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HART CRANE'S DEBT TO P. D. OUSPENSKY

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the existence of a significant influence upon Hart Crane by the Russian philosopher P. D. Ouspensky, and to define more specifically than has yet been done the exact nature of Crane's debt. Although the criticism generally acknowledges that a debt is present, no study yet exists which identifies and discusses the influence at length. This paper attempts to fill that void.

The study first examines the life and thought of Ouspensky, a turn-of-the-century mystic philosopher whose book Tertium Organum became popular in America in the early 1920's. A brief discussion of the major points of that book is given. The paper then attempts to determine why Hart Crane was so drawn to Ouspensky by investigating Crane's character and examining the major themes of his early poetry in order to establish the parallels between the two men's ideas and to reveal how Ouspensky's work shaped Crane's thought. Finally, the study makes an examination of how Ouspensky's theories of consciousness, space, and time are used by Crane in his poem The Bridge. It is argued that Crane adopted Ouspensky's idea of the expansion of man's space-sense and the reduction of the time-sense and used it as a structural principle in his poem.

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## INTRODUCTION

Hart Crane's poetry has been the focus of a substantial amount of criticism, much of it negative. The Bridge, in particular, has been harshly treated at times. It has been labeled a failure by many of its critics. In the last twenty years, the critical consensus has become more positive, and it is now acknowledged that the poem is important, unified, and worthy of permanent recognition. That opinion has not always prevailed, however, and the fluctuation of the criticism from one pole to another suggests that the poem has been subject to misinterpretation and that it has not always been subject to the closest of analysis. The reasons for this are complicated and require a brief, very selective review of the poem's critical history.

The most devastating blow to The Bridge was delivered by Yvor Winters in an essay entitled "The Significance of The Bridge by Hart Crane, or What Are We to Think About Professor X?" Winters saw Crane as part of a literary tradition led by Emerson and Whitman, a tradition which he believed was fundamentally flawed:

The doctrine of Emerson and Whitman, if really put into practice, should naturally lead to suicide: in the first place, if the impulses are indulged systematically and passionately, they can only lead to madness. . . . The Emersonian doctrine, which is merely the romantic doctrine with a New England coloration, should naturally result in madness if one really lived it; it should result in literary confusion if one really wrote it. Crane accepted it; he lived it; he wrote it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Yvor Winters, in In Defense of Reason (Denver: The University of Denver Press, 1947), pp. 590, 599.

This condemnation of Crane, along with another article by Winters entitled "The Progress of Hart Crane," had an astonishingly swift and negative impact upon the criticism that followed. Winters, normally a thoughtful, sensitive critic, reacted to what he perceived as a moral dilemma presented by The Bridge, and rather than provide a careful analysis of the poem, he condemned it:

There is only one poem in the volume that endeavors to treat clearly of an individual human relationship; the poem "Indiana," and it fails miserably--it could scarcely be more mawkish and helpless. The fact is unimportant except that it strengthens one's suspicion that Mr. Crane is temperamentally unable to understand a very wide range of experience, and one's feeling that even his best poems--which, in spite of this limitation, are very fine--have about them something of the fragility of innocence.<sup>2</sup>

Winters' attacks had a negative effect on the criticism that followed. R. P. Blackmur, for example, could see The Bridge only as a failure, as did Winters. His charge, which was similar to Winters', was that "Almost everyone who has written on Crane has found in him a central defect, either of imagination or execution, or both."<sup>3</sup> Blackmur, Winters, and Allen Tate<sup>4</sup> held what were the most influential but also the most damaging opinions for quite some time. The effect of their negative criticism has been to leave an important twentieth-century

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<sup>2</sup>Yvor Winters, in The Uncollected Essays and Reviews of Yvor Winters, ed. Francis Murphy (Chicago: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1973), p. 76.

<sup>3</sup>R. P. Blackmur, "New Thresholds, New Anatomies: Notes on a Text of Hart Crane," in Language as Gesture (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1935), p. 302.

<sup>4</sup>See Allen Tate, Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 26-42.

poem in relative darkness and obscurity until the last twenty years, in which time the unfavorable opinion has been somewhat counter-balanced by more positive and constructive criticism.

Because The Bridge has received more careful attention for only a relatively short while, some negative or perhaps too hasty conclusions that were drawn by earlier critics are still retained by more recent evaluators. This is unfortunate because it means that readers of Crane are encouraged to form prejudices against some aspects of his work. Such has been the case with the subject of this paper, Crane's debt to the Russian philosopher P. D. Ouspensky. The general critical judgment about Ouspensky's influence on Crane has been colored by the responses of early critics which, in my opinion, were neither fully correct nor complete or piercing. Thus it is that such an otherwise careful and favorable critic of Crane's as R.W.B. Lewis could perpetuate the conclusion offered by Philip Horton in his biography that although Crane's appreciation of Ouspensky was considerable, it ultimately only confused him. Horton says:

Given Crane's intense and lively imagination and his predisposition to mysticism, it was inevitable that such theories [as Ouspensky offered] should have a powerful influence over his thought. But it was equally inevitable that they should ultimately only confuse him.<sup>6</sup>

The effect of Horton's evaluation was to cast a shadow on the actual facts of Ouspensky's influence on Crane and to predispose following

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<sup>6</sup>Philip Horton, Hart Crane: The Life of an American Poet (New York: The Viking Press, 1937), p. 136.

critics to dismiss the possibility that Ouspensky was an important source of Crane's ideas.

R.W.B. Lewis follows Horton's analysis and nearly blanketly accepts it:

In Philip Horton's deft summary, Ouspensky's "conception of the spiritual decay of humanity under two centuries of scientific materialism and the imminent emergence of a new order of consciousness," along with his "view of art as the beginning of wisdom and the artist as visionary"--all this could appeal mightily to Crane and to the New York friends upon whom he later urged a reading of Ouspensky. But Crane's own enthusiasm was short-lived. When those same friends went on to adopt the bizarre discipline of the Ouspenskyite Gurdjieff, . . . Crane signed off at once. . . . Crane's most important dispositions were always toward poetry, and not to mystical flailings nor to any mode of philosophizing, however he might be momentarily diverted by the splurging arguments of an Ouspensky.<sup>7</sup>

I quote such a long statement because it contains nearly all of Lewis' remarks on the subject of Crane and Ouspensky, thus illustrating how scanty the response has been, and because the argument does not stray markedly from the course earlier set up by Horton. It is true, as both Lewis and Horton claim, that Crane rejected the Gurdjieff group, but that fact does not diminish or discredit his personal and creative response to Ouspensky's work Tertium Organum. Rather, it suggests that Crane was not interested in cultish behavior. For Horton and Lewis to conclude from this that Crane had "only a brief, minor interest in Ouspensky"<sup>8</sup> is unwarranted.

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<sup>7</sup>R.W.B. Lewis, The Poetry of Hart Crane: A Critical Study (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 94-95.

<sup>8</sup>Lewis, p. 97.

Lewis' other point about Crane's debt to Ouspensky is equally superficial. He addresses a controversy about a phrase in Crane's poem "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" which contains words used by Ouspensky in Tertium Organum, and attempts to demonstrate that since Crane did not borrow those words from Ouspensky, no major influence can be ascertained:

The lines about "the world dimensional" are sometimes cited as evidence of the sizable influence upon "Faustus and Helen" (and perhaps on the lyrics that followed) of Tertium Organum, a turgid work of mystical philosophy by the Russian speculator, P. D. Ouspensky. The claim seems to me improbable, on both particular and general grounds. . . . [F]or one thing, most of the sentence just quoted was as we remember composed early in 1921 as part of a grab-bag poem, "The Bridge of Estador"; and this was apparently some time before Crane had heard of Ouspensky's book.<sup>8</sup>

Lewis' argument sounds convincing enough, and his authoritative tone perhaps dissuades most readers from questioning his facts. What he says is indeed factual, but it is what he does not say that casts doubt on the validity of his conclusion. The complete sentence he refers to in "Faustus and Helen" is the following: "There is the world dimensional for / those untwisted by the love of things / irreconcilable. . . ."<sup>9</sup> The complete reference Lewis points to in "The Bridge of Estador" is the following:

--your vision  
May slumber yet in the moon, awaiting

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<sup>8</sup>Lewis, pp. 93-94.

<sup>9</sup>Hart Crane, The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane, ed. Brom Weber (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., Anchor Books Edition, 1966), p. 28; hereafter cited as CP in the text.

Far consummations of the tides to throw  
Clean on the shore some wreck of dreams. . . .

But some are twisted with the love  
Of things irreconcilable,--  
The slant moon with the slanting hill:  
O Beauty's fool, though you have never  
Seen them again, you won't forget (CP, pp. 142-43).

The phrase in question, "the world dimensional," does not appear in "The Bridge of Estador" as Lewis suggests, in a sleight-of-hand fashion, it does. Although I cannot claim with certainty that Crane did borrow it from Ouspensky, the "world dimensional" is a major subject of Tertium Organum, which Crane probably read while writing "Faustus and Helen."

Whether or not the phrase was borrowed from Ouspensky is not, however, the important point in this issue. The fact is that the analysis of Ouspensky's influence by at least two important readers of Crane's work is not as rigorous as it should be, and their conclusions have perhaps dissuaded others from examining the issue more closely. Although a debt to Ouspensky has never been denied, few critics, if any, have spoken at length about it.

Although the treatment has been generally skimpy, it has not been entirely negative. Hyatt Waggoner recognizes Ouspensky's importance to Crane:

Ouspensky's influence was almost certainly the greatest single one to which Crane was subject in the realm of ideas; it is to be seen both in the total intention of The Bridge and in discrete passages. . . . No doubt the spiritualism of the Tertium Organum . . . was the most

adequate religion which . . . Crane was capable of absorbing and profiting by.<sup>10</sup>

In the same essay Waggoner also expresses doubts about whether Ouspensky's influence was helpful to Crane, but at least he does recognize that Crane was greatly attracted to Ouspensky's "spiritualism," among other things. John Unterecker notes Crane's fascination with Ouspensky by relating a tale about his endlessly hounding his friend Gorham Munson to read Tertium Organum until Munson finally did so.<sup>11</sup> Sherman Paul cites several instances of Ouspensky's influence on passages of Crane's poetry in his book, Hart's Bridge.<sup>12</sup> And finally, Glauco Cambon recognizes that it was more than Ouspensky's mysticism that attracted Crane--it was also his theories of space and time that Crane "absorbed": "Crane . . . absorbed Einstein's ideas [of space, time, and the four dimensions] through the visionary mediation of Ouspensky."<sup>13</sup> Thus some specific and positive, although not well-developed, conclusions about Crane's debt to Ouspensky have been suggested, but still no detailed study of the subject exists.

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<sup>10</sup>Hyatt Waggoner, The Heel of Elohim: Science and Values in Modern American Poetry (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), p. 169.

<sup>11</sup>John Unterecker, Voyager: A Life of Hart Crane (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1969), p. 249.

<sup>12</sup>Sherman Paul, Hart's Bridge (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972). See pages 68, 88, 96, 116-17, and 146.

<sup>13</sup>Glauco Cambon, The Inclusive Flame (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), p. 141.

Such a study is the subject of this paper. It is my intention to provide an examination of Crane's use of Ouspensky first by giving a brief overview of Ouspensky's philosophy, then by assessing the reasons Crane was drawn to that philosophy, and finally by looking at exactly how Ouspensky's ideas inform Crane's The Bridge. By doing so, I hope to show that Crane is not the confused, irrational poet that many think he is. Contrary to the claim that Crane had a brilliant but quixotic mind that could not adhere to any philosophical system for an extended period of time, his use of Ouspensky's ideas in The Bridge demonstrates a consistent, careful application of a philosophical method designed to achieve his desired goals.

## CHAPTER I

### OUSPENSKY'S THOUGHT

Crane's debt to Ouspensky's ideas will be fully discussed in later chapters, but before that discussion can be attempted, it is necessary to look at Ouspensky himself. Very little has been written about him, mainly because he was for some time closely associated with another Russian philosopher, G. I. Gurdjieff, whose work has been seen by many as more important and whose popular following was larger than Ouspensky's. However, Crane and his friends, in particular Waldo Frank, were for a while very much taken with Ouspensky and quickly sent Tertium Organum around their circle as soon as they became aware of it. Ouspensky, although somewhat obscured by the greater figure, thus deserves analysis independent of Gurdjieff, not only because he is important in the history of Russian thought, but also because of the influence that his ideas exerted on a major group of early twentieth-century American intellectuals and poets, and specifically upon Crane.

The picture that we have of Pyotr Demianovitch Ouspensky is of a man in ways not unlike Crane himself. That is, he was essentially a romantic, interested more in looking at the nebulous, hidden, inner side of life--that side not readily apparent to the rational, logical, and the materialistic. He believed, like Crane, in the existence of a "higher" dimension of life--believed that there is something beyond the ordinary world of appearances. This is not

to suggest, however, that Crane or Ouspensky did not believe at all in the importance or at least the undeniability of the physical world. Ouspensky did eventually lean more to mysticism than did Crane, but both acknowledged the world's presence. Crane, however, refused to consider any philosophy as being true which did not admit, in what he considered a healthy proportion, of the necessity and positive value of the physical world.

The tendency to look for the "hidden" side of life was probably formed for Ouspensky in part by his exposure in the first several years of his life, after his birth in Moscow on March 5, 1873, to the atmosphere of the Russian intelligentsia found at his grandmother's house, where many artists and intellectuals gathered frequently and at which young Ouspensky was often present.<sup>14</sup> His parents too had a diverse background of interests and activities, which also served to train the young boy to search for more than what was readily apparent on the surfaces of things. His father was an officer in the Survey Service and a talented mathematician "whose particular hobby was the fashionable topic of the fourth dimension" (Webb, p. 94), with which his son would later be so much concerned. Ouspensky's mother was a painter, and it was she who brought the young boy to her mother's house where he became involved in the Russian intellectualism of the day. That exposure stimulated him to

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<sup>14</sup>James Webb, The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G. I. Gurdjieff, P. D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1980), p. 94; hereafter cited in the text as Webb.

begin to read far more advanced books at the age of five than most children of age ten have even heard of; at the same time he also began to draw, paint, and read poetry (Webb, p. 96).

