I.A. RICHARDS' THEORY OF VALUE AND ITS RELATION TO PRACTICE IN HIS LITERARY CRITICISM

by

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Being a Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, at the University of London.

Synopsis of Thesis

I.A.Richards, Lecturer in English Literature in Cambridge, is a many-sided personality who has expressed his various intellectual interests in voluminous writings. Semanticist, educationalist, philosopher, psychologist, and, last but not least, literary critic, he has written on all these subjects separately, though in his two most important books—"Principles of Literary Criticism" and "Practical Criticism"—he attempts to be all these at the same time. But the purposes and the methods of these various disciplines are different and sometimes conflicting. It is this conflict between Richards the exponent of a certain type of psychological aesthetics and Richards the practical literary critic who is not bound by his own theoretical preconceptions that is the central theme of my thesis.

I have devoted the first four chapters to an exposition and criticism of Richards' theory of language and his psychological theory of aesthetic value. Having shown that the theory of "Synaesthesis" as a criterion
of aesthetic merit implies aesthetic pluralism and is inapplicable in practice, because vacuous, I have tried in Chapter 5 to find Richards' actual standards of aesthetic value as revealed in his own literary criticism.

In Chapter 6 I have discussed the nature and function of the aesthetic judgment and have emphasised, as against Richards, its status as a judgment of value and not of psychological fact.

In Chapter 7 I have attempted to show that the psychological approach to the problems of aesthetics is not as such to be ruled out as irrelevant; on the contrary, as practised, e.g. by E. Bullough it is worthy of being further developed, because it both offers a comprehensive view of aesthetics, art-criticism and culture, and provides in the principle of "Psychical Distance" an aesthetic principle capable of practical application.

The main assumption underlying my critical attitude to the kind of aesthetic theories of which Richards is a typical exponent is that in Aesthetics theory and practice must be connected: Aesthetic theory must begin with an examination of aesthetic judgments, and practical art-criticism - if it is to be valid - must be based on theoretically established criteria of value.

If this is so, then the aesthetician's task can be much wider than a "journeyman's".1 By affirming the

underlying similarity of most great works of art of past cultures, by pointing out the essentially humanistic values of great art, he might perhaps actively contribute to their re-emergence.

### CONTENTS

#### PART I

**Chapter I**  
- a) Meaning  
- b) Referential and emotive meaning  
- c) The poetic use of language  

**Chapter II**  
- a) Rejection of the Metaphysical theory of value  
- b) The quest for a science of Aesthetics  
- c) The new criterion of value: Synaesthesis  
- d) Richards and earlier accounts of aesthetic equilibrium  

**Chapter III**  
- a) Criticism of the theory of Synaesthesis  
- b) The fallacy of Richards' theory of value
I. A. RICHARDS' THEORY OF VALUE AND ITS RELATION TO
PRACTICE IN HIS LITERARY CRITICISM

CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART I</th>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I</td>
<td>EPISTEMOLOGICAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Meaning.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Referential and emotive meaning.</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) The poetic use of language.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter II</th>
<th>RICHARDS' THEORY OF VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Rejection of the Metaphysical theory of value</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) The quest for a science of Aesthetics</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) The new criterion of value: Synaesthesia</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Richards and earlier accounts of aesthetic equilibrium</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter III</th>
<th>CRITICISM OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Criticism of the theory of Synaesthesia</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) The fallacy of Richards' theory of value</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX A OF DEFINING A POEM
Chapter IV RICHARDS' THEORY OF POETRY

a) The nature of poetry. 123
b) Poetry and life 129
c) Poetry and Science 135
d) The method of poetry 147
e) The function of poetry 154

Chapter V RICHARDS AS A PRACTICAL LITERARY CRITIC 163

PART II

Chapter VI A THEORY OF AESTHETIC VALUE

a) The aesthetic judgment - a judgment of value 193
b) The analysis of an aesthetic judgment 223
c) Art and morality 232
d) Art and truth 245

Chapter VII I.A. RICHARDS AND E. BULLOUGH: SIMILARITY AND CONTRAST

a) Psychic Distance 257
b) Psychical Distance and catharsis 275
c) Psychical Distance and Synaesthesis 281

Appendix A ON DEFINING A POEM 288
BIBLIOGRAPHY

of I.A. Richards' books and articles referred to in the thesis


Chapter I

Abbreviations

M.M. - The Meaning of Meaning.
P.L.C. - Principles of Literary Criticism.
P.C. - Practical Criticism.

(Allen Tate, "On the Limits of Poetry", p.113)

The Richards, who is one of the most important

modern critics and who has been writing on

both the theoretical and the practical aspects of

literary criticism for the last 35 years, began his career

as the critic of a positivist (i.e. 'scientific')

correspondent school of criticism, and, together

with others, as the founder of a new science of

literature.

The first question on the nature of beauty in

"The Foundations of Aesthetics" led to a general theory

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PART I

Chapter I

EPISTEMOLOGICAL

a) Meaning

"But the kind of criticism that dominates our intellectual life is that of the French mathematician, who, after reading a tragedy by Racine, asked: "Que'est-ce que cela prouve?"

(Allen Tate, "On the Limits of Poetry", p. 113)

I.A.Richards, who is one of the most important modern English critics and who has been writing on aesthetics, on theoretical and on practical aspects of literary criticism for the last 35 years, began his career as the initiator of a positivist (i.e. 'scientific') and behaviouristic school of criticism, and, together with C.K.Ogden, as the founder of a new science of Symbolism.

His first question on the nature of beauty in "The Foundations of Aesthetics" led to a general theory of meaning developed in "The Meaning of Meaning" (M.M.) and to a view of the nature of poetry expounded in "Principles of Literary Criticism" (P.L.C.) and in "Practical Criticism" (P.C.). His question was more complex than, but essentially the same as, that of the French
mathematician: "What does poetry prove, what does it refer to, and what does the poetic statement assert?"

The answer he gave to this question is wholly negative, but followed from a highly positive and new general theory of meaning, involving a view of the dual functions of language, and an original theory of interpretation in sign-situations. In order therefore to understand Richards' assertion that poetry proves nothing, refers to nothing, and that the poetic statement does not correspond to anything in the objective world but at most to an elusive subjective experience of the poet, we must first understand his general view of language.

In "The Meaning of Meaning" (M.M.) Ogden and Richards undertook "A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought", and hoped that with the emergence of the new "Science of Symbolism", with its canons of symbolism, theory of interpretation and of multiple definition, "the way is open to the systematisation of all that is known and further of all that will ever come to be known." They thought that this new science would solve the most important problems of the theory of knowledge, \(^2\)

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2. -do.- Ch. 3 and 4.
enable them to give "a proper account of perception of
the Nature of Things",¹ "provide a new basis for Physics",²
lay the foundations of a science of Aesthetics³, do away
with the "problem of Truth"⁴, and "provide both what has
been covered by the title Philosophy of Mathematics and
what has hitherto been regarded as Meta-physics".⁵

This vast and ambitious scheme was not to be
limited to theory alone but would have far-reaching
influence on practical affairs as well, especially
"in the lives of thoughtful people, who were they fully
acquainted with the relations of Symbols, References and
Referents, might be led to think and act very differently."⁶

The authors assumed that most controversies, be they
philosophic, ethical or aesthetic, and even some scientific
disputes (see footnote 7), spring not from the nature of
reality but from the nature of our language. If we want
to resolve them we need only clear up the verbal muddles
and then the metaphysical problems will disappear.

"Examples of such problems are those of Truth,
Reality, Universals, Abstractions, Negative Facts,
Virtuous Triangles, Round squares and so forth."⁸

7. "Scientific controversies constantly resolve themselves
into differences about the meaning of words." Prof.
Schuster, quoted in the "Preface" on to M.M. p.XXXII
These different problems are all considered as similar and as equally 'pseudo'. According to the authors they arise from an incorrect theory of language (that words have significance in only one way, by standing for objects), and from an inexact use of language, usually in some way from the same term being used with different meanings. Therefore, if we want to resolve the problems by means of this account of them, we must begin with an exhaustive analysis of Meaning, which forms the basis and cornerstone of the new science of language.

In analysing 'Meaning' in general, and "The Meaning of 'Beauty'" in particular, the authors wanted to dispense with ambiguous, unscientific terms like 'images', 'thought', 'mind', to discard "mystical relations between the knower and the known" and to treat the meaningful use of terms and therefore knowledge, "as a causal affair open to ordinary scientific investigation."¹ Finally the term 'meaning' itself was discarded in favour of terms which were deemed more precise (and indeed, which are more precise) as different and more specific paraphrases of 'meaning' in various contexts, like:

'Intention' ("They meant no harm, He means well, I meant to go"\(^1\) = they intend no harm, his intentions are good, I intend to go).

'Value' ("The world longs for a new expression of the MEANING of life and reality",\(^2\) = of the value of life).

'Referent' ("Nobody's certainty as to his reference, his 'meaning', is of any value in the absence of corroborative evidence..."\(^3\)).

Expression of Emotion. (In "This is good", 'good' has no referential or symbolic function. "This peculiar ethical use of 'good' is, we suggest, a purely emotive use").

The authors draw up a list of 16 different definitions of 'Meaning' (and we shall see in the sequel that they do the same with 'Beauty'). Of these 15 are rejected either as standing for linguistic phantoms (e.g. when 'Meaning' is taken as an intrinsic property of, or relation to, things,) or as being definitions not of 'Meaning' proper but only of its "Occasional and erratic usages" (for example, when 'Meaning' is defined by W.James in a sense in which it is a property of things rather than symbols as "The Practical Consequences of a thing in our future experience.")\(^5\)

5. M.M., p. 307
After listing and rejecting these traditional definitions of 'Meaning', Ogden and Richards put forward a definition of meaning in terms of Sign and Symbol—using situations generally and of their interpretation. The authors refer to C.S. Peirce as the first modern philosopher who had made a "determined attempt to give an account of signs and their meaning."¹ But although in their account of 'meaning' they use some of the terms used by Peirce, like 'sign', 'symbol', 'reference', their whole approach differs fundamentally from his, because, as they say, "he constantly endeavours to exclude psychological considerations from his treatment of signs", whereas their approach is psychological throughout.² Thus they formulate their definition of 'meaning' in terms of the "psychological contexts" and the interpretation of the "external contexts" in which signs are used.

"A sign is something which has once been a member of a context or configuration that worked in the mind as a whole. When it reappears its effects are as though the rest of the context were present."³

A "psychological context" is "a recurrent set of mental events peculiarly related to one another so as to recur, as regards their main features, with partial uniformity."⁴

Their account of 'interpreting' a sign will naturally be in terms of the effects of a sign on the mind: "Our Interpretation of any sign is our psychological reaction to it, as determined by our past experience in similar situations, and by our present experience."\(^1\)

Then, "... the meaning of A is that to which the mental process interpreting A is adapted."\(^2\) and "that to which the mental process" is adapted is the "external context", configuration of things or events:

"A context is a set of entities (things or events) related in a certain way; these entities have each a character such that other sets of entities occur having the same characters and related by the same relation; and these occur 'nearly uniformly'."\(^3\)

The difference between an 'external context' and a 'psychological context' is that the one is physical and the other mental; nevertheless, the 'external context' is the meaning of the 'psychological context'.

In order to understand this definition of 'meaning' we must see its close connection with a causal theory of thinking. In the Principles of Literary Criticism Richards states the latter very simply: "The striking of a clock is the cause of our thinking of its striking. In such a case the external thing (i.e. the external context) is linked with


(New York, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1949.)
the thought 'of' it in a fairly direct fashion, and the view here taken is that to be a thought 'of' the striking is to be merely a thought caused in this fashion by the striking. A thought of the striking is nothing else and nothing more than a thought caused by it."

To say therefore "I am thinking of A" is simply a shorter expression for "My thought is being caused by A".2 (Thus suppose I mistakenly think I hear an owl hooting when my nephew gives vent to his war-cry; I am thinking of my nephew, and not, as I should suppose, of an owl.)