A resemblance between Ouspensky and Crane can also be seen in their lack of formal education. Crane did not finish high school, and he apparently had trouble applying himself to the school work. John Unterecker notes that Crane took frequent trips around the country with his mother,<sup>15</sup> which probably accounts for his difficulties in maintaining interest in schooling, aside from the fact that such absence prevented him from being there to learn what the school had to teach him. Ouspensky, too, did not finish even his early educational training. According to Webb, he "loathed the school routine. . . . He hated Latin and Greek and found the work as irksome as the discipline" (Webb, p. 97). Consequently, he often broke the school rules and was eventually expelled, probably over a relatively minor incident, when he was fourteen or fifteen.

Both Ouspensky and Crane were interested in reading, however--each read widely on a variety of subjects. Their lack of a rigorously applied discipline of guidance thus worked both to the advantage and disadvantage of each. Crane's critics, in fact, have sometimes claimed that his lack of formal education allowed him to stray off the "normal" path into intellectual mediocrity, which in turn, they say, was a major cause for the so-called failure of The Bridge.

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<sup>15</sup>Unterecker, p. 28.

The lack of formal training is said to have caused a somewhat different disadvantage for Ouspensky. Webb says that this partially accounts for a "forbidding" aspect of his character: "His occasional arrogance and dictatorial manner . . . are very much part of the self-educated philosopher" (Webb, p. 98). However, from their less than orthodox schooling neither man can be said to have suffered badly: both gained the advantage of acquiring a wide range of interests and an ability to see things from a fresher, less narrow perspective than a person trained in a strictly orthodox manner. As Webb says of Ouspensky, "From his lack of orthodox schooling came a breadth of interests and a wide culture which belong to the polymath and not to the academic specialist" (Webb, p. 98).

The Ouspensky family observed a tradition of naming their sons which conveniently categorizes the two "poles" of Ouspensky's character. The family passed the names Peter and Damian alternately from father to son (Webb, p. 106): "The Damians were supposed to be world-rejecting ascetics and the Peters to enter with zest into the joys of life. Ouspensky thought that both Peter and Damian influenced his character" (Webb, p. 106). The two names and what they represent define in a simple way Ouspensky's dual nature. The Peter in him led him to travel around the world--in 1905 he became a journalist and in that capacity travelled to Europe and the eastern United States (Webb, p. 100)--and to enjoy sometimes to excess the life of bars and taverns where friends and acquaintances could argue the issues of the day. The Damian side of his character revealed itself in his

interests in dreams and in the occult, and accounted for his desire to remove himself somehow from the pain and suffering of the physical world. Webb says that a "powerful ascetic drive lay behind his spiritual quest and his intellectual rejection of the material world; but it was the bon viveur who [said] . . . that he thought that he had been born with the noise of the tavern in his blood" (Webb, p. 107).

The Damian side apparently became the more dominant part of Ouspensky's character, since it was his spiritual quest which became most important to him. That quest brought him to the study of Theosophy, which at that time (1907-8) was enjoying increasing popularity in Russia. By means of such study Ouspensky gradually began clarifying his thoughts about the spiritual reality he was seeking. He needed, he thought, a way out of the painful everyday world, and he found it in his studies in mysticism and occultism:

He began to see more clearly that there was a way out of the trap, a way, what was more, that asserted the real value of the poetic and mysterious world of which he had only preserved a hope. . . . There might be a life, he thought, beyond, within, or through the life of byt (Webb, p. 110). (Byt is the Russian word for routine life; firmly established, unchanging, monotonous circumstances of living.)

One can see a further resemblance of Ouspensky to Crane in his desire to redeem or escape the life of byt by discovering some kind of unifying synthesis of spiritual experience with this world. Both men were motivated by such attempts to enlarge and deepen the normal, somewhat chaotic, and essentially stultifying routine of everyday life. This desire led both men to be interested in human consciousness and

experience, since it is by control or change of these that man is able to change the quality of his life. They were both interested, therefore, in time and space, which are the contexts of our experience. Ouspensky approached the problem philosophically; Crane used Ouspensky's approach poetically.

During the years 1909-12, Ouspensky carried on his search by further travel, study, and experimentation in the occult. During that time he also wrote the book that was later to be received so enthusiastically by Crane, Waldo Frank, Jean Toomer and others of that circle. Tertium Organum was written in 1911, and was first translated into English by Nicolas Bessaraboff and Claude Bragdon in 1920. As Webb notes, the book

was intended to show how habitual patterns of thought--particularly those created by the development of materialist science--have imprisoned thought itself. In [Ouspensky's] view, human consciousness had voluntarily limited the territory in which it could exercise itself--when beyond its cramped backyard was an entire countryside in which to rove and the prospect of the noumenal world beyond the hills (Webb, p. 119).

A fuller discussion of the book will follow a brief look at the rest of Ouspensky's life and career.

In 1915 Ouspensky met G. I. Gurdjieff in Moscow, which "marked a turning point in his life."<sup>16</sup> He remained with Gurdjieff and established a lecture series and study group in London until 1940, at which time he travelled to the United States for several years.

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<sup>16</sup>Nicolas Bessaraboff and Claude Bragdon, trans., Tertium Organum, by P. D. Ouspensky (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 311; hereafter cited in the text as Tertium Organum.

He broke with Gurdjieff during that time, and refused to have anything to do with him for the rest of his life, which ended in 1947. During his creative years he wrote several books, among the most popular being A New Model of the Universe, In Search of the Miraculous, and The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution.

The second book of his career remains perhaps the most important, and it contains a comprehensive presentation of his thought. Ouspensky himself explained the book's intention, saying, "I have called this system of higher logic Tertium Organum because for us it is the third canon--third instrument--of thought after those of Aristotle and Bacon" (Tertium Organum, p. 236). Ouspensky presents in the book a "new" synthesis and statement of an ancient, mystical system of logic--the logic of intuition--designed to be more attuned to the needs of the modern world than a worn-out positivist-materialist philosophy could be. His philosophy responds to the changes in our conception of the world necessitated by Einstein's theory of relativity and Kant's theory of the subjectivity of time and space. He attempts to create a new conception of world order in which man's consciousness is the principal instrument of growth; by means of his philosophy man can transcend the limitations of the positivist view and can achieve consciousness of higher principles--consciousness of eternity and of the unity of all things.

It is, of course, only by a careful reading of Tertium Organum itself that anyone can thoroughly understand Ouspensky's "system"; however, I shall present here, in much condensed form, the basic

tenets upon which the philosophy stands. While the analysis certainly aims to present Ouspensky's ideas as clearly and as accurately as possible, it is not intended to achieve completeness. The major principles of the philosophy will be discussed first, followed by a look at a few subjects which although not of primary significance are nonetheless interesting and help to convey the unique flavor of Ouspensky's thought.

Ouspensky believed that while positivism, the philosophy which holds that "true" knowledge is based on natural phenomena and therefore sees metaphysical and mystical philosophies as imperfect systems, has some value as a method of thinking, he was fundamentally opposed to its approach, because it does not and cannot allow for or explain the basic, unknown mysteries of life. He saw that positivism inevitably leads to materialism, which leads man to see only physical phenomena and leaves him incapable of understanding the "invisible" world of causes, thoughts, and feelings. The result of positivistic thinking, he says, is that

we rob ourselves, deprive life of all beauty, all mystery, all content; and wonder afterwards why everything is so uninteresting and detestable to us, why we do not desire to live, and why we do not understand anything around us. . . . THE METHOD IS NO GOOD (Tertium Organum, p. 305).

A materialistic approach to the world is unsatisfactory, Ouspensky believed, because it leaves an entire segment of man's experience, that is, its content, its substance, uncharted and somehow "suspicious" because not directly verifiable. He sought an understanding of the world that would include as an integral part of its

foundation an acceptance not only of the phenomenal world but also of the noumenal. In fact, what he created was a system of thought which actively seeks out the "higher" noumenal world as a means of enriching man's experience; his theory of the fourth dimension and the expansion of consciousness seeks as its goal the attainment of an awareness of the eternal, of the unity of all things, of ultimate realities.

The fourth dimension is not an idea originated by Ouspensky. Einstein and C. H. Hinton, among others, were the sources of Ouspensky's thoughts on the subject, but he used their ideas in a way that is uniquely his own. The fourth dimension, he says, is one step beyond our normal perception of the world as three dimensional (i.e., in terms of length, breadth, and height).

Ouspensky's idea of the fourth dimension grows out of his concept of time and space. He says that our idea of time actually includes two ideas, that of a "certain space and that of motion upon that space" (Tertium Organum, pp. 99-100) and that our unclear consciousness of that space and our sensation of motion upon that space is what we call time. An analogy between human and animal perception is given to clarify this idea:

The snail feels the line as space, i.e., as something constant. It feels the rest of the world as time, i.e., as something eternally moving. The horse feels the plane as space. It feels the rest of the world as time.

We feel an infinite sphere as space; the rest of the world, as time. In other words, every being feels as space that which is grasped by his space-sense: the rest he refers to time; i.e., the imperfectly felt is referred to time. Or it is possible to refer to the matter thus:

every being feels as space that which, by the aid of his space-sense he is able to represent to himself in form, outside himself; and that which he is not able to thus represent he feels as time, i.e., eternally moving, impermanent, so unstable that it is impossible to imagine it in terms of form (Tertium Organum, p. 100).

The fourth dimension, according to Ouspensky's view, is what we perceive as time. It is only the imperfection of "space-sense" (the ability to grasp things spatially), that causes us to perceive the higher dimension as moving and impermanent, just as "lower" animals perceive as motion what their space-senses are incapable of representing to themselves spatially. Because we are unable to represent the next dimension of reality to ourselves in some form, it appears to us to be constantly moving; it does not acquire any shape, therefore is impossible for us to "grasp," and thus appears impermanent.

However, we know, Ouspensky argues, that what an animal perceives as time we perceive as depth, which is something that we do not see as changing or in motion. Thus the third dimension is constant, and so likewise what we perceive as time (the fourth dimension) must also be constant, contrary to our imperfect perception of it as motion. Robert L. Perry, in The Shared Vision of Waldo Frank and Hart Crane, clarifies this point in his discussion of Ouspensky:

Just as a dog, when he walks past a three dimensional object, perceives its third dimension (depth) as something fleeting and transitory, so man perceives the fourth dimension (time) as something fleeting and transitory.

The fourth dimension is time itself, but since it is a dimension, it is therefore static.<sup>17</sup>

The existence of such a dimension beyond our normal apprehension of three dimensions reveals some significant facts to us. That is, since according to this theory of the fourth dimension time is not something so impermanent as we ordinarily perceive it to be, then we know that we need not suffer the misfortunes that occasionally beset us simply because we are unaware that events are not fleeting; the existence of the fourth dimension insures that time is actually a constant, that all things exist always, and therefore we should see that it is unnecessary to suffer the pains brought about by what we perceive as change. For example, one need not suffer over the loss of love, since it is only a false perception of time which makes it appear that love existed temporarily. According to the existence of the fourth dimension, love is something which exists always: once we feel it, it is there forever, not just for a brief or discrete period of time. We assume that love is like our perception of time as the movement of events from yesterday, through today, and into tomorrow; that is, we see love as transitory if we perceive it to be here at one time and gone at another. But if we become aware of the existence of the fourth dimension, we are assured that love is not transitory, and therefore is not absent even though we may experience what seems to be the loss of it.

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<sup>17</sup>Robert L. Perry, The Shared Vision of Waldo Frank and Hart Crane (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Studies, 1966), p. 12.

The important word in the previous remarks is "perceive," since it is, Ouspensky says, our own consciousness which determines how we see. Our inability to represent things to ourselves in terms of space forces us to perceive those things in motion: "Because of the properties of our sensuous receptivity, we see the world as through a narrow slit" (Tertium Organum, p. 40). If we could imagine, however, that what we perceive as impermanent is actually stable, then perhaps we could change our receptivity to include more of an awareness of the "other" world not directly apprehended through our senses:

If our receptivity could rise above its ordinary plane it would undoubtedly perceive simultaneously, below itself, a far greater number of events than it usually sees while on a plane. Just as a man, ascending a mountain, or going up in a balloon, begins to see simultaneously and at once many things which it is impossible to see simultaneously and at once from below . . . so consciousness rising above the plane in which it usually functions, must see simultaneously the events divided for ordinary consciousness by periods of time. . . . The angle of vision will enlarge during such an ascent, the moment will expand. . . . All that we are apprehending in time would become something like a single moment (Tertium Organum, pp. 41-42).

Our ability to "see" depends upon or is limited by our ordinary consciousness. If we can expand our consciousness to include a spatial awareness of the fourth dimension (time), then we will be able to transcend the limits and illusions caused by our perception of things as merely three-dimensional and will possess a greater understanding: we will understand the oneness that exists in the apparent multiplicity of things.

An example of such expanded consciousness of "oneness grasped through multiplicity" may clarify the concept. The poetry of Walt Whitman provides such an example (although it is not being suggested that there is anything other than a purely accidental coincidence of ideas between Whitman and Ouspensky). In the poem "A Child Went Forth Every Day" there is a passage in which occurs an expansion of vision beyond the ordinary three dimensions of usual sight or apprehension:

. . . the sense of what is real, the  
 thought if after all it should prove unreal,  
 The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time, the  
     curious whether and how,  
 Whether that which appears is so, or is it all flashes  
     and specks?  
 Men and women crowding fast in the streets, if they are not  
     flashes and specks what are they?  
 The streets themselves and the façades of houses, and goods  
     in the windows,  
 Vehicles, teams, and heavy plank'd wharves, the huge crossing  
     at the ferries,  
 The village on the highland seen from afar at sunset, the  
     river between,  
 Shadows, aureola and mist, the light falling on roofs and  
     gables of white or brown two miles off,  
 The schooner near by sleepily dropping down the tide, the  
     little boat slack-tow'd astern,  
 The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken crests, slapping,  
 The strata of color'd clouds, the long bar of maroon-tint  
     away solitary by itself, the spread of purity it lies  
     motionless in,  
 The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of  
     salt marsh and shore mud,  
 These became a part of that child who went forth every day,  
     and who now goes, and will always go forth every day.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, Eds. Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1973), pp. 365-66.