As M.Black has pointed out, such a theory does not differentiate between thoughts of X in the forms of expectations, imaginations, perceptions or memories of X, and could never be used to explain how and why "expecting (an event) Rn differs irreducibly from perceiving an event qualitatively similar to Rn or remembering such an event."3

But let us return to the definition of 'meaning' in terms of sign-interpretation. This use of the notion of 'interpretation' is not clear but we are given an illustration of what is meant by it. A very simple case of such a basic act of interpretation is analysed. (It is to be noticed that this is not a case of what we normally call 'interpretation' at all. It is nevertheless

1. P.L.C., p.126
2. M.M., p.142
   (New York, Itaca, Cornell University Press, 1949.)
taken as a paradigm case for more complex and quite different acts of interpretation in the ordinary sense, like those involved in reading a poem, listening to a symphony or studying a piece of advanced research. The authors do not try to prove that these complex acts of ordinary interpretation can be explained in the same way as the simple one, nor that interpretation is in general the same mental process as understanding the meaning of a work — they just assume it.

The basic act of interpretation which serves them as working-model is the following: on striking a match we expect a flame.¹ This they take to be a simple case of the interpretation of an event as a sign of a further event. They explain this phenomenon as occurring because and only because previous occasions of such a conjunction of events striking-of-match-followed-by-production-of-flame (i.e. "the external context" of the mental event) has left a "residual trace" or "engram" in the brain. Innumerable past occasions of striking a match have conditioned our organism to expecting a flame, and this expectation is really an incipient form of behaviour: "Expectation, ... becomes a peculiar form of

action, getting ready, namely, to receive certain kinds of stimuli rather than others.\textsuperscript{1} Thus our expectation of, (or being "directed to", the occurrence of the external event, 'flame', is undergoing a mental (neural) process as described above, and "understanding the meaning of scraping-of-match" consists of undergoing this same mental process.

At this point there are several objections to such an account of 'meaning':

1. There is no attempt to back up the 'engram' theory of an expectant condition by empirical evidence.

2. The account is open to the usual objections made against Hume's account of causal necessity - most of our expectations are not the result of experienced regular successions; if we hear a cock crow in the middle of the night we do not expect the day to break prematurely.

3. It is characteristic of the non-natural significance of words as distinct from the natural significance of such events that it does not depend on their always appearing in the same sequence.

4. It is characteristic of most, except for the most elementary, thinking, that we try to connect objects and events which are either not connected in experience, or which cannot be experienced by us at all (e.g. in the

\textsuperscript{1} P.L.C., p.88
creative imagination, the recreation of the past, the construction of scientific theories).

The authors try to treat mental processes in terms of neural events. We saw that they equated "I am thinking of A" with "My thought is being caused by A" and 'thought' is taken as equivalent to the occurrence of "certain happenings in the nerves". But 'expectation' is also treated as some kind of neural modification, as is 'meaning' itself. We are given to understand that 'thought', 'idea', 'reference', 'meaning', all really refer to the same sort of thing, namely, "certain happenings in the nerves"; but this account of thinking in terms of neural happenings is not kept up throughout the book, so that we encounter a strange mixture of behaviouristic terms like 'stimulus-response', 'impulses', 'engrams' etc., and phenomenological terms like 'thoughts', 'mind', 'experiences'. It is never quite clear whether they are to be taken as interchangeable or as distinct.

The 'residual trace' or 'engram' type of explanation of meaning as a type of thought-process encounters a welter of difficulties in the cases, for example, of thought-processes involving false reference, thoughts of events which are only imagined and have therefore had no corresponding 'external context', or any more complex cases of interpretation of non-natural signs (symbols).

1. M.M., p.178
In the case of a false reference, the quite implausible view is put forward that it is made up of a number of true constituents or references which somehow do not add up to the one true referent. For example, the statement "This is a book", where in fact what is referred to is a box, is "composed of a simple indefinite reference to any book, another to anything now, another to anything which may be here, and so on. These constituents will all be true, but the whole reference to this book which they together make up ... will be false, if we are in error and what is there is actually a box or something which fails to complete the three contexts, book, here, and now."

The difficulties of distinguishing expecting, imagining, perceiving, remembering X etc., pointed out by M.Black recur in a more acute form if they are to be surmounted by distinctions in neurological happenings. In order to do so, the authors would have to postulate ever more, finer and subtler differences in the neurological make-up with its psychological context parallel to, or diverging from, the "external context".

At all events, these rough and vague postulations are only possible accounts of causal processes assumed to go on when we think, imagine, expect, etc. But it is not

1) M.M., p.166.
to be expected that an account of our understanding of natural signs in a causal nexus will be adequate to account for our understanding of conventional signs in a symbolism, and as an account of how words come to have meaning for us, it is hopelessly vague. It would seem impossible to account engrammatically for our selectively distinct or similar responses to, for example, the words '99 miles' and '100 miles'; or for example 'athlete' and 'tall man'. As Stevenson admits in elaborating a similar causal theory of meaning, it is impossible to account for these without invoking not just experienced regularities but specifically linguistic rules distinguishing their uses, besides experiences of distances of 99 miles and 100 miles which for some purposes are practically equivalent and for others vitally different, and of athletes who are generally, but not always, tall men.¹ But if we have to invoke linguistic rules to account for our responses, this is explaining how a word comes to mean something for us by invoking its meaning. Finally, as Grice in his criticism of Stevenson has pointed out, any causal theory of meaning can at most account for the standard meaning of a term, and in our analysis of the meaning of statements we must consider the different external and linguistic contexts of the utterance as well as their "relevance to an obvious end."²

We need not deny that we can treat learning as a causal process - in fact psychologists and educationalists mostly do, but this is to give at most a scientific account of the necessary conditions, scientifically discovered, for A to learn the meaning of p; it is not to give an account of what we mean by "A knows the meaning of p", i.e. the necessary and sufficient conditions for the truth of this statement. No causal account can do this, though the causal theory of meaning tries to offer such an account for "A understands p".