The cataloguing of images in this passage produces a sense of timelessness, a sense that all of the images perceived are included in one moment, or at least that they are all seen simultaneously by the poet. Although in fact there is a progression of images from one line to the next, it is never made clear whether that progression corresponds to the temporal growth and expansion of the child's experience or to any other natural time scheme. What does become clear is that all of these things are indeed seen simultaneously. This "seeing" is not the everyday kind of seeing we usually refer to with that word, but rather it is an expansion of vision which operates beyond the bounds of three-dimensional experience. The poet is able to enclose all of the images within his consciousness at one time. He is aware of not only what is happening on the streets but at the same time is able to see "the light falling on roofs and gables . . . two miles off," and the "horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of salt marsh and shore mud" as being permanent parts of the child's every movement. He envisions not simply the day-to-day movement of events but instead sees the fullness and timelessness of experience.

This ability to see from not just one but many angles and perspectives is exactly what Ouspensky means by moving beyond the third dimension by an expansion of consciousness to gain awareness of the fourth dimension. It is what he means when he says:

Let us imagine a consciousness that is not bound by the conditions of sensuous receptivity. Such a consciousness can rise above the plane upon which we are moving. . . . It can see the past and the future, lying together and existing simultaneously (Tertium Organum, p. 35).

The consciousness in Whitman's poem (no definite persona of narrator or poet is made clear) can see more than the present and past--they can be seen at one time, together, because the mind perceiving them is not bound to the ordinary way of viewing the world. Thus a sense of timelessness is felt: the time-sense is reduced and instead all of the images that normally occur to the senses in the course of the passage of time as it is usually perceived are represented in spatial form. The consciousness grasps the fourth dimension; the unity of all the child's experiences is known: they all are known to be a part of the child forever, and remain with him always, not just at some times and not others. It is known that they exist always, not just at particular moments. This kind of awareness is exactly what Ouspensky discusses--particularly in his chapter on the "Cosmic Consciousness" of many historical mystics in Tertium Organum:

There comes to the person an intellectual illumination, a clear conception (a vision) in outline of the meaning and drift of the universe. . . . He sees that instead of men being, as it were, patches of life scattered through an infinite sea of non-living substance, they are in reality specks of relative death in an infinite ocean of life. . . . A man learns much of the new. Especially does he obtain such a conception of the WHOLE--or at least of an immense WHOLE--as dwarfs all conception, imagination or speculation . . . (Tertium Organum, p. 292).

The ability to see wholes, to see things all together, just as the poet can see all of the separate parts of the child's life in one unified vision as being forever a part of the child, is the capacity bestowed by the consciousness able to grasp the concept of the fourth dimension, because it allows the mind to move beyond the limitations

of the ordinary world. Crane was quite receptive to this kind of thinking (as will be discussed in Chapter II). In fact, it is possible that his earlier reading of Whitman may have disposed him to respond sympathetically to Ouspensky, since surely he would have recognized the similarity to Whitman, whose work he greatly admired.

Ouspensky's theories of the fourth dimension, space, time, and consciousness are of central importance to his thought. There are, nonetheless, other subjects raised in Tertium Organum which are of perhaps lesser but still notable importance. Part of the foundation of Ouspensky's thought is the idea that in his ordinary, everyday life man is not really awake, that he walks around as if in a dream most of the time because he is not properly attuned to reality. In order to awaken, man must realize that this world is not as "solid" or stable as it appears. The belief that the material world is all that there is must be abandoned, and action upon a belief in the existence of a higher order or state must be taken. That is, man must develop his consciousness in order to awaken; he must strive for a higher consciousness, an awareness of the eternal within this world, and by that process he will begin to awaken out of his "sleep." The means by which man awakens, then, is by attempting to "get in touch" with the deeper parts of his self: his feelings, his patterns of being, and, by such self-observation, begin to be able to contact others and unite himself with not only the world but, Ouspensky says, the universe:

Our usual receptivity and thinking are too absorbed by the sensations of the phenomenal world, and by themselves, and

therefore do not reflect impressions coming to them from other beings, or reflect them so weakly that they are not fixed there in any intelligible form. Moreover we do not recognize that we are in constant communion with the noumena of all surrounding things, near the remote, with beings like ourselves and others entirely different, with the life of everything in the world and of all the world (Tertium Organum, p. 174).

It is our consciousness, says Ouspensky, that determines whether we remain absorbed in the phenomenal or whether we achieve "communion" with the noumenal world, which is, he says, always present.

One of the means by which we develop our consciousness, a means by which we train our minds to be in contact with the noumenal, is art. The poet, according to Ouspensky, "must be a clairvoyant: he must possess the power to make others see that which they do not themselves see, but which he does see" (Tertium Organum, p. 145). The artist is capable of helping others to see because he possesses a special understanding of the world:

He understands the difference between the stone from a church wall and the stone from a prison wall. He hears "the voices of the stones," understands the whisperings of ancient walls, of tumuli, of mountains, rivers, woods and plains. He hears "the voice of the silence," understands the psychological differences between silences, knows that one silence can differ from another. And this poetical understanding of the world should be developed, strengthened and fortified, because only by its aid do we come into contact with the true world of reality (Tertium Organum, p. 144).

The function of art, then, is to make people aware of the hidden but essential noumenal side of life. It does this by making clear the subjectively felt difference between objects; that is, "those differences expressed in the symbols and metaphors of art which are often revelations of the world of reality" (Tertium Organum, p. 143)

are the poet's subject because it is by showing the subjectively perceived differences between objects that people's awareness and contact with the hidden inner side of life increases and thus expands their consciousness. The business of the artist or poet is to help people become aware that "the mystery of life dwells in the fact that the noumenon, i.e., the hidden meaning and the hidden function if a thing, is reflected in its phenomenon. . . . The phenomenon is the image of the noumenon" (Tertium Organum, p. 145).

Another subject covered in Tertium Organum is the question of the true nature of love. Ouspensky thought that many people take love for granted and tend to subordinate it to the needs of their everyday lives without understanding that the feeling of love is actually something much greater than an individual's self. It is a "cosmic phenomenon," he says, and a quality whose mystical nature should be better acknowledged. Contrary to the facile assumption that the function or purpose of love is reproduction, it is actually the energy that is expended in love that constitutes its greatest value. "In all living nature," Ouspensky says, "love is the motive force which drives the creative activity in the most diverse directions" (Tertium Organum, p. 152). It is the indirect power of love to "transform itself into instincts, ideas, creative forces on different planes of life; into symbols of art, music, poetry" (Tertium Organum, p. 152) that makes love so important to our lives; it is the force that drives all striving toward a "higher" order of consciousness, toward a comprehension of harmony and unity in the

world. Love is a creative force, a force that builds the world:

Love inspires this orgy of activity. . . . At the first awakening of love this work begins. One and the same desire creates a new generation and those conditions under which this new generation will live. One and the same desire urges forward creative activity in all directions, brings the pairs together for the birth of a new generation, and makes them build and create for this same future generation (Tertium Organum, p. 153).

The fact that love inspires living things to reproduce is not its sole value or effect; additionally, its collateral function is to stimulate a creative regeneration of the world and of ideas.

Because love stimulates people to see things more openly and clearly, says Ouspensky, because it strips off the masks that hide men's souls, it thus leads men to build or create new physical, material, or mental forms (e.g., ideas). The creation of new forms of thought is love's greatest power, according to Ouspensky, since it is the introduction of new ideas that eventually will liberate man from his physical chains:

If creation, the birth of ideas, is the light which comes from love, then this light comes from a great fire. In this eternally burning fire in which humanity and all the world are being incessantly purified, all the forces of the human spirit and of genius are being evolved and refined; and perhaps indeed, from this same fire or by its aid a new force will arise which shall deliver from the chains of matter all who follow where it leads (Tertium Organum, p. 154).

Thus love's potential to liberate the mystical part of man's soul is its great power, because the establishment of an awareness of the "otherness," of the mystical aspect of life, is necessary to combat the encroachment of the positivist-materialist tendencies of modern

life. Love keeps alive the spiritual in man, and thus is man's best hope for growth and evolution.

One further point, appropriately raised in the conclusion to Tertium Organum, remains to be mentioned here. Ouspensky wishes above all to caution people not to accept philosophies or systems which appear to provide absolute answers to their questions about life. Since he believes that reality and true understanding lie in the human consciousness, he insists that one can never stop searching--one can never stop the mind from thinking and feeling. Any philosophy which becomes too ordered, too neat, too established, cannot successfully approach truth, since truth lies in the very motion of consciousness: "The true motion which lies at the foundation of everything, is the motion of thought. True energy is the energy of consciousness. And truth itself is motion, and can never lead to arrestment, to the cessation of the search" (Tertium Organum, p. 306). (In this respect Ouspensky is similar to Blake in his emphasis on the power of the imagination.) Thus Ouspensky concludes his book with the assertion that it is only in the process of search that the new knowledge can be found: "The meaning of life is in eternal search. And only in that search can we find something truly new" (Tertium Organum, p. 306). Man must keep his mind open and fluid if he hopes to attain a knowledge and understanding of the higher reality, the mystical world of vision and harmony.

Many ideas set forth in Tertium Organum have remained unnoticed by this brief summary, but the major principles of Ouspensky's thought, and some points of lesser significance but of

equal interest, have been covered. The philosophy he sets forth is something of a mixture of Platonism and mysticism and is sometimes difficult and obscure, and thus has not achieved great notice among twentieth-century philosophers. Yet for many reasons Tertium Organum appealed to several people when the English translation first appeared in America in the early 1920's. Waldo Frank and Jean Toomer, among others, were excited about it because it confirmed some of the thoughts they were having at that time. Crane too was enthusiastic about the book, but for somewhat different or perhaps more personal reasons. In the next chapter, Crane's attraction to Ouspensky's ideas will be discussed in order to determine what psychological, intellectual, and poetical needs Ouspensky's philosophy may have spoken to, and to show how Ouspensky's ideas paralleled, reinforced, and shaped Crane's thought.

## CHAPTER II

### CRANE'S ATTRACTION TO OUSPENSKY

Ouspensky's appeal to Crane is easily understood when we review the facts of Crane's life and thought. Throughout his boyhood Crane had to deal with the unhappy marriage of his parents, which produced in him an emotional insecurity that he never overcame. He was a sensitive young boy who longed for his parents' approval and affection, but that need was met with conflicting, confusing, and permanently unsettling responses from them. He wavered between his allegiance to his father and his very strong dependence on his mother, and his suffering over their battles often resulted in emotional and physical illness. For example, during what was meant to be a family vacation on the Isle of Palms in 1915, a quarrel between his parents left Crane so unhappy that he apparently attempted suicide. The details of the incident are not fully known, but the effects were devastating to Crane. According to Unterecker,

Whatever happened on the Isle of Palms late in the winter of 1915, the events seemed to have created in Harold psychological wounds of almost incalculable severity. . . . [He] would for days after a parental quarrel find himself emotionally and physically ill.<sup>19</sup>

Crane was caught in a cruel conflict that had profound negative effects upon him, since his normal instinct to seek the love of both parents

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<sup>19</sup>Unterecker, p. 38.

was frustrated by their continual angry battling. His stronger tie to his mother caused him to side with her, and she in fact cultivated his loyalty to her and against his father. Repeated episodes of his parents' fighting left Crane, not surprisingly, with an insecurity about love from that point onward. In his future relationships with friends, for example, he always sought to establish very intimate emotional ties and was perhaps uncommonly insistent that his friends be loyal, because of his basic insecurity.

Other manifestations of Crane's instability were his inability to remain settled in a job for any great length of time, and, more importantly, his difficulty in adhering to any one coherent system of thought throughout his life. He wavered between faith in the presence of spirit and disillusionment over the impossibility of achieving lasting vision in a rapidly changing world.

Thus it is that Ouspensky's theory of the existence of a permanent fourth dimension and his "method" of achieving awareness of the fourth dimension by means of expansion of one's "space sense" (consciousness) must have held personal appeal for Crane because they provided an assurance of stability in the world that he needed and also offered a means of attaining that stability of vision and being for which he sought so persistently. Certainly all of us seek stability, but Crane was perhaps more sensitive, and was definitely more deprived of that sense of stability, than many people. That may have disposed him to respond more easily and favorably to Ouspensky's promise of "permanence." Ouspensky's philosophy filled

a need that for many is met by traditional religion but was not for Crane, since he was not raised in a religious household nor was he trained in orthodox religion. Because he lacked any Christian context, any traditional faith, Crane turned to what possibilities of faith he could find in his reading, and Ouspensky offered him hope, something tangible to believe in.

His early poems, for example, illustrate that search for a lasting awareness of a spiritual reality upon which he could rely. In "The Moth That God Made Blind," the moth gains a momentary vision of "harmony" but loses his insight almost immediately:

And the torrid hum of great wings was his song  
When below him he saw what his whole race had shunned--  
Great horizons and systems and shores all along  
Which blue tides of cool moons were slow shaken and sunned.

A little time only, for sight burned as deep  
As his blindness before had frozen in Hell,  
And his wings atom-withered,--gone,--left but a leap;--  
To the desert,--back,--down,--still lonely he fell (CP,  
p. 123).

The problem of the moth (symbolic of the poet) is how to retain the harmonic vision he once felt, since he finds that time moves on and denies him permanent awareness of the vision he once had. This was Crane's problem also, demonstrated in his personal life and in other poems such as "The Bridge Of Estador" and "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen." The possibility Ouspensky offered of a permanent fourth dimension which man could obtain by achieving the "higher consciousness" of the mystical element was attractive, then, to Crane because it fulfilled his need for both personal and spiritual assurance of access to the harmonic vision of which he dreamed.

The portrait which emerges from the facts of Crane's life show a person confused about the positive effects of love, but one who sought nevertheless to feel or gain an assurance or sense of stability about it that he lacked. Thus he was surely attracted to another of Ouspensky's chapters in Tertium Organum, the chapter on love, because it so emphatically declared love to be positive and creative rather than negative and debilitating. Crane had grown up tenaciously retaining his belief in love even while the events he endured marshalled against any such faith. Thus he could be "taught" by Ouspensky about love in the same sense that any good student is taught: a teacher simply articulates something which the student "knows" already but has been unable to formulate, and the student adopts the articulation as his own, as then part of himself. So Crane must have adopted Ouspensky's view of love as positive and creative because it was what he had attempted to believe throughout his life, and the articulation of such a belief was exactly what he needed to hear to more firmly establish it as his own.

Crane's own experiences of love as a "vehicle" to mystical, ecstatic sensations also paralleled Ouspensky's ideas about love. In Tertium Organum, Ouspensky says that love is the force by which the mystical enters the world, and that by means of love the new order of consciousness he envisions will become established. Crane came to feel this same thing in a couple of his love affairs; in fact, there is a surprisingly close similarity between Ouspensky's idea about love as the liberator of the "new" force of mystical,

visionary power and one of Crane's experiences of love that occurred in early 1923. He emphasized in his letters to friends about his experience that it had produced in him a productivity that had previously been absent, and, interestingly enough, that such productivity was being spent on "a synthesis of America and its structural identity . . . called The Bridge."<sup>20</sup> The Bridge, of course, was Crane's attempt to introduce the new, mystical order of consciousness into the world, which he had dreamed of doing for some time. Crane's experience of love put him into contact with the mystical forces he knew were present in the world, and such contact stimulated him to create new forms just as Ouspensky said it would. Certainly one cannot claim that Crane's reading of Tertium Organum caused him to experience love in this way; rather, the similarities indicate a striking kinship of feeling about love's power, and it is possible that Ouspensky's discussion in some way shaped Crane's form or manner of experiencing his feelings. Certainly Crane would respond positively to any book which contained an articulation of things which he felt himself, and thus he undoubtedly responded to Ouspensky's ideas about love because they were parallel to his own.

Although it is true that Tertium Organum appealed to Crane for personal and psychological reasons, it cannot be said that these were the only bases for his attraction to the book. He also responded intellectually to the book's view of contemporary society and found

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<sup>20</sup>The Letters of Hart Crane 1916-1932, Ed. Brom Weber (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), p. 127; hereafter cited as Letters in the text.

its estimation of what was needed in the world to be similar to his own view. When he reached his late teens Crane became more interested in the world about him and sought to become a part of the "booming" American cultural life. He sought, with his friends, to establish a mode of life which would counteract the negative tendencies of the growing technological society. He found life in New York, for example, quite difficult because there was little respite from the hectic pace of life there--at every moment something practical but trivial had to be dealt with. Too much activity of that sort stifled and frustrated Crane's creative spirits, and he struggled against it. He often felt depressed and "broken" because of his frustration, and in a letter to Gorham Munson in late 1921 he revealed his sinking spirits:

For myself--I [have] just finished a week's trial at selling real estate--of which, of course, I didn't sell any. Trying now to get into a bookstore to help out during the Christmas rush.

There is nothing but gall and disgust in me--and there is nothing more for me to tell you but the familiar, all-too-familiar complaints. I wish I could cultivate a more graceful mask against all this (Letters, pp. 70-71).

Crane found that his jobs, whether they were selling real estate or writing advertising copy, were not conducive to his chosen vocation as a poet. His inability to live on his earnings as a poet and his work at undemanding jobs was upsetting and draining to him.

Frustrated himself, he saw in others also a lack of time to think, feel, and observe. Apathy and a lack of depth was caused, Crane thought, by the empty "busy-ness" of people's lives which left them with little energy to pursue positive and creative ways of living.

He and his friends were challenged by the people's indifference to the idea of spiritually improving themselves and society, and they discussed the problem often. One example is a letter Crane wrote to Munson in which he expressed his concern with contemporary life:

The indifference you will encounter when you return to these states you must be prepared to face. Everyone is suddenly and enormously busy--making money, attending teas, motoring, starving--God knows what all. It makes me reel! Life is too scattered for me to savor it anymore. Probably this is only on account of my present work which demands the most frequent jerks of the imagination from one thing to another, still--the war has certainly changed things here. The question in my mind is, how much less vergigo are we to suffer in the latter whirl than we did in the first blows and commotion (Letters, p. 82).

America was changing, Crane saw, and such change was not necessarily for the best, since it fostered a scattered, directionless quality rather than purposefulness or creativity. In December of 1922 Crane spoke of the problem in a letter to his friend William Wright:

I think of New York and next summer when the present is too sharp (or is it dull!). But the main faults are not of our city alone. They are of the age. A period that is loose at all ends, without apparent direction of any sort. In some ways the most amazing age there ever was. Appalling and dull at the same time (Letters, p. 110).

Crane and his friends saw the need for a more satisfying and unifying vision of American life than was currently operative in American society. They resisted the changes brought about by technological advances not because they were unimpressed by the potential of technology to improve people's lives but because they thought that over-enthusiasm about industrialization seduced people to believe too readily in the "solidity" of the material world and

caused them to forget the spiritual qualities of life. Crane and Gorham Munson spent long hours discussing this problem, and they sought a means of achieving a union of the higher (spiritual) world with the machine-bound phenomenal world. That desire is exactly what Ouspensky's philosophy addresses.

When Ouspensky's Tertium Organum became available, Crane and his friends instantly recognized its concern with the same problem with which they had been grappling. Ouspensky had observed the effect of positivism upon the modern world: he says in his book that positivism is "no good" because it leads people to see only physical, material phenomena rather than look into the "invisible" world of the noumena, the spiritual. Ouspensky's position on this issue is one reason Crane became quite excited about the book, because, as Horton points out, it provided "corroboration" of his own thoughts:

Carried away by verbal eloquence and the sweeping conception of a spiritual union between man, nature, and machine, both Crane and Munson seem to have had a utopian vision of a new order of humanity about to arise. The idea haunted Crane's mind constantly; and when a few months later he read Ouspensky's Tertium Organum, he thought he had found impressive corroboration of it in the Russian logician's thesis of a fourth-dimensional order of consciousness in the world.<sup>21</sup>

Crane and Munson were excited about the possibility of a "new" kind of consciousness in the world which would consist of a greater awareness and acceptance of mysticism. A sense of oneness, a sense

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<sup>21</sup>Horton, pp. 135-36.

of the harmony which underlay experience, was what they thought the contemporary world lacked but sorely needed to balance or counteract the emptiness that a too-busy pace of life engendered. Thus Crane was drawn to Ouspensky's theory of a new order of consciousness because he himself had dreamed of its possibility: Ouspensky's exposition of a system corroborated Crane's own thoughts on the same subject. Additionally, Ouspensky's articulation must have helped both Crane and Munson define a subject which they were not sufficiently prepared to explore, since they were not trained as philosophers. Ouspensky systematically articulated thoughts which the two writers had not yet been able to set into a coherent and all-encompassing form.

Crane's desire for the emergence of a new order of consciousness originated not only in his awareness of the emptiness of the modern world but also in the belief that the visionary or mystical sense of man needed to be better accepted because of its great value to contemporary culture. He himself experienced mystical states, which probably created in him a predisposition to a philosophy like that of Ouspensky, whose thesis assumed the necessity and inevitability of the mystical state in the world. In the months before reading Ouspensky, Crane was beginning to see himself as a visionary:

Certainly an aura of Platonism, or better, Neo-Platonism, seemed to surround him during these months. As the summer wore on and his intoxications, both spiritual and physical, grew more frequent, Crane's sense of affinity with the visionary tradition of poetry began to emerge in the foreground of his consciousness.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Horton, p. 125.

Crane's sense of himself as a mystic was strengthened by experiences he had had in which he directly sensed a unity of harmony between spirit and matter. One of those experiences was the subject of a June, 1922 letter to Gorham Munson:

Did I tell you of that thrilling experience this last winter in the dentist's chair when under the influence of ether and amnesia my mind spiraled to a seventh heaven of consciousness and egoistic dance among the seven spheres--and something like an objective voice kept saying to me--"you have the higher consciousness--you have the higher consciousness. This is something very few have! This is what is called genius." A happiness, ecstatic such as I have known only twice in "inspirations" came over me. I felt the two worlds. And at once . . . I have known moments in eternity (Letters, pp. 91-92).

Crane's "mystical" experience of feeling the "two worlds," of knowing "moments in eternity," convinced him that he was part of a movement that was destined to establish an awareness of the mystical in this world. Therefore it is not surprising that when he read Tertium Organum a few months after writing this letter he would be attracted to Ouspensky's emphasis on and elaboration of the mystical state. Ouspensky provided a validation, a parallel, of Crane's personal experience as a visionary. In fact, he remarked on his interest in Tertium Organum for its validation of his own experience in a letter to Allen Tate in February of 1923: "I have . . . enjoyed reading Ouspensky's Tertium Organum lately. Its corroboration of several experiences in consciousness that I have had gave it particular interest" (Letters, p. 124).

Another subject discussed by Ouspensky that appealed to and perhaps shaped Crane's thoughts was that of the artist's function in

bringing the visionary capacity into people's minds. As Unterecker points out,

Ouspensky stressed the importance of the creative artist as forerunner of a new race of supermen. The artist, Ouspensky maintained, had an inkling of the world of the higher consciousness in which opposites were reconciled and creative activity was accomplished through the motive act of love.<sup>23</sup>

Ouspensky's belief in the artist's visionary function perhaps shaped Crane's own theory about the role of the artist, since Crane's belief in his own visionary capacities was quite important to him at the time he read the book. He had been seeking, in the months before learning about the book, to formulate a coherent theory of art. In January of 1922 he began to "systematize his theories"<sup>24</sup> in his conversations with friends William Sommer, William Lescaze, and Ernest Nelson. During that year he was consumed with the project of defining an "acceptable" view of art, and often he found himself at odds with the popular movements of the time. He wanted to get away from the prevailing negative attitudes about American life, "wanted to deal with modern themes in a modern manner" without being "caught up in the fashionable pessimism"<sup>25</sup> of the period. According to Unterecker, "What Crane really wanted was corroboration for a growing conviction that out of American crassness and vulgarity a new kind of art . . . was likely to arise."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Unterecker, pp. 247-48.

<sup>24</sup>Unterecker, p. 229.

<sup>25</sup>Unterecker, p. 241.

<sup>26</sup>Unterecker, p. 229.

Such corroboration was found, at least in theory, in Tertium Organum's proclamations about the emergence of a "new" purpose of art. Since by 1923 Crane felt more confident of his theory of the visionary quality of poetry, it is likely that his reading of Tertium Organum had helped in some way to reinforce and define his ideas:

By [then] Crane was completely committed to an aesthetic he and Sommer had worked out together. . . . It founded itself on an essential optimism, a celebration of life that both men shared. . . . There, beneath the disordered surface of the modern world, they looked into a coherence which gave them the courage not to deny their artist's vocation. For only the artist and the mystic, they felt, could penetrate to that ordered place--and only the artist in his structured works could reproduce for the rest of the world something of that inner world's glowing possibilities.<sup>27</sup>

Crane and Sommer often discussed the role of art in the modern world, and together they shared thoughts about reading they had done. One of the books they discussed was Tertium Organum, which strengthens the possibility that the "aesthetic" they were so committed to in early 1923 was to some degree influenced by Ouspensky's ideas. Certainly the theory they evolved is similar to Ouspensky's.

The artist's struggle with the crude and cruel debasements of American life is a subject that pervaded not only Crane's conversations with his friends but also became a major theme of his poetry. The early poem "Chaplinesque" (written in October of 1921) demonstrates Crane's preoccupation with the subject of the artist's role in the modern world and helps us to see why Crane would be so drawn to Ouspensky's approach to the same problem. "Chaplinesque" deals with

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<sup>27</sup>Unterecker, p. 270.

the attempt to avoid or redeem the "fury of the street" in favor of achieving a more feeling, more "human" existence. Crane's discussion of the poem reveals his own estimation of this subject:

Poetry, the human feelings, "the kitten," is so crowded out of the humdrum, rushing, mechanical scramble of today that the man who would preserve them must duck and camouflage for dear life to keep them or keep himself from annihilation (Letters, p. 68).

Crane felt when he wrote the poem that the artist in the modern world must be almost devious in his attempt to avoid the "humdrum" and "scramble" of city life. Although he clearly thought that such elusiveness was a less-than-ideal condition for the artist, nonetheless it appeared to be necessary. Yet he revolted against the idea of a complete separation of the artist from the world, and he sought a way to unify the two. Thus when he read Ouspensky's Tertium Organum, which spoke of the positive need and value of the artist in the contemporary world, undoubtedly Crane grabbed at the opportunity to believe in an optimistic role for the artist in society, and especially a role that could be accepted by the society for its usefulness and its valued contribution, so that the artist would not need to "duck and camouflage." Whether or not Crane successfully integrated this belief into his life from then on does not matter (indeed, he later had considerable difficulty maintaining the belief), but at least Ouspensky's justification of the artist's visionary, transformational function and necessity helped him formulate his thoughts in a more positive direction and helped him sustain his faith in the value of poetry long enough for him to write the great poem he had conceived of, The Bridge.

Although it cannot be claimed that out of the many things Crane had read Ouspensky was the most important influence on him, it is certainly clear that Crane found in Ouspensky a kinship, a similarity of thought and feeling, that helped him to reinforce or define his own thoughts on subjects that were important to him.<sup>28</sup> Crane's personal need for a sense of stability or security found in Ouspensky a philosophical assurance of a permanent, "eternal" dimension of man's existence that would supply him with grounds for optimism that security was indeed to be found in the world. Also, Crane's personal experiences of love as a tremendously liberating force that unleashed the mystical sense into the world found a parallel in Ouspensky's discussion of love as the creative force that would usher in a new order of consciousness in people's lives. Ouspensky also presented his belief that the modern world needed a dose of spirituality, which Crane responded to because of his own

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<sup>28</sup>R.W.B. Lewis claims in his book The Poetry of Hart Crane: A Critical Study that everything Crane read in Ouspensky he also read in Blake, and therefore he thinks that Blake was the stronger influence. Although it is likely that Crane was heavily impressed and formed by Blake, however, it is also a fact that he was enthusiastic about Ouspensky because of some very particular things that he could not have found in Blake. For example, Crane would have found similar ideas about the importance of the visionary capacities of the artist in both Blake and Ouspensky, but he would not have found in Blake as specific a concern with the problems of the modern world (e.g., the effects of positivism) as he saw in Ouspensky. Thus I think that Crane was probably indebted to Ouspensky for specific contexts in which to work with his ideas: because he was very much interested in improving American life, Ouspensky's philosophy, which was designed to be applicable to the problems of the modern world, would have been more timely and thus somewhat more immediately relevant to Crane's position.

estimation that the "crass" materialism of American life needed to be redeemed and made tolerable by the infusion of the spiritual, visionary sense into people's minds.