So far I have given an account of the authors' 'engram' theory of meaning and my criticism of it. I shall now go on to discuss their other definition of meaning in terms of reference, as a transition to their most influential work on meaning, viz., their distinction of referential and emotive meaning.

The 'engram' account of 'meaning' (applicable specifically to events which 'mean' further events to a perceiver, and not obviously applicable to words which 'mean' the objects they signify to a hearer) leads naturally to an identification of 'meaning' with 'reference' as found in the further definition of 'meaning' as "That to which the User of a Symbol actually refers".¹ This seems to imply that every symbol or any expression...

must be used to *refer* to things. This, of course, is not
the case: only certain types of expressions are referring
expressions. They are, as Strawson has shown in his article
"On Referring" (Mind 1950)\(^1\) roughly: proper names,
substantives, pronouns, 'here', 'now', 'this', 'that'.
Other types of expression, e.g. adjectives, 'while',
'is', 'either-or', etc. can be absorbed in this referential
account if the statements in which their meaning can be
completed can as a whole be held to *refer* — to facts,
situations, states of affairs, etc. But if one takes
the whole statement rather than its referring expression
as referring to a fact, as if a fact were a bit of the
world, this gives rise to further difficulties for the
meaning = reference theory. For then one finds two
statements referring to each fact but contradictory in
meaning, for example, "The fire is alight" and "The fire
is not alight" referring to the same fact as well as to
the fire (an object) and its state (a property); i.e.
one has to *fabricate* objects = facts for whole statements
to refer to, just as one has to fabricate objects = properties
for adjectives to refer to. And the only reason for such
fabrication would be a preconception that every expression

\(^{1}\) P.F.Strawson: op.cit., reprinted in "Essays in Conceptual
has meaning by referring to something. Hence the authors' definition of meaning cannot be taken to be a general definition applicable to all meaningful expressions. But nor can it be taken as a definition even of specifically referring expressions, such as the referring use of a general name like 'the fire'. For although I say "The fire is alight", meaning by "the fire" the object in front of me (i.e., I refer to one particular object in using the expression "the fire"), this can not mean that the meaning of the expression 'the fire' (which is, of course, to be found in any good dictionary) is this particular object. Nor again can the meaning of such an expression be some particular mental process of interpretation in some particular speaker or hearer.

In fact to be a statement a use of language must not only make a reference but also say something about the person, object, event, place or process referred to, (Strawson, op.cit.)¹; and for an adequate account of meaning we must distinguish (and not identify) "What Jones meant by saying 'X'" from "the meaning of 'X'." ("The meaning of an expression cannot be identified with the object it is used, on a particular occasion, to refer to." )² (Strawson, op.cit.).

1. p.40.
Thus, "the meaning of 'X'," where 'X' is an expression, is not to be confused with what a particular speaker or hearer would mean by 'X'. Yet explanations of the meaning of an expression are often a confused conflation of various things that may be meant by 'means' in

"A means X by Y." to the name and object named model

"When A says Y he intends to commit himself to X."

"When A says X is good (or bad) he is attributing p, q, r, to it as a basis of evaluation:

For example in suitable contexts:

When A says "that bullying jackass" he means Mussolini.

When A says "M is not religious" he intends to commit himself to M's not being a Christian.

When A says "M is not a Christian" his criterion is that M does not go to Church.

There are also many possible paraphrases of the expression "Y means X to A". For example in suitable contexts:-

Referential and emotive meaning

"When A sees Y he thinks immediately of X".
(When A sees a red flag he thinks immediately of Communism).

"When A sees Y he responds to it as if to X".
(When A sees a red flag he responds to it as if to danger).

"When A says Y he intends to refer to X".
(When A says 'the red flag' he intends to refer to the Communist emblem);

i.e. we know how to cope with the sense of 'meaning' in
which people mean X by Y, and with the sense of 'meaning' in which things mean X to people, but 'the meaning of the expression X' is a complex notion and of much more indeterminate meaning in general. It is roughly a whole range of linguistic jobs which can be done by X in combination with other appropriate expressions.

Nevertheless the name and object named model retains its powerful attraction as the model of all cases of significant expression and their meaning, and we can preserve it in traditional company by fabricating suitable referents; e.g., facts for statements, (preferably true); universals for adjectives, feelings of hesitation for 'either-or' etc. Thus we might save the meaning = reference definition. But the authors (especially Richards) abandon it to make their most influential distinction within meaning, namely that of referential versus emotive meaning.

b) Referential and emotive meaning

We have found that the causal theory of meaning provided by Ogden and Richards was not based on sufficient empirical evidence, and that no explanation of its adaptation to fit the more complex cases of meaning and interpretation arising through the use of non-natural signs in language was given. We may now consider Ogden and Richards' theory of language and its functions.
Their main tenet is that language has two functions: referential and emotive. These terms are perhaps the most famous among the many coined by Ogden and Richards, and have been adopted (with due modifications), by many succeeding philosophers and aestheticians (e.g. Ayer in *Language, Truth and Logic*, Stevenson in *Ethics and Language*, Collingwood in *The Principles of Art*). In the terms of this dichotomy the language used in science (and in common sense factual statements) is held to be referential and all other uses of language are necessarily emotive, since these are held to be "two totally distinct uses of language" and exhaustive. The referential function of language consists in "the recording, the support, the organisation and the communication of references", whereas "the emotive use of words is a more simple matter; it is the use of words to express or excite feelings and attitudes".

At this point I want to draw attention to two things:

1) That 'referential' and 'emotive' are said to apply to *uses*, not to bits of language, and we can

1. P.L.C., p.261
2. In M.M., p.360, the authors enumerate five functions of language, 1) "Symbolisation of reference; 2) The expression of attitude to listener; 3) The expression of attitude to referent; 4) The promotion of effects intended; 5) Support of reference." This list they think to be exhaustive, but they generally talk of only two functions, referential and emotive. Functions 2-4 are included in the emotive function, functions 1&5 in the referential.
presumably put the same sentence to both uses, according to our different purposes.

2) Ogden and Richards talk of 'communication of references' where we should expect 'facts' or 'information', i.e., the communication of both references and descriptions (or attributions and ascriptions in Strawson's words).