Ouspensky's philosophy was not the only one to which Crane responded positively. It was, however, the best synthesis of "religious" belief, mystical consciousness, and material fact that he found. He had also read Whitehead's Science and the Modern World, whose organic naturalism "confirmed Whitman" and "freed him from dependence on the superstitions of materialistic naturalism."<sup>29</sup> What Crane was searching for, however, was a system of meaning that went beyond even that of Whitehead's, and Ouspensky offered in addition a mystical, optimistic counterbalance to the spirit of positivism, materialism, and naturalism that Crane perceived as dominant at that time.

One way of understanding Crane's attraction to Ouspensky's Tertium Organum is to see it as the opposite of his dislike for Spengler's Decline of the West. As Waggoner observes,

Spengler . . . was simply the expression for Crane of the negation of the myth for which he was groping. For Crane, Spengler summed up the essentials of modern pessimistic naturalism. . . . Spengler was the label Crane attached to his doubts.<sup>30</sup>

Spengler offered a pessimistic view of the potential for creative growth and establishment of the Whitmanian spirit in America which

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<sup>29</sup>Waggoner, p. 168.

<sup>30</sup>Waggoner, p. 170.

Crane longed for so intensely. And, although Crane was often beset by doubts that the vision he hoped for could become reality,<sup>31</sup> he chose to believe in Ouspensky, who offered a positive method by which that vision could be attained. It is not unnatural that Crane should have chosen the optimistic rather than the pessimistic, Spenglerian attitude, since he possessed a great and sensitive spirit which actively sought creative synthesis, not despair and doubt.

All of these parallels and similarities do not alone adequately define the nature of Ouspensky's influence on Crane. Nonetheless, the subjects treated here indicate the grounds on which Crane probably responded to Ouspensky; they show that Crane had ample reason for feeling an alliance with the philosophy set forth in Tertium Organum. And, it becomes conceivable, given the extent of the parallels between Crane and Ouspensky, that Crane would "borrow" ideas presented in Tertium Organum, that his thoughts would be partly defined and formed in response to Ouspensky's articulations. It is quite natural that Crane would use, in his own way, the ideas that he got from Ouspensky, since one of his goals was to establish a community or tradition of thought and vision. Ouspensky's method constitutes the most concrete influence that he had on Crane. The ways in which Crane applied Ouspensky's theories of time and space as the means of attaining the new order of consciousness in his

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<sup>31</sup>Crane's doubts and their effects on his poetry are the subject of Waggoner's essay, Winters' articles, and several other studies of Crane.

poetry, particularly in The Bridge, are where his indebtedness to Tertium Organum can best be seen, and it is to that discussion that I shall now turn.

### CHAPTER III

#### CRANE'S APPLICATION OF OUSPENSKY IN THE BRIDGE

Many of the reasons Crane felt an affinity with Ouspensky have now been established. He read Tertium Organum at a time when he needed corroboration, articulation, and justification of his thoughts about himself, the world about him, and his poetry. Tertium Organum played a key role in shaping Crane's thought, not because it was the only system with which he felt a kinship, but because it paralleled so many of his own ideas and reinforced the ideals he was so valiantly trying to believe in. Crane's most important debt to Ouspensky, however, has not yet been discussed, because it extends beyond its personal, intellectual or mystical corroboration of his experience--it is a subject which Crane handled directly in The Bridge, the major poem of his career. That subject is space, time, and consciousness, which was central to Ouspensky's book, and which came to occupy an important position in Crane's poetry.

It is likely that Crane paid careful attention to the parts of Ouspensky's book that discussed the theories of space, time, and consciousness, although that probability has often been overlooked by critics who have considered the extent of Ouspensky's influence on Crane. (One critic, however, Glauco Cambon, is a notable exception to the general blindness on this point. He recognizes that Crane "absorbed Einstein's ideas [of four-dimensional space] through the

visionary mediation of Ouspensky."<sup>32</sup>) Crane probably discussed the ideas about space and time that Tertium Organum sets forth with his friend Bill Sommer, with whom he frequently discussed artistic and philosophical issues. Unterecker reports that Sommer "carefully copied out a dramatic presentation of a four-dimensional world"<sup>33</sup> given by Ouspensky in his section on time, space, and consciousness. The passage Sommer copied has already been referred to in Chapter I; it is the discussion of the snail as an illustration of the concept of the fourth dimension:

The snail feels the line as space, i.e., as something constant. It feels the rest of the world as time, i.e., as something eternally moving. . . . Every being feels as space that which, by the aid of his space-sense, he is able to represent to himself in form . . . (Tertium Organum, p. 100).

It is likely that Crane and Sommer discussed the passage at length, for it was their practice to bring to one another ideas they encountered in their reading. The fact is that Crane was interested in Ouspensky's ideas about time and space, and was not merely drawn to Ouspensky's mysticism, as some have claimed. That interest is demonstrated in The Bridge, which gives more direct attention to the subject of time, space, and consciousness than any of Crane's earlier poetry. Also, the ways in which Crane handles the subject--the ways

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<sup>32</sup>Cambon, p. 141. Cambon discusses the importance of images of time and space in the poem, and my approach is similar to his in that respect. However, he does not discuss the specific structural paradigm that I do; also, he does not make any direct connection between the use of time and space in The Bridge and Ouspensky's book.

<sup>33</sup>Unterecker, p. 267.

that it is integrated into the poem--are so similar to Ouspensky's formulation that it is difficult not to recognize the existence of Ouspensky's influence on Crane's treatment. The chief influence is seen in Crane's use of Ouspensky's idea that man's consciousness is the only true locus of action or knowledge; also, Crane uses Ouspensky's method of achieving a consciousness of a higher dimension of reality: he applies, as a structural principle of The Bridge, the theory that by expanding the space-sense and diminishing the time sense the permanence of one's visions can be grasped rather than be whisked away by time.

Before I begin discussing how Ouspensky's influence is demonstrated in The Bridge, my approach to the poem should be clarified. As mentioned in the Introduction, there exists a good deal of controversy about whether or not The Bridge is a unified work and about what the "subject" of the poem is. Yvor Winters, R. P. Blackmur, and Allen Tate,<sup>34</sup> among others, claim that the poem is a failure (though, they say, a magnificent one), that it is not a unified work, and that Crane's subject is the "myth of America." Although their judgments have held sway for quite some time, other approaches to The Bridge have been suggested which challenge that initial critical response. L. S. Dembo, Thomas Vogler, John Unterecker, Stanley Coffman, Glauco Cambon, and Roger Ramsey<sup>35</sup> are a

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<sup>34</sup>Yvor Winters, "The Significance of The Bridge . . .," and "The Progress of Hart Crane"; R. P. Blackmur, Language as Gesture; Tate, Reactionary Essays.

<sup>35</sup>L. S. Dembo, Hart Crane's Sanskrit Charge (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960); Thomas Vogler, Preludes to Vision

few of the critics who have set forth what seem to me more useful and positive approaches which demonstrate a unity of form and purpose in the poem.

One critic, Roger Ramsey, provides a clear view of the essential differences between the two critical approaches. He says that the critics who label the poem as a failure generally require of it an Aristotelian form: they see it as a product rather than a process, as a "story" with objective, fictional forms and "cathartic effect."<sup>36</sup> Such a view makes assumptions about the poem which its structure and purpose are not designed to fulfill. That is, the Aristotelian approach to the poem's form requires of it a continuity of narrative, an objectivity which the poem cannot fulfill because it is not meant to. Ramsey says that the more satisfactory approach to The Bridge is Longinian, which sees a work as process rather than product, as a "'series of ecstatic moments or points of expanding apprehension.'"<sup>37</sup> Approaching the poem from such a point of view eliminates the need "to complain of incoherent narrative or inconsistent 'myth,'" Ramsey says.<sup>38</sup>

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(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 142-196; John Unterecker, "The Architecture of The Bridge," in Hart Crane: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 80-96; Stanley Coffman, "Symbolism in The Bridge," PMLA 66 (March 1957), pp. 65-77; Glauco Cambon, The Inclusive Flame; Roger Ramsey, "A Poetics for The Bridge," Twentieth-Century Literature 26 (Fall 1980), pp. 278-293.

<sup>36</sup>Ramsey, p. 279.

<sup>37</sup>Northrop Frye, quoted in Ramsey, p. 279.

<sup>38</sup>Ramsey, p. 280.

This approach is essentially the same as that presented by Glauco Cambon in his essay on Crane in The Inclusive Flame:

"Once the framework of logical narrative continuity has been exploded, and expanding association of themes becomes the sole source of form, the poem can take shape only as an 'expanding universe.'"<sup>39</sup> Cambon says that in such an inclusive, expansive form the "proper locus of action is . . . the objectified consciousness of the poet,"<sup>40</sup> which parallels Ramsey's approach, which expects of the poem moments of ecstasy in which "the poem, the poet, and the reader . . . become one."<sup>41</sup> Crane's own statements about poetry support Ramsey's and Cambon's judgments. For example, Crane said to Gorham Munson that poetry is

the concrete evidence of the experience of a recognition (knowledge if you like). It can give you a ratio of fact and experience, and in this sense it is both perception and thing perceived. . . . [It] may well give you the real connective experience, the very "sign manifest" on which rests the assumption of a godhead (Letters, p. 237).

This approach clearly sees poetry as requiring the participation of the reader's consciousness (which is the Longinian approach discussed by Frye and Ramsey), and also as having as its subject consciousness, psychic experience, perception. More importantly, not only is poetry's subject the consciousness, but it is also meant to recreate

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<sup>39</sup>Cambon, p. 128.

<sup>40</sup>Cambon, p. 129.

<sup>41</sup>Ramsey, p. 282.

an experience, to give "concrete evidence" of an experience of recognition achieved by means of the working of the consciousness.

Others, too, have diverged from the approach which demands a coherent "myth" from The Bridge. L. S. Dembo, for example, states that

The Bridge is not a naive attempt to set up a national myth based on technology for its own sake, but an account of the exiled poet's quest for a logos in which the Absolute that he has known in his imagination will be made intelligible to the world. As that logos, the Bridge is neither a god nor a myth unto itself; rather it "lends a myth to God," or is the myth by which the Absolute makes itself understood in the modern world: it is the new embodiment of the Word. . . .<sup>42</sup>

My own approach to The Bridge falls in line with those of Ramsey, Cambon, and Dembo, for it seems clear that to judge the poem on the basis of Crane's supposed intention to create a "myth of America," as he stated in his letters, is to miss what the poem itself presents. Winters, Blackmur, and Tate were led astray, I think, by their assumption that Crane's own comments about the poem were the best clues to its "meaning"; the poem itself, however, forces me to conclude that these earlier critics have ignored an important dimension of the poem. It is not an objective "myth," a coherent, fixed answer to the problems of contemporary American society; rather, it embodies an attempt to achieve a vision of the higher consciousness, the sense of the eternal or Absolute, within the modern world. It is an attempt to embody a paradoxical experience of being both in time and beyond time, an experience like that which Crane felt in the dentist's chair

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<sup>42</sup>L. S. Dembo, pp. 9-10.

in the Winter of 1921, an experience like that reported by Mircea Eliade in his book The Two and the One. Eliade quotes the account of an experience of a man named W. L. Wilmhurst, who said:

"I saw from all parts of my being simultaneously, not from my eyes only. Yet for all this intensified perceptive power there was . . . no loss of touch with my physical surroundings, no suspension of my faculties of sense. . . . I felt happiness and peace--beyond words."<sup>43</sup>

Crane's goal in The Bridge is to express the experience of "being aware of himself and at the same time absorbed in the whole,"<sup>44</sup> as Eliade describes it. Such experience is, Eliade says, a feeling of

the paradox of a mode of existence both in time and out of time, a sort of coincidentia oppositorum. The writer is aware of being himself and at the same time absorbed in the whole, he enjoys simultaneously a personal consciousness and a consciousness that transcends personality; and at the same time an ontological centre is revealed to him, an Urgrund where contraries are reconciled.<sup>45</sup>

The Bridge embodies an attempt to express such a feeling; and it attempts not just the expression but the re-creation of that feeling--it is, as Ramsey says, a poem of "ritualized ecstasy,"<sup>46</sup> whose purpose "is not to make something other but to invite participation . . . the poem, the poet, and the reader must become

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<sup>43</sup>Quoted in Mircea Eliade, The Two and the One, trans. J. M. Cohen (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1969), p. 70.

<sup>44</sup>Eliade, p. 72.

<sup>45</sup>Eliade, p. 72.

<sup>46</sup>Ramsey, p. 280.

one"<sup>47</sup> in this experience of the higher dimension, the higher consciousness.

Crane explains this purpose in his essay "General Aims and Theories":

[The poem's] evocation will not be toward decoration or amusement, but rather toward a state of consciousness. . . . In this condition there may be discoverable under new forms certain spiritual illuminations. . . . It is as though a poem gave the reader as he left it a single, new word, never before spoken and impossible to actually enunciate, but self-evident as an active principle in the reader's consciousness henceforward (CP, pp. 220-21).

Crane's stated intention is to invite the reader to participate in the poem, so that through the union of poem, poet, and reader a "new," spiritual state of consciousness can be achieved. In The Bridge, for example, the poet seeks to attain an awareness of "a myth to God" ("Proem"); the bridge itself, which becomes a representation of an act of consciousness [that of spanning, as in "the imagination spans beyond despair" ("Faustus and Helen"), and as in "The very idea of a bridge . . . is an act of faith besides being a communication" (Letters, p. 261)], leaps toward the "myth" in the closing lines of the "Atlantis" section:

So to thine Everpresence, beyond time,  
Like spears ensanguined of one tolling star  
That bleeds infinity--the orphic strings,  
Sidereal phalanxes, leap and converge:  
--One Song, one Bridge of Fire! (CP, p. 117).

The "orphic strings" (the cables of the literal structure) of the bridge leap toward the radiant "Everpresence" which exists "beyond

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<sup>47</sup>Ramsey, p. 282.

time," which is the action of the human consciousness "leaping" toward a vision of eternity, harmony, and love: this is the true subject and goal of the poem.

I have spent this time defining my approach to The Bridge because it seems to me to be the most fruitful and the most adequate one by which to deal with the complexities of the poem. It, therefore, needs to be emphasized in order to counteract the negative effects of the approach taken by Winters, Blackmur, and others. But it also helps one to see more clearly how Ouspensky's ideas are used in the poem.

For example, one must accept The Bridge as embodying an act of consciousness, rather than as an objective expression of a narrative or myth, in order to see that Ouspensky's influence on Crane lies partly in Crane's use of his idea that the consciousness is the only true focus, the only true subject, because it is one of the only things of which we really can be certain. Ouspensky says in Tertium Organum:

But what do we know?

We know that with the very first awakening of knowledge, man is confronted by two facts:

The existence of the world in which he lives; and the existence of psychic life in himself . . . (i.e. of sensations, perceptions, conceptions, reasoning, feeling, desires).

Neither of these can he prove or disprove, but they are facts; they constitute reality for him (Tertium Organum, pp. 8-9).

Because these are the only two things we really know, we must rely as closely as possible upon our consciousness, which combines both of these facts, for our knowledge about our world. The consciousness

determines and defines what is "real" for us. Crane indicated his awareness that consciousness is a subject requiring attention in a letter to his benefactor, Otto Kahn, in which he said, "I am really writing an epic of the modern consciousness, and indescribably complicated factors have to be resolved and blended" (Letters, p. 308). Also, in an outline written early in the years-long process of his composition of The Bridge, Crane defined the final section of the poem (which was then labeled "The Bridge" rather than "Atlantis") as "A sweeping dithyramb in which the Bridge becomes the symbol of consciousness spanning time and space" (Letters, p. 241). Clearly this was of central importance to his original idea of the poem.

Although it cannot be claimed with certainty that Crane was made aware of the importance of consciousness in defining or shaping reality by his reading of Ouspensky, it is certain at least that Ouspensky offered corroboration and articulation of this subject. It is possible, however, that the idea that the forms of human perception actually structure our reality, and that by the development of the consciousness man can achieve the "higher dimension" was gained by reading Ouspensky. We know that Crane applies these ideas in his poetry after he had read Tertium Organum; before that time he makes no reference to the central importance of the consciousness' role in shaping reality and of its role in "solving" the problem of achieving a lasting sense of a vision of the everlasting. Before reading Ouspensky he had grappled with that problem, and was in fact dealing with it in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," which he

was writing when he read Tertium Organum. Ouspensky's book gave Crane some fresh ideas about how to handle the subject more successfully in his poetry.

One fresh idea that Crane received from Ouspensky was that "the transition into a new phase of consciousness is impossible without the expansion of the space-sense" (Tertium Organum, p. 304). Crane was very much interested in firmly establishing a "new" kind of consciousness which he felt emerging in the world, one which included an awareness of the spiritual quality or dimension, but he had found it difficult to "translate" his desire into actual fact. In "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," for example, he expressed his desire to establish his vision of beauty in the twentieth-century world, where:

Across the stacked partitions of the day--  
Across the memoranda, baseball scores,  
The stenographic smiles and stock quotations  
Smutty wings flash out equivocations (CP, p. 27).

The poet seeks to find Helen (eternal beauty) within this mundane and materialistic world:

And yet, suppose some evening I forgot  
The fare and transfer, yet got by that way  
Without recall,--lost yet poised in traffic.  
Then I might find your eyes across an aisle,  
Still flickering with those prefigurations--  
Prodigal, yet uncontested now,  
Half-riant before the jerky window frame.

There is some way, I think, to touch  
Those hands of yours that count the nights  
Stippled with pink and green advertisements (CP, p. 28).

The poet dreams of meeting Helen's eyes within the crowd on a subway, her eyes full of the "prefigurations" of the beauty he desires.

However, although his vision is strong, he is incapable of fusing it with the destructive, war-torn, machine-ridden world, and thus is left only with his original desire, no fulfillment in sight. He remains hopeful that his desire can be achieved, but as yet he does not know how that will be accomplished, and thus all he has is his imagination. The poem ends on an optimistic note, but it is nonetheless an expression of desire, not of fulfillment:

Distinctly praise the years, whose volatile  
Blamed bleeding hands extend and thresh the height  
The imagination spans beyond despair,  
Outpacing bargain, vocable and prayer (CP, p. 33).

Although his imagination can span beyond despair, the poet has not succeeded in completely fusing the vision of eternal beauty with the world that causes such despair. Thus the poet finds himself again, as in earlier poems (such as "Possessions" and "The Moth that God Made Blind"), waiting for and seeking out the way to join the vision he holds with a world that seems particularly resistant to such a fusion.

While finishing "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," Crane read Ouspensky's Tertium Organum, and there he discovered that way or method for which he had been seeking. Ouspensky's discussion of time and space as "the forms of our receptivity . . . the prism through which we regard the world" (Tertium Organum, p. 11) suggested to Crane a new way of handling the problem. Since, as Ouspensky says, space and time are "signal posts, signs put up by ourselves because we cannot picture the external world without their help [,] . . . the graphics by which we represent the world to ourselves" (Tertium

Organum, p. 11), they are the means by which we can change our consciousness. Ouspensky says in his book that "the transition into a new phase of consciousness is impossible without the expansion of the space-sense" (Tertium Organum, p. 304), and Crane studied with interest Ouspensky's method of achieving that "new phase." He found that if we can alter our consciousness to include an awareness of a higher dimension, then we will have succeeded in joining that vision with the present; it is the structure of our minds that must be transformed in order to achieve a lasting sense of vision.

Since Crane was interested in the way that the forms of our perception shape our reality and in how we can change our perception to create a "new" reality, Ouspensky's philosophy gave him exactly what he had been looking for. Crane accepted Ouspensky's idea that space and time are the forms or structures of our awareness and the idea that by manipulating or altering our perceptions we achieve a more permanent sense of the "higher consciousness." Thus he set out to apply these ideas within his poetry, and indeed did so in The Bridge.

The first evidence that Crane applied Ouspensky's ideas in The Bridge is that the poem contains a more abundant, consistent, and pervasive use of images of time and space than any of his previous poetry. For example, in nearly every section of the poem there are direct and indirect references to time; in fact, only two of the sections, "Southern Cross" and "National Winter Garden," do not contain any clear reference to or image of time. In every other part

of the poem a reference of some kind is made to time. Examples are abundant: in "The Harbor Dawn," one of the poems in the section "Powhatan's Daughter," the notes which accompany the verses illustrate the role that time plays in vivifying the lasting, creative vision which the poet seeks. First, time "recalls" the poet from sleep and fantasy to the actual world and to his love: living in time allows the poet the possibility of finding the "love" of which he dreams:

400 years and  
more . . . or is  
it from the  
soundless shore  
of sleep that  
time

recalls you to  
your love,  
there in a  
waking dream  
to merge  
your seed  
--with whom?

Who is the  
woman with  
us in the  
dawn? . . .  
whose is the  
flesh our feet  
have moved  
upon? (CP, pp. 55 and 57).

The poet dreams of "Pocahuntus," "Powhatan's Daughter," who represents his vision of America: she represents the vision of life in America which he would like to create, the life which includes an awareness and permanent possession of the higher, spiritual dimension. He would like to "merge his seed," his dream, with her

"flesh," her actuality, and therefore join vision to reality. As the note demonstrates, the poet seeks to make real that fusion of dream and "flesh" in time, in real life, since otherwise the vision will not have significance or permanence.

The immediately following reference to time occurs in the next few lines of the notes. The "woman" whom the poet seeks is actually "time's truant"--she defies or transcends time:

Streets spread  
past store and  
factory--sped  
by sunlight  
and her  
smile . . . .

Like Memory,  
she is time's  
truant, shall  
take you by  
the hand . . . (CP, p. 55).

These lines make clear that the woman whom the poet seeks is actually "out of time," and therefore she is an ideal which he seeks to realize in time. He seeks to possess the ideal that the woman represents, possess it so completely that he could name it, give identity to it, make it tangible, "living." His search must be performed within time, but the quality of experience he is looking for is distinctly timeless, eternal.

Many other images of time and space are present in The Bridge; some call direct attention to the fact that the subject of time and space is important, even central, to the poem. For example, in "The River" Crane defines particular images as representing space and time: time is represented by the serpent, and space by the eagle:

Papooses crying on the wind's long mane  
 Screamed redskin dynasties that fled the brain,  
 Dead echoes! But I knew her body there,  
 Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark,  
 And space, an eaglet's wing, laid on her hair (CP, p. 66).

In his discussion of this passage, R.W.B. Lewis admits his uncertainty about its meaning. He realizes that the poet is attempting to achieve a "certain kind of perception: the perception of all time and space,"<sup>48</sup> but he is unable to grasp, he says, the meaning of the references to time and space: "I remain uneasy with those symbols and that image."<sup>49</sup> It is understandable that Lewis is uncertain about the specific images Crane uses to represent time and space, but nonetheless they are used consistently throughout the poem. Therefore, the subject requires some attention, which Glauco Cambon realizes in his analysis of the poem. He recognizes that

The snake is time, as the eagle (or hawk, or seagull, or airplane) is Space; and the two motifs punctuate the whole poem, finally to combine in the last lines of the epilogue ("The serpent with the eagle in the leaves . . .") . . . . Time is change, like the skin-sloughing snake; space is eagle wing and eagle eye, it is flight, dominion, comprehensive presence, perennialness. . . . [T]he poet . . . seeks [in his vision] to master time and space, death and life.<sup>50</sup>

Others, too, have addressed the subject in their analyses. Thomas Vogler discusses the river as a symbol of time in his comments about "The River" section:

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<sup>48</sup>Lewis, p. 302.

<sup>49</sup>Lewis, p. 302.

<sup>50</sup>Cambon, pp. 147-48.

The remainder of the section is an elaboration of the force of time, identified with the River which carries with it all the "Damp tonnage and alluvial march of days," as it flows over Desoto's bones, past the whole history of the continent, to the sea.<sup>51</sup>

The hoboes in this section, Vogler says, are isolated from the flow of time: "[They] know time in a cyclical, seasonal sense. But they lack the more imaginative vision of time as the River, time moving forward bearing everything with it toward a final end."<sup>52</sup> Thus Vogler explains how Crane uses time (and does likewise for the space motif) within the poem. Several critics address the subject, but Vogler's is one of the more satisfying treatments to be found. However, none have observed that Crane is dealing with the subject of time and space in a very particular way--the way he learned from Ouspensky's Tertium Organum. Glauco Cambon comes closest to viewing the use of time and space in The Bridge as following a certain identifiable pattern, but he also does not make the connection to Ouspensky that would clarify Crane's use of time and space in the poem.

Ouspensky says that space is a property of our consciousness, that the dimensions of the world depend on the constitution of our psychic apparatus. We create the world, he claims, because the world which we "see" is simply a manifestation of the forms of our consciousness (Tertium Organum, p. 10). Therefore, should we wish

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<sup>51</sup>Vogler, p. 161.

<sup>52</sup>Vogler, p. 161.

to create a "new" world, to attain a new vision, we must change the forms of our consciousness. Specifically, he says, we must expand our space-sense, the ability to represent things in form, so that we can objectify, give form (and thus permanence) to the vision we wish to attain (Tertium Organum, p. 100). Also, our time-sense (of things as moving, changing) must be diminished in order to allow for the space-sense to "take over" (Tertium Organum, p. 105).

Crane employs this idea in The Bridge. The poem's attempts to create lasting evidence (representation) of his vision of the absolute and of spirituality are enacted by changes of the space-sense and the time-sense. The vision the poet seeks is steadily approached as the poem moves from beginning to end, and as the poem develops an expansion or conquest of space and a concomitant diminishing of the time-sense (to a point at which it is more equal in magnitude and can therefore be fused with the space-sense) occur.

That such changes are structurally important in the poem is alluded to by its epigraph: "From going to and fro in the earth, / and from walking up and down in it." The action suggested by these lines is a conquest of space--to go "to and fro" and "up and down" is to move within the dimensions of space, to explore and expand one's spatial sense. Another indication of the importance of the space-sense in the poem is given in the final lines of the Proem:

O sleepless as the river under thee,  
Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod,  
Unto us lowliest sometime sweep, descend,  
And of the curvship lend a myth to God (CP, p. 46).

The poet implores the bridge, which is to become a "symbol" of consciousness, of the act of the imagination spanning and joining material and spiritual realities, to "sweep, descend," which is action of conquering, mastering space. The phrase "of the curveship lend a myth to God" suggests that the curveship--the spanning of space, the extension of power and grace in spatial form--will actually help achieve or identify the "myth to God," the vision of the absolute, which is the poem's major purpose. It is the consciousness' act of expanding the space-sense, of gaining a firmer, better represented form by which to objectify the vision, the higher reality it seeks, that is the subject of the poem. Waggoner, too, sees the curveship "as an important clue to the meaning and purpose of The Bridge":

The shape of the bridge is that of a promise; incomplete, demanding completion . . . , it unites vitality and form into a highly evocative symbol. . . . [T]he Poem has prepared us for a work which will celebrate man's conquest of space. . . . Crane has forged a unity, so that all things, bridge, knowledge that made it possible, even the darkness in which the shadow of the bridge attains its only clarity, point to one end: the symbol of man's completion of the curve, the final word in the poem, God.<sup>53</sup>

Thus the structure of the poem is built upon the action of spanning, the act of conquering or expanding the space-sense in order to articulate the poet's vision of the fusing of spiritual and material reality.

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<sup>53</sup>Waggoner, pp. 171, 173.