In keeping with their general scientific positivism, Ogden and Richards assume that reference can only be to objects which can be scientifically (i.e. empirically) demonstrated - tables, chairs, florins, i.e. referents which can as it were be pointed at, seen, and touched, or, as Black says, be part of "a specific spatiotemporal event". They would no doubt allow also for scientific reference to such unobservable but scientific objects as electrons, bacteria, inferiority complexes, in terms of which the behaviour of observable objects is theorized about. Now Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Virtue, etc. are not such spatiotemporal particulars, since their instantiation is incapable of scientific verification; they are therefore for these authors merely 'symbolic fictions' or "quondam denizens" of "The World of Pure Being" and are of no use to positivists - except for furnishing examples of the emotive use of language. 'References' to these must be pseudo-references.

If we say "The height of the Eiffel Tower is

1. Black: Language and Philosophy, p.194
we are making a statement amenable to scientific verification and hence either true or false. But if we say "The Eiffel Tower is beautiful" we are not making a statement, not even a false statement, for no scientific verification procedure is appropriate to it. Yet we do not seem to be using language nonsensically. The authors' answer is: "We are most probably using words merely to evoke certain attitudes." The objection to this suggestion is that on such a view it would be self-contradictory to say "The Eiffel Tower is beautiful but I'm glad you don't admire it," whereas, in fact, this is quite free from self-contradiction, e.g. I may be pleased that we won't have to miss our train while you contemplate it. Moreover on this view it is hard to see why we should even say or think to ourselves that the Eiffel Tower is beautiful (or ugly). In fact we may be far from wanting to arouse anyone's feelings or attitudes, and far even from wanting to express our own feelings or attitudes; we may be simply making an evaluative judgment. But I shall defer the question of the uses of such statements to Chapter 6. Here it suffices to point out that the dichotomy of factual statement or merely emotive expressions cannot accommodate such judgments.

With this crude antithesis between emotive and

scientific utterance even such a favourable critic of the theory as Bertrand Russell found fault, objecting that "the distinction between the emotional and the logical use of words is illusory," since we can always give both an emotional and a logical force to our words. This is however itself too crude an objection to the distinction. Richards and Ogden are of course aware of the fact that the two functions of language mostly occur together, and that except in the case of a language wholly made up of artificial symbols (for example as in 'Principia Mathematica'), all discourse, whether ordinary, poetic or scientific, contains a reference to objects of some sort, and generally implies an emotional attitude towards them, being often intended to have the effect of evoking in the listener similar or different references and attitudes. Still Richards upholds as possibly exclusive this distinction between the two functions of language as the necessary premise for the new theory of poetry which he developed later.

The 'referential' and 'emotive' functions of language clearly do not exhaust all types of meaning, and Stevenson tried to fill the obvious gaps in Ogden and Richards' theory of meaning somewhat sketchily in his chapter on meaning in Ethics and Language. Thus he

finds that

"It would be well to supplement the terms 'emotive' and 'descriptive' by subdividing meaning in a number of other ways. If meaning is taken as a disposition of a sign to produce psychological reactions, one may subdivide it by classifying the psychological reactions in any way that occasion requires."

He then talks of 'pictorial meaning' and of 'confused meaning' as separate kinds of meaning different from both descriptive and emotive meaning. Stevenson also differentiates between different kinds of 'emotive meaning', namely:

1) laudatory and derogatory (according to "the kind of feelings or attitudes that constitute the response");

2) dependent and independent emotive meaning (according to whether the emotive meaning of an expression is dependent on a primarily referential meaning).

Whatever the merits of Stevenson's additions to and subdivisions of meaning, Richards' and Ogden's division of meaning into 'referential' and 'emotive' is both historically and philosophically the most influential. I shall therefore in the sequel discuss only the original simple theory of 'emotive meaning', as found in Ogden and Richards' work.

In order to distinguish and disentangle the woof of the referential from the warp of the emotive use of language, we must, so we are told, apply the test of verifiability: "Is this true or false in the ordinary

1. C.L. Stevenson, op. cit., p.77.
2. ibid, p.79.
3. cf. p.79.
strict scientific sense? If this question is relevant then
the use is symbolic, if it is clearly irrelevant then we
have an emotive utterance."

To this distinction between referential and
emotive meaning there are many objections. In the first
place, the notion of a class of clearly referential
statements, based on a clear criterion of empirical or
scientific verifiability, is by now recognised to be much
less clear than was assumed. The problem of giving a
satisfactory and rigorous definition of 'empirical
verifiability' was, as is well-known, a source of trouble
to Ayer in his successive editions of Language, Truth and
Logic; and has developed into a still unsolved problem
of a satisfactory and rigorous definition of the notion
of 'confirmation'.

Although a precise specification of verifiability
has hitherto failed, the criterion was useful in
eliminating certain metaphysical statements as unverifiable
in any acceptable sense at all and hence meaningless.
(For example, "Poetry is a Spirit", "The world longs for
a new expression of the Meaning of life and reality").
And when the test of empirical verifiability came to be
applied to moral and aesthetic statements Ogden and Richards
either had to reject them as meaningless, or to invent

4. cf. Arthur Pap: Elements of Analytic Philosophy (The Macmil-
a special, non-cognitive kind of meaning for them, and since such statements are in fact often significantly made, emotive meaning was a helpful candidate for the job.

Unfortunately Ogden and Richards never make it clear what it means for a use of language to have emotive meaning. They usually imply that its emotive meaning is the actual emotive effect of a particular utterance of the language in question. But this is plainly something different from, though usually dependent on, its meaning. If, as is usually the case, this emotive effect is derivative from the meaning of the utterance, this would seem to show that the expression 'emotive meaning' is itself non-referential, its reference to 'meaning' a pseudo-reference, and only used for its emotive effect. That 'emotive meaning' is really emotive effect, though perhaps restricted to usual emotive effect among a certain group of language uses, emerges quite clearly from Stevenson's definition of 'emotive meaning' in his paper on "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms":

"The emotive meaning of a word is a tendency of a word, arising through the history of its usage, to produce (result from) affective responses in people. It is the immediate aura of feeling which hovers about a word."1

On such a view words like 'love', 'Christ', the

'hydrogen bomb,' would probably qualify as having 'emotive meaning', i.e. a usual emotive effect in whatever context they are used. But this account of emotive meaning can hardly be used to explain the whole significance of what would otherwise be taken to be true or false ethical or aesthetic judgments.

At all events, as Richards and Ogden are aware, the distinction between 'referential' and 'emotive' language is a distinction between uses of language, not between bits of language. Yet it is bits of language, words and sentences as such, capable of many and varied uses, which have meaning, and can acquire emotive force only in virtue of this. Most bits of language can be used both to make statements and to evoke or express attitudes, though usually the one function or the other predominates, sometimes to the frustration of the subordinate function. From this the authors conclude that in exclamations, greetings, oaths, military commands, threats, questions and requests, the referential function is either negligible or absent altogether, so that they can be safely counted as emotive language.¹

If this is so, we have to consider whether 'meaning' at least at sentence level is not best confined to that aspect of the use of language in which it is

¹ M.M., pp. 371, 372.
capable of being true or false and having logical implications and presuppositions, yet leaving its emotive effects as a separate study.

In any case there are uses of language which claim to assert truths as clear as those of scientific statements or the factual statements of common sense which do not purport to be either, e.g., assertions of moral truth; i.e., the assumption that an assertion must report the sense-perceived world or be a disguised ejaculation is not self-evidently true.

c) The Poetic use of Language

Let us now consider the poetic use of language. Ogden and Richards are right that from the point of view of the reader, the main function of poetry - as of art in general - is not the conveying of some specific kind of information about particular matters of fact (which is done more efficiently in plain prose), but the evocation of a certain mood, attitude, experience or perhaps the conveying of a new insight. But they were mistaken when they assumed that this effect could be achieved independently of, or in spite of, the meaning of the language used in poetry. It is only in virtue of the meaning of the words that compose it that a poem can and does achieve its appropriate emotional effect. When listening to poetry
in an unknown foreign language one may of course be aware of some emotional effect due to the sounds of the words, their rhythm, the voice and tone of the reader, our mood, etc., but this is an emotional effect independent of the meaning of the poem. Such a kind of emotive effect would probably be dismissed by Richards as inappropriate. In short, not any kind of emotional reaction can even for Ogden and Richards be taken as a sign that the 'emotive meaning' of an utterance has been understood.

Though poetry is not concerned with literal truth and does not usually use assertive language to make assertions factually true of particular objects in the world, it could not achieve its full emotive effect of inducing "a fitting attitude to experience" if it were composed of nonsense 'words', or words having only 'mythological referents' unconnected with human truths. We must first of all know the 'referential' meaning of a statement (poetic or otherwise), and only afterwards can we take up an attitude made appropriate by it, be it favourable, unfavourable or indifferent.

When, for example, William Blake says:

"O Rose, thou art sick! "Has found out thy bed
The invisible worm, Of crimson joy,
That flies in the night, And his dark secret love
In the howling storm, Does thy life destroy."

he is not concerned to make an assertion about a specific


l. M.M., p. 270
rose and a specific worm, yet he uses a rose and a worm as images in order to convey to us indirectly but more forcefully a general assertion about human life. 'The sick rose' is a symbolic poem, i.e., there is no simple relation between the words used and the objects, feelings or states referred to. Therefore it is almost impossible or very difficult to give their prose equivalents — at most we can interpret his poetic symbols in various, approximate ways. For example we can say that the rose is a symbol of love and 'the howling storm' a symbol of jealousy which slowly, inexorably leads to the corruption of love. But we can also give a different interpretation of the poem, as does for example Arnold Kettle in his article on the "English Blake". He says: "The rose is a rose, with the scent and colour and texture of a rose; and it is also Blake's world, a sick society, corrupted by its spectre, eaten away by false feelings and false ideas based on false relationships."¹

We see that 'the sick rose' contains a whole complex of meanings, and even if we give its prose equivalent as being a report of either or both individual and social corruption, whether physical, intellectual, or moral, we still feel that no explanation can fully exhaust the richness of the poem, but nevertheless this is constituted by the referential meanings of the words used.

The meaning of Blake's poem depends on the meaning of the words of the poem; the emotive effect and the assertive meaning are not mutually exclusive but interdependent, though it is in virtue of the poetic formulation of the assertion that the force of the emotive effect is what it is.

Therefore it is only in virtue of the meaning of a sentence, or expression or statement, be it scientific, empirical or poetic, i.e. in virtue of "the rules, habits, conventions governing its correct use,"¹ that the appropriate emotive effect occurs. That a use of words has an emotive effect is not a distinguishing characteristic of a poetic use of language. Every judgment has its emotive aspect (and the 'aura of feeling' is not restricted to uses of sentences with purely 'emotive meaning' as Stevenson suggests), and most emotional states depend on our beliefs, i.e., our explicit or implicit judgments about what is the case. To want to separate, as Richards tries to do in his account of the poetic use of language, the referential from the emotive functions is to force language into a bed of Procrustes in order to justify a theory.

Now since Ogden and Richards realise (as Russell does not) that it is uses of language rather than bits

(e.g. sentences) which must be distinguished as used primarily to state facts or used primarily to evoke emotions, they could have distinguished the poetic use of language at least to some extent as that in which the hearer is aware that it is only the latter which is intended. Then if they had some way, independently of 'adapted response', for identifying the referential meaning of utterances, they could say that utterances could be used in poetry with their referential meaning for their emotive effects even though their actual referential function was cancelled by the poetic context. Indeed Ogden and Richards hold that in poetry "any symbolic function that the words may have is instrumental only and subsidiary to the evocative function."¹ But since on their theory understanding the referential meaning of an utterance just consists in adopting adapted attitudes of expectation, it follows that poetry where such expectations are cancelled by the context, cannot be understood by the hearer; yet it is appropriately emotively effective. Clearly something is wrong with this account of the poetic use of language. Sometimes the use of the expression 'meaning' in 'the meaning of a poem' is very like that in 'the meaning of Christ's crucifixion', i.e., as equivalent to 'practical importance', and very nearly 'emotive effect'.