Glauco Cambon's interpretation of the poem's purpose also emphasizes the importance of space and time as a means of achieving the permanence the poet seeks:

One of the important aspects of The Bridge is the effort to perceive time spatially, for space is the realm of permanence. . . . Thus the bridge is grasped from the very start as a voyage, a spatially realized and ever-present act of spanning; a dynamized object, an arrested, perpetuated temporal gesture.<sup>54</sup>

Cambon recognizes that the bridge "reveals itself as the divine archetype of poetical consciousness, soaring to span in all its sleepless curve river, sea, and prairie, namely all of the world in space, all of time's order."<sup>55</sup>

This act of bridging, spanning, or conquering space is exactly what Ouspensky says is necessary in order to achieve consciousness of the higher dimension. In the conclusion to Tertium Organum he quotes the words of the apostle Paul, and concludes that his own philosophy is essentially the same as Paul's. The passage he quotes is as follows:

. . . That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height (Tertium Organum, p. 303).

Ouspensky interprets "the breadth and length and depth and height" to which Paul refers as "the comprehension of space" (Tertium

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<sup>54</sup>Cambon, p. 167.

<sup>55</sup>Cambon, p. 133.

Organum, p. 303), and states that thus "we know that the comprehension of the mysteries of space is the beginning of the higher comprehension" (Tertium Organum, p. 303). Ouspensky surmises that Paul knew what he himself has learned, that "the transition into a new phase of consciousness is impossible without the expansion of the space-sense" (Tertium Organum, p. 304). The higher consciousness, which Crane calls "a myth to God" in the Proem to The Bridge, is achieved by "the growth of the space-sense . . . proceeding at the expense of the time-sense" (Tertium Organum, p. 105). Crane indicates that the conquest or expansion of the space-sense ("going to and fro in the earth/and moving up and down in it") is a means of achieving the "myth to God" in The Bridge, and thus he adapts an idea he borrowed from Ouspensky as a structural principle of his poem.

Throughout The Bridge, a gradual expansion of the space-sense and a reduction of the time-sense occur and these movements coincide with the poet's coming closer and closer to achieving and articulating the vision he seeks to embody in the poem. An examination of the sections of the poem will demonstrate how Crane uses Ouspensky's idea to achieve his own vision.

In "Ave Maria" Columbus prays that he will be able to articulate the vision of the "New World" that he has seen, but he finds that the passing of time leaves him increasingly unable to translate what he has seen from being a nebulous vision to an actual "fact," representable in form, tangible in substance. In this

section of The Bridge time is dominant: Columbus is at the mercy of the power of change to take away his vision. The opening stanzas of the poem illustrate the weakness or the inadequacy of Columbus' space-sense to retain the vision:

Be with me, Luis de San Angel, now--  
 Witness before the tides can wrest away  
 The word I bring, O you who reined my suit  
 Into the Queen's great heart that doubtful day,  
 For I have seen now what no perjured breath  
 Of clown nor sage can riddle or gainsay;--  
 To you, too, Juan Perez, whose counsel fear  
 And greed adjourned,--I bring you back Cathay!

Here waves climb into dusk on gleaming mail;  
 Invisible valves of the sea,--locks, tendons  
 Crested and creeping, troughing corridors  
 That fall back yawning to another plunge.  
 Slowly the sun's red caravel drops light  
 Once more behind us. . . . It is morning there--  
 O where our Indian emperies lie revealed,  
 Yet lost, all, let this keel one instant yield! (CP, p. 49).

Columbus calls on two partisans of his quest to help him again; he calls on their spirits of faith, on their trust in him to complete his journey. He fears, however, that he will be unable to utter the "word," the proof of the vision he has seen, because the tides may wrest it away. That is, the passing of time (suggested by the coming and going of the tides) may prove stronger than he, and he may yet lose his vision.

In this stanza there is an up and down movement in space, which suggests change and loss: "Here waves climb into dusk" and "fall back yawning to another plunge," and "the sun's red caravel drops light / once more behind us." Each time upward and downward movements occur they are associated with loss and failure: the sun's

light drops behind Columbus and takes with it another day that brings him farther away from the "Cathay" he has seen. The waves rise and fall, but no meaning can be wrested or gained from them; they represent the indifferent and unyielding onward movement of time. This rising and falling movement in space which brings only failure because of its incompleteness recalls the bedlamite in the Proem who also fails because of an imperfect space-sense:

Out of some subway scuttle, cell or loft  
A bedlamite speeds to thy parapets,  
Tilting there momentarily, shrill shirt ballooning,  
A jest falls from the speechless caravan (CP, p. 45).

The bedlamite cannot hold himself steady; thus he tilts and sways, as if at the mercy of the wind. He is like Columbus, who waits in an in-between, insecure state at the mercy of the tides and time. The last stanza emphasizes time's dominance in keeping him from articulating the "word" of his vision:

White toil of heaven's cordons, mustering  
In holy rings all sails charged to the far  
Hushed gleaming fields and pendant seething wheat  
Of knowledge,--round thy brows unhooded now  
--The kindled Crown! acceded of the poles  
And biassed by full sails, meridians reel  
Thy purpose--still one shore beyond desire! (CP, p. 51).

The meridians of the earth which he crosses while traversing the ocean leave Columbus as yet unfulfilled. He still hears the "sounding heel" of Elohim, but cannot yet articulate his experience, because time still dominates his days; his space-sense is not adequately developed to express the wonderful vision he has witnessed.

In "The Harbor Dawn" another in-between state is evoked, with a subtle suggestion that progress toward achieving the desired vision is being made. In this section time is not as dominant as in "Ave Maria," and the space-sense is more firmly located in a concrete place, thus achieving more power, greater immediacy. The poet has now "landed"--he is at the shore, the harbor, whereas he (Columbus was the poet's persona) was at sea before. He is now located in a more stable, concrete place, which metaphorically suggests the strengthening of his space-sense. He is still at the mercy, somewhat, of time, since it is time that "recalls [him] to [his] love" (CP, p. 55), and the sense of beginning a new day is very strong in the poem. Here, however, time's movement is not associated with unfulfillment; rather, it is an agent of promise, suggesting completion, realization of the poet's dream. The poet longs to "merge his seed" with the visionary woman of whom he dreams:

your hands within my hands are deeds;  
 my tongue upon your throat--singing  
 arms close; eyes wide, undoubtful  
                   dark  
                   drink the dawn--  
 a forest shudders in your hair! (CP, p. 56).

This is his dream of fulfillment, and the day's beginning brings him hope of realizing it:

The window goes blond slowly. Frostily clears.  
 From Cyclopean towers across Manhattan waters  
 --Two--three bright window-eyes aglitter, disk  
 The sun, released--aloft with cold gulls hither.

The fog leans, one last moment on the sill.  
 Under the mistletoe of dreams, a star--  
 As though to join us at some distant hill--  
 Turns in the waking west and goes to sleep (CP, p. 56).

The sun's upward movement in space coincides with the beginning of a new day, thus suggesting a joining of time and space. The new day brings promise, hope of achieving the desired vision, which suggests that it is the fusing of time and space that enables such fulfillment. The poet's space-sense is still not absolutely clear, however. His ability to represent his vision in form is still impaired or inadequate, which is indicated by the fact that "The fog leans one last moment on the sill," the air is still cold, frosty, and the star, which represents the joining of his dream with reality, "Turns in the waking west and goes to sleep." The vision is not yet ready to "awaken," and thus it is obscured by sleep. In this section, however, the poet's sense of place is much stronger than in the previous section, and that strength allows him partially to articulate (represent) his vision.

The following section, "Van Winkle," stresses the poet's imaginative movement backward in time in an effort to recapture something that is lacking or something he has not previously understood. He uses time here to explore his past; thus time is not dominant--he is not at its mercy. Also, as Cambon points out, Van Winkle is "Crane's own poetry, committed to the exciting game of jumping backward and forward in time with a continuous change of perspective: another projection of the bridge as a spanner of time."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Cambon, p. 145.

The poet attempts to delve backward in time to the past to recover a moment of vision, to remember a previous intimation of the vision he now seeks to embody permanently. He seeks to remember because his vision is in danger of being overcome not by time, now, but by the expansion of space:

Macadam, gun-grey as the tunny's belt,  
Leaps from Far Rockaway to Golden Gate (CP, p. 58).

Cambon's gloss is helpful:

[Van Winkle] is . . . modern America feverishly growing from year to year without realizing the extent of its growth, lunging to devour space with a thousand highways.<sup>57</sup>

In this section it is the too-rapid expansion of the space-sense that endangers articulation of the vision, because the exhilaration and ecstatic power that such expansion brings fosters forgetfulness, unawareness of time. The poet suggests that he is like Van Winkle who has "forgotten" time and allowed America to grow uncontrollably without awareness of a sustaining, underlying vision of meaning. The effect of his forgetfulness is to leave him in another of those in-between states, observed in earlier sections. The time-sense is forced to return to the past (rather than help in the progress towards achievement of the vision) and the space-sense now dominates too vulgarly. Van Winkle (the poet) feels as if he is nowhere, unidentified:

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<sup>57</sup>Cambon, p. 145.

And Rip was slowly made aware  
     that he, Van Winkle, was not here  
 nor there. He woke and swore he'd seen Broadway  
     a Catskill daisy chain in May (CP, p. 60).

Thus the poet's space-sense in this section has expanded, but it is not yet sufficiently equal to his time-sense to achieve articulation of his vision.

This expansion of the space-sense is present also in "The River," in which an express train "makes time like / SCIENCE-- COMMERCE and the Holy Ghost" (CP, p. 62). The rushing conquest of space represented by the train is somehow unholy, because it is too dominated by time--speed--and thus is the opposite of the sacredness of feeling the poet seeks to grasp. As the train speeds by, it leaves in its wake three men who more carefully explore the land but who do not possess a sense of twentieth-century time. Crane's goal is to join twentieth-century time with a visionary capacity that encompasses the entire country, and these three men possess part of the space-sense he is trying to represent by altering his consciousness. Thus he must grasp these nomads' intimate knowledge of the land, their intuitive yet unutterable knowledge of the land's beauty, and somehow join that to his sense of twentieth-century time so that his vision can be achieved. This is attempted in "The River" in an ingenious way.

The poet grasps the hoboes' knowledge, possesses their feeling of elemental contact with the land, and completes their "ignorance" [they are "blind fists of nothing, humpty-dumpty clods" (CP, p. 66)] by joining them to his consciousness of twentieth-century time:

yet they touch something like a key perhaps.  
 From pole to pole across the hills, the states  
 --They know a body under the wide rain;  
 . . . . .  
 They lurk across her, knowing her yonder breast  
 . . . . .  
 --As I have trod the rumorous midnight too (CP, p. 66).

As the poet identifies himself with the wanderers, he has a momentary success in joining time and space and thus gets closer to achieving his vision:

But I knew her body there,  
 Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark,  
 And space, an eaglet's wing, laid on her hair (CP, p. 66).

He knows the land (represented as a woman's body), and has an instantaneous awareness of his vision, which is, however, yet incomplete. His knowledge of space is still insufficient: it is "like an eaglet's wing," not yet like a full-grown eagle. He cannot yet articulate his vision as he desires.

In this same section, however, he does succeed to a greater degree in joining his sense of space with a less dominant, less powerful sense of time. In the beginning of the section time is portrayed as the speeding express train that whizzes by so hastily that it cannot join with the elemental sense of space that the poet comes to know. Toward the end of the section, however, the image of the train becomes the river: still representative of time, but now an organic part of the land, now capable of being fused with the land within the poet's imagination:

O lean from the window, if the train slows down,  
 As though you touched hands with some ancient clown,  
 --A little while gaze absently below  
 And hum Deep River with them while they go.

Yes, turn again and sniff once more--look see,  
 O Sheriff, Brakeman and Authority--  
 Hitch up your pants and crunch another quid,  
 For you, too, feed the River timelessly.

. . . . .  
 You will not hear it as the sea; even stone  
 Is not more hushed by gravity . . . But slow,  
 As loth to take more tribute--sliding prone  
 Like one whose eyes were buried long ago  
 The River, spreading, flows--and spends your dream.  
 What are you, lost within this tideless spell?  
 You are your father's father, and the stream--  
 A liquid theme that floating niggers swell.  
 . . . . .

The River lifts itself from its long bed,

Poised wholly on its dream, a mustard glow  
 Tortured with history, its one will--flow!  
 --The Passion spreads in wide tongues, choked and slow,  
 Meeting the Gulf, hosannas silently below (CP, pp. 68-69).

In the final lines of this poem, there is an upward movement and a movement back and forth: the River "lifts itself," and the Passion "spreads in wide tongues." Thus the space-sense is expanded to distinctly represent the poet's vision of the beautiful, natural land not yet completely destroyed by technology. However, the space-sense is still not as strong as it must be: the spreading movement is "choked and slow," while time, represented by the River, is still strong: "The River lifts itself," and has one will: "flow!" Although the poet is partially successful in joining his sense of time with an expanding space-sense, he finds that the dominant time-sense of the century is still too dangerous and destructive; after all, the train image is still recalled in the river image in this section, and still suggests the overwhelming power of speed and conquest. As Sherman Paul points out,

What the poet desires cannot be won in time, not, at least, by the masculine imperatives of conquest and success which fill this vision of history. He does not assent to the kind of history associated with the train and industrialism--with his father's world.<sup>58</sup>

In this section the poet has moved closer to articulating his vision, but he has not yet been able to complete his task. He still must somehow reverse the flow of time and recapture the Indian's sense of time as being fused with space, the land. Thomas Vogler makes this point in his study of the poem:

The poet, after finding in the River a symbol of the progression of time, must now reverse that flow, must return up the River and back in time to the consciousness of the Indian with "Mythical brows" who knew his gods directly as part of the natural physical world. . . . The reversal of time in "The Dance" is not a rejection of the sense of time expressed in "The River," but an attempt to return to the source of time, to achieve the primitive mythic state of consciousness, and then to rejoin time and return again to the present. . . .<sup>59</sup>

This movement backward in time is what Ouspensky means by diminishing the time-sense. The poet's effort has been to recapture a consciousness that has nearly been eradicated, the passing of time, and thus he has attempted to imagine himself in the past, to represent himself as being placed in the mind of a past consciousness. Such an act of imagination requires a reduction of his time-sense and an expansion of his sense of representing things in form, his space-sense. This is what Ouspensky says must be done if one is to achieve the higher consciousness. In that dimension of consciousness,

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<sup>58</sup>paul, p. 215.

<sup>59</sup>Vogler, p. 162.

"TIME" must exist spatially, i.e., temporal events must exist and not happen--exist before and after their manifestation, and be located in one section as it were. . . . There cannot be anything which is measured by years, days, hours--there cannot be before, now, after. Moments of different epochs, divided by great intervals of time, exist simultaneously, and may touch one another (Tertium Organum, p. 241).

The poet of The Bridge is attempting to negate the effects of the passing of time and instead trying to create a consciousness that spans past and present, that embodies past and present in its view. Thus he attempts to embody the mythic consciousness of the Indian so that it exists permanently because it is represented in form. If he can succeed in doing this, he will have succeeded in achieving that "timeless" state of consciousness that Ouspensky advocates.

In "The Dance" he succeeds in identifying himself with the Indian and in achieving that timeless state of consciousness. For example, he becomes Maquokeeta, who represents the State he desires:

Dance, Maquokeeta! snake that lives before,  
That casts his pelt and lives beyond! (CP, p. 73).

Maquokeeta is the snake (time) that exists in the past and the present. The poet achieves identification with him by the perfection of his space-sense. In this section, the image of curvship, which suggests a graceful and powerful space-sense, is dominant. The curving, swirling movement of the dance suggests a circle, an image of perfection and eternity. Also, this section combines movements of ascent and descent with the circling movement, thus completing the expansion of the space-sense in all directions:

I took the portage climb, then chose  
A further valley-shed; I could not stop

. . . . .  
 O Appalachian Spring! I gained the ledge;  
 Steep, inaccessible smile that eastward bends  
 And northward reaches in that violet wedge  
 Of Adirondacks!--wisped of azure wands,

Over how many bluffs, tarns, streams I sped! (CP, p. 72).

. . . . .  
 A birch kneels. All her whistling fingers fly.  
 The oak grove circles in a crash of leaves  
 The long moan of a dance is in the sky (CP, p. 73).

Finally, the swirling, expansive movements reach a climax in the final stanza of the poem:

We danced, O Brave, we danced beyond their farms,  
 In cobalt desert closures made our vows. . .  
 Now is the strong prayer folded in thine arms,  
 The serpent with the eagle in the boughs (CP, p. 75).

Here the poet has succeeded in joining time and space--the serpent and the eagle. The curveship is complete, and the poet has achieved the Indian's consciousness: "In cobalt desert closures [we] made our vows." Thus the poet now possesses the Indian's intuitive, organic knowledge of the land and its connection with a sense of timelessness. His next step is to join the consciousness he has gained with the present world, if he is finally to be successful in his quest.

While it is not necessary to continue giving readings of each of the following sections of the poem in order to illustrate my point, a few comments about those sections need to be made. In each section again there occurs an expansion of the poet's space-sense and a reduction of the time-sense, an attempt to join his mystic consciousness with his consciousness of present-day America. This is particularly difficult because he must deal with contemporary

perversions and abuses of those senses and try to "straighten them out," try to fuse them with his timeless, expansive vision. For example, he must deal in "Cutty Sark" with the temporary loss of his vision. As Vogler says,

The sense in which the River "spends your dream" ("The River") seems clear now. Time has conquered the vision, the nickel has run out, the star that was to join him ("The Harbor Dawn") now floats burning in a gulf of tears, and he is ready to give up time "and sleep another thousand" years.<sup>60</sup>

Vogler also raises an interesting point about the poet's ability to retain the vision he has gained. He says that accepting the possibility of failure is itself part of the expansive vision the poet seeks; to embrace even the darkness of failure is necessary, and if he can do that he can move closer to success.<sup>61</sup> This is paradoxical, but it means that the poet must expand his vision even wider to include the realization that he may not be able to achieve the bright, optimistic fusion or continuity of vision of which he had dreamed:

Crane is now ready to write the poem Keats might have written had he lived longer, a poem beginning with the failure of his dream and attempting to transcend the failure by achieving a vision that can accept it.<sup>62</sup>

The sections which follow, "Cape Hatteras," "Quaker Hill," and "The Tunnel," all deal with the poet's attempt to create that inclusive vision which embraces all aspects, even the dark ones, of

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<sup>60</sup>Vogler, p. 167.

<sup>61</sup>Vogler, p. 169.

<sup>62</sup>Vogler, p. 169.

life. He achieves this by embodying the negative qualities of the contemporary world within his consciousness and attempting to retain the promise of a higher consciousness as he does so. And, as in the earlier sections of the poem, his purpose is carried out by the expansion of his space-sense and the reduction of the sense of the dominance of time. For example, in "Cape Hatteras" the great many upward and downward movements suggest the poet's attempts to fuse his vision with the technology of the age. The airplanes, which represent the conquest of space, are not adequately joined to an encompassing, mythic vision, and thus they explore but "splinter" space:

O bright circumferences, heights employed to fly  
 War's fiery kennel masked in downy offings,--  
 This tournament of space, the threshed and chiselled height,  
 Is baited by marauding circles, bludgeon flail  
 Of rancorous grenades whose screaming petals carve us  
 Wounds that we wrap with theorems sharp as hail!

Wheeled swiftly, wings emerge from larval-silver hangers.  
 Taut motors surge, space-gnawing into flight (CP, p. 91).

But the poet still retains his faith that somehow his vision can be translated into the contemporary world, and thus leaps beyond, in his imagination, the destructiveness of technology to embrace Whitman's optimistic, faithful vision of the successful joining of technological progress with mythical, timeless, visionary consciousness:

O Walt!--Ascensions of thee hover in me now  
 As thou at junctions elegiac, there, of speed  
 With vast eternity, dost wield the rebound seed! (CP, p. 93).

"Ascensions" of Whitman's spirit rise up in the poet and allow him to retain his faith, his vision. Again it is an upward movement that bolsters the poet's ability to articulate his vision; it is his

ability to embody his vision, and even the destruction of his vision, in a permanent, spatially-realized form which denies the possibility that time may destroy it, which allows the vision to be articulated. He has expanded his space-sense and triumphed over time's destructiveness of vision; he has applied Ouspensky's idea and gained the representation and consciousness he sought.

That consciousness is finally achieved in the last section of The Bridge, "Atlantis." In this section the expansion of the space-sense is finally joined to a consciousness of timelessness:

Through the bound cable strands, the arching path  
Upward, veering with light, the flight of strings,--  
Taut miles of shuttling moonlight syncopate  
The whispered rush, telepathy of wires.  
Up the index of night, granite and steel--  
Transparent meshes--flekless the gleaming staves--  
Sibylline voices flicker, waveringly stream  
As though a god were issue of the strings . . . (CP, p. 114).

Finally the poet's consciousness is able to join the "myth to God" with the modern world. The bridge itself becomes a concrete representation (in spatial form) of the consciousness the poet has sought. His ability to represent his vision thus means that he has achieved a vision that is beyond time yet within time. His final address to the bridge demonstrates this quality of his consciousness:

So to thine Everpresence, beyond time,  
Like spears ensanguined of one tolling star  
That bleeds infinity--the orphic strings,  
Sidereal phalanxes, leap and converge:  
--One Song, one Bridge of Fire! Is it Cathay,  
Now pity steps the grass and rainbows ring  
The serpent with the eagle in the leaves . . . ?  
Whispers antiphonal in azure swing (CP, p. 117).

He embodies a consciousness of "Everpresence" that suggests permanence, infinity, eternity. Space and time are perfectly fused, with space being his formal representation of a timeless vision in the concrete form of the bridge, and time being the changing world in which that vision has been attained. Although paradoxical enough, he has succeeded in articulating his vision--not the original vision, but the actual, time-tested act of envisioning that is finally all he possesses. He has successfully expanded his consciousness to embrace all of space, and has succeeded too in articulating a noumenal, spiritual sense that ordinarily is destroyed by or lost to time's onward movement. Glauco Cambon sees the poem in this way also:

Certainly the American cult of experience, brought by Crane to the point of paroxysm, counts for something in his repeated strivings for ecstasy through orgy, and the dream of deliverance from time, memory, and the "curse of sundered parentage" has a deep existential motivation that helps us understand his interest in Ouspensky's cosmology. Time can be consumed by dionysian Faustus to such an extent that it will be annulled into permanence. . . . One of the important aspects of The Bridge is to perceive time spatially for space is the realm of permanence.<sup>63</sup>

Perhaps Crane is not entirely successful in convincing his readers that this act of vision can be performed and maintained by everyone. Perhaps he leans too heavily on the promise that such a consciousness as he has achieved offers, and thus has not actually succeeded in achieving permanent awareness of the eternal fourth-dimension. But he has achieved a permanent articulation of the act of consciousness which includes a knowledge of the eternal joined

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<sup>63</sup>Cambon, pp. 166-67.

with the modern world. This has been his goal throughout; so too was it Ouspensky's goal. He has followed Ouspensky's method of achieving the higher consciousness, and has been successful. He has attained the consciousness which grasps all of time in a single moment, which Ouspensky says is the "fourth form" of consciousness; which he describes as follows:

Fourth form. Beginning of the understanding of four-dimensional space. A new concept of time. The possibility of more prolonged self-consciousness. Flashes of cosmic consciousness. The idea and sometimes the sensation of a living universe. A striving toward the wondrous. Sensation of infinity (Tertium Organum, p. 300).

Thus even if Crane's vision cannot at all moments be successfully maintained in the world, he has at least succeeded in representing the "fourth form" of consciousness in poetic form. And, finally, that is all Ouspensky himself called for. He knew that the search, the effort, must go on continuously:

[T]he true and real progress of thought is only in the broadest striving toward knowledge, that does not recognize the possibility of arrestment in any found knowledge at all. The meaning of life is in eternal search. And only in that search can we find something truly new (Tertium Organum, p. 306).

So Ouspensky ends his book; so also Crane ends his work on a note of incompleteness, suggesting that his search for higher vision will continue:

Now pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring  
The serpent with the eagle in the leaves . . . ?

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Hart Crane attempted to articulate his perception of a "myth of America," of a new order of consciousness in America. To do so he needed a way to weave all the strands of American experience together, a way to demonstrate the blend of the spiritual and physical worlds he believed was possible. He needed to prove that a spiritual dimension could be fused to the quest for power and technology that was sweeping the country. Crane yearned for a completeness of experience; he desired to experience, as R.W.B. Lewis says, the "totality" of living:

Crane sought to body forth a vision in which countless aspects of the world, themselves united by the poet's esemplastic eye, were seen in union with the "Ever-presence," the irradiating power of the simultaneously perceived world of ideal beauty and love and harmony. Not the absolute pure, . . . but the absolute inextricably wedded to the actual, seen and known by the actual even as it serves to transform the actual.<sup>64</sup>

Crane found in Ouspensky the means by which he could articulate this vision. Ouspensky's theory of the interrelatedness of phenomena, of the underlying unity of events in the physical world, gave Crane faith that his estimation of the American mythos was correct. He read in Tertium Organum that

Each phenomenon, no matter how insignificant, is a link of an infinite and unbroken chain, extending from the

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<sup>64</sup>Lewis, p. 374.

past into the future, passing from one sphere into another, sometimes manifesting as physical phenomena, sometimes hiding in the phenomena of consciousness.

· · · · · If events most distant from one another in relation to time touch one another in the fourth dimension, this means they are proceeding simultaneously as cause and effect, and the walls dividing them are just an illusion which our weak intellect cannot conquer. Things are united, not by time, but by an inner connection, an inner correlation. And time cannot separate those things which are inwardly near, following from one another (Tertium, Organum, p. 136).

Passages such as these showed Crane that he did not have to be limited by time, that he could look beyond the present (either into the past or the future) and could articulate the hidden associations between events and thus establish the unity he sought, the "spiritual quantity" he perceived but had been unable to express in poetry. Thus he was able to write The Bridge, whose sections are unified by "inner correlations": Crane was able to see the different ages of American experience through a multi-dimensional lens; he saw the inner connections that held the periods together; he saw that it is man's consciousness that creates the qualities of his age. Thus he could demonstrate in his poetry that his vision of America was a viable one, that a unifying spiritual dimension had been part of the American consciousness since the beginning of its existence, and thus it could indeed be part of it again. Although difficult to prove conclusively, the presence of a carefully-worked out structural paradigm of the expanding space-sense and the diminishing time-sense which directly parallels Ouspensky's theory of the means to attain the higher consciousness strongly indicates that Crane

borrowed the idea and adapted it to his particular poetic purpose.

We know that Crane was deeply impressed by Ouspensky's ideas, and thus it is not surprising that he applied some of those ideas in his poetry. We know, for example, that Crane discussed Tertium Organum's theories of time and space with his friend Bill Sommer, and that he went so far as to attend a meeting of an Ouspensky-Gurdjieff group. Gorham Munson provided a reliable indication of the degree of Crane's enthusiasm for Ouspensky when he told John Unterecker, "You cannot overemphasize the importance of that book. Crane hounded me to read it. And he kept after me until I finally did."<sup>65</sup> Crane himself, in a letter to Munson, said he had enjoyed reading Tertium Organum because it "corroborated" several mystical experiences he had had. He was likely referring to that day in the dentist's chair when he "saw the two worlds. And at once." Ouspensky offered corroboration of that experience, lent it the validity Crane required; thus he turned to Ouspensky when he sought to express that vision of "seeing the two worlds" in his poetry. Some say that Ouspensky led Crane astray because the path they were on was essentially illogical and untenable, but Crane is the best defender of the chance he took:

New conditions of life germinate new forms of spiritual articulation. . . . [T]he voice of the present, if it is to be known, must be caught at the

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<sup>65</sup>Unterecker, Voyager, p. 249.

risk of speaking in idioms and circumlocutions sometimes shocking to the scholar and historians of logic. Language has built towers and bridges, but itself is inevitably as fluid as always (CP, pp. 222-23).

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## VITA

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