¹. M.M., p.259
But for a poem to have such an effect a necessary condition is that it should be made up of words which have meaning in a different sense. Having meaning in this further sense is what makes words words rather than marks or noises, and if a poem must be made up of words, these must have meaning in the primary sense of meaning applicable to the language of the poem as to all language. 'Referential' is far too specific a label for it.

To sum up: 'the meaning of' the language used in, for example, The Ancient Mariner is the quasi-factual narrative it reports, and it is not the emotions it does evoke, nor the emotions Coleridge meant it to evoke, nor the emotions it appropriately evokes: i.e. emotive effect is perhaps vital in poetry, and is dependent on, but quite different from, meaning in any sense.

Another distinction between the referential and the emotive uses of language lies, according to Richards, in the different kind of internal relations and interconnections appropriate to each. The logical interconnection of references is characteristic only of scientific language, whereas the proper organisation of emotive language is one of "emotional interconnection", for which, "logical arrangement is not necessary".¹

This is surely a dogmatic assertion, not to say an irrational one. Even if it is true that "Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas," it does not follow that there are no reasons, i.e., no justifications for one's emotional choices and attitudes; it would mean only that they are too fine and elusive to be caught in the web of a logical schema, unless one uses an extended concept of logic. It is probably only the mentally unbalanced person's use of language which may be allowed to have no logical connection, and even here we often find a para­logical 'method in his madness'.

The difference then between the two uses of language is not that one is logical and referential and the other illogical and emotive (as Richards asserts), but that the interconnection we mostly find in poetry is mediated by emotional phenomena and hence apparently concentrated and elliptical, often resulting in the joining together of apparently unconnected images and thoughts. It is we, the reader, who must supply the missing, intermediate links and stages of the emotive development in the poem - and this is one of the jobs of clarificatory criticism. There is no justification for Richards' sweeping generalisation that emotional interconnection often has no dependence upon logical relations of references. There is a logic of the emotions (a rational as against an irrational connection between them and the world), just
as there is a logic of thought. The main difference lies, as I have tried to show, in the degree of their verbalisation. When - and if - we have as rich a theoretical vocabulary for the discrimination of emotions as we now have for the most varied objects of thought, their interconnection will also become more amenable to analysis. (It may, of course, be argued that all we need is not a richer vocabulary but only a finer sensibility.)

Let us consider what Richards might take as a justification for his view, an example from the main source of emotive language - poetry. Let us take Blake's poem "The Clod and the Pebble".

"Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair....

Love seeketh only self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite."

Here we have a typical example of emotional interconnection which seems to support Richards in being clearly of the form 'A is B and A is not-B'. Richards would say it is not logical, but that for Blake's "emotive purposes logical arrangement is not necessary." But the poet would strongly object to our transformation of his poem into its logical

1. P.L.C. p.268
equivalent - 'A is B and A is not-B' because it constitutes both a logical contradiction and a factual falsification: the Love of the first stanza is not the same love as that in the second, and therefore we cannot refer to both of them as A, as we were trying to do; the self-abnegation and the self-seeking do not qualify the same emotion (which would be logically self-contradictory), but either two different emotions in general, or two different particular cases of emotion in two different people. The Clod and the Pebble are both right and they are right at both levels - at that of referential meaning and at that of emotive effect. If it were otherwise, if there really existed this utter independence of factual reference and emotional attitude and the supposedly different mental processes corresponding to them, there would be no possibility of ever justifying our attitudes by appealing to facts.

Science, (always with a capital S), says Richards, always deals with undistorted references; art, poetry, and "innumerable other human activities not less important... "require distorted references or, more plainly, fictions.

This again is itself a distortion of facts, not to say a fiction. The scientist who deals with atoms,

1. P.L.C., p.266. (Author's italics.)
protons and neutrons, or the poet who deals with daffodils are both dealing with fictions or both dealing with words used to refer to objects. They are simply using different techniques of describing these objects. If the scientist's references are distorted, if they are fictitious, then his theory will ultimately be invalidated. If the poet's references are distorted, they will not be excused by being called 'fictions' but will rightly be called implausible fictions. If we accepted Richards' view, we would expect all literature and all poetry to be but variations on the theme of Alice in Wonderland. And our judgment of them, if it is to accord with Richards' demands, would have to be like Alice's after reading "Jabberwocky":

"It seems very pretty ... but it's rather hard to understand! Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas - only I don't exactly know what they are!"...

But then Alice did not realise that as she was reading poetry she had no right and no need to know "what they are". For Richards, her initial response was both adequate and sufficient. But not for us.

Perhaps the ambiguity and inconsistency of the theory of emotive meaning arises from Richards' adopting different attitudes to, and hence giving different accounts

of, science and art. In the case of science he describes the way scientific statements are actually made and never uses prescriptive language in the sense of how he thinks these statements ought to be made; and he is right in applying to them the test of verifiability or correspondence to fact because this is ultimately the test which science (by experiment) does in fact apply to its statements, and the application of such a test is what makes them scientific rather than metaphysical or perhaps pure-mathematical statements. But in the case of poetry, he was not content only to describe the way he thought poetry worked, but proceeded to explain how we ought to understand poetic statements. If he had been satisfied with drawing our attention to the fact that the truth about particular matters of fact which may be expressed by a poem should not be the sole, or the most important, factor in our aesthetic appreciation, much controversy would have been avoided. But when he says that "poetry seems about the return to the conditions of its greatness, by abandoning the obsession of knowledge and symbolic truth," he commits himself to the rejection of much great poetry which does embody truth-claims, and whose greatness as poetry is inseparable from them. Subtract from Prometheus Bound Aeschylus' concern with true freedom, from Paradise Lost Milton's concern with man's spiritual

fall, from War and Peace Tolstoy's concern with the life of man (and of woman), take away the truth-claims of these works, and their greatness will surely be impaired. We admit that these truth-claims are not made by means of assertive statements, but we hold that a poetic statement which is purely emotive (non-referential) would be meaningless and hence even emotively ineffective, because incapable of arousing any kind of "attitude to experience". Rimbaud's poem Voyelles is a case in point:

"A noir, E blanc, I rouge, O bleu, voyelles,
Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes.
A, noir corset velu des mouches éclatantes
Qui bombillent autour des puanteurs cruelles,..."

Richards might say that this poem justifies his belief that in poetry "Many arrangements of words evoke attitudes without any reference being required en route", but actually even here the language is 'referential', and apart from its discriminating references (e.g. to vowels and colours) we could not get any emotive effect from it.

We find therefore that any comprehensible use of language will be referential, and that directly or indirectly a question of truth or falsehood applies equally to all our statements, whether they are predominately referential or emotive. But a given statement is verified in different ways in different situations. If I say "I am miserable

1. P.L.C., p.267
today", the question whether this is verifiable in any strictly scientific way is surely not the right question to ask (unless perhaps for a doctor), because misery or happiness, just like beauty or goodness is not something that can be measured or weighed, though I can tell whether I am more or less miserable today than last time, and therefore it can be measured - roughly, by introspection. But the labelling of such a statement as a 'pseudo-statement' by Ogden and Richards, a mere expression of feeling without any referent is surely unwarranted. If I honestly mean what I say, if the statement corresponds to my experience of 'feeling-miserable-here-now', then it is just as true as if I had said "I weigh 8 stones today". The difference of course is in the kind of test by which we verify the two statements: the one by means of weighing machines, the other by careful consideration of how we feel or by psychological tests. And if "I am miserable today" is considered as an 'emotive statement' just because it reports an emotional state, then there is no reason for regarding "I am having synaesthesia" as descriptive.

Philip Wheelwright has rightly pointed out that Richards' view rests on the mistaken assumption "that only scientifically determinable objects ... are the only objects there are, and the only objects which can significantly be talked about."¹ From this basic tenet

it logically followed that all those referents which are not 'scientifically determinable', like Goodness, Beauty, Virtue, etc., are therefore "mythological referents".¹

But Ogden and Richards not only set up an antithesis between referential and emotive meaning, they also asserted their independence of each other. They say that "It is not necessary to know what things are in order to take up fitting attitudes towards them."² Let us try and apply this statement (is it referential or emotive?) to a concrete instance: I do not have to know that the noise in the jungle is that of a tiger in order to take up an attitude, but my attitude will not be fitting unless what I heard is what I took it to be, the noise of a tiger or something comparable. If I cannot identify the noise I may take up 'the fitting attitude' to take up on hearing an unidentified noise in the jungle, but I know that I have heard an unidentified noise and the fittingness of the attitude is a function of this judgment. If they mean that one can elicit a fitting attitude from a person whom one keeps in ignorance of the object the attitude fits, this is true, but the person does not 'take up' such an attitude towards the object, it is just evoked in him. Perhaps this is the way Ogden and Richards thought poetry worked.

Thus, by confining the 'referential' (true-or-false) use of language to bare science, poetry, literature, philosophy and ethics were relegated to the limbo of emotive language, with the task of evoking 'fitting attitudes' to 'mythological referents'; and though we may now be made conscious by Ogden and Richards' work of the whole make-believe procedure, we are yet still to be encouraged to go on giving them our wholehearted 'imaginative assents'.

But one cannot keep up for long two contrary beliefs: the belief that poetry (and emotive language in general) is not concerned with truth and the belief that it is all-important for the ordering of our inner lives. Richards came therefore to abandon one of these positions for the sake of the other. Indeed, as A. Tate puts it, "Mr. Richards' books may be seen together as a parable, as a mythical and dramatic projection, of the failure of the modern mind to understand poetry on the assumptions underlying the demi-religion of positivism."  

The belief that there is only one kind of truth or knowledge, the scientific, if brought to its logical conclusion, would have led to the wholesale "renunciation of poetry because it cannot compete with the current version of our objective world." 

In his maturest work, Coleridge on Imagination, Richards tries to resolve this apparent antithesis between science and poetry, truth and falsehood, objective fact and experience. So he prudently abandons his early extreme position and has now come round to regard all man's accounts of himself and the world as equally mythical. He admits that now "knowledge in all its varieties - scientific, moral, religious - has come to seem a vast mythology with its sub-orders divided according to their different pragmatic sanctions."¹ Now all systems of knowledge, all traditional schemas of beliefs and religion, all scientific and historical accounts are regarded simply as different systems of myths. Of all these myths, "It is the privilege of poetry to preserve us from taking our notions either for things or for ourselves."² Whereas once Richards regarded only Science as capable of furnishing an exact and truthful account of 'reality', as the only indubitable source of knowledge, he now seems to hold that poetry too is a source of knowledge, or rather of mythology! But how can we classify anything as mythology except by contrast with something we take to be reality? However if all accounts of the

¹ Richards: Coleridge on Imagination, p.227
² Richards: -do- p.153
world are equally arbitrary projections of the mind; then, if we have to choose between the prosaic accounts of science and the imaginative accounts of art, we should naturally choose the latter. And this is the choice which Richards makes, and which he wants us to make as well: "Poetry is the completest mode of utterance,"¹ he says, and implies that this completeness is more valuable than the incomplete, piecemeal accuracy of scientific utterance.

We may agree with the late Richards that the poetic is more nearly complete than the scientific utterance because it gives us not only the bare fact, the 'this' or 'that', but the fact as seen and felt and experienced by a human being from his unique point of view, the complete relation of a specific subject to a specific object, the given-in-experience to an individual perceiver. Poetry goes beyond science to realms where science cannot tread. Although poetry cannot reach the vast abstractions of science, it is no less capable of its special kind of truth in its rendering both of the universal element in human nature and in life and of the particularity and uniqueness of things and their meaning for particular persons. Science and poetry are not two opposites but

¹ Richards: Coleridge on Imagination, p.163.
two different techniques of describing our world (and man), the one in order to master and change it, the other in order to know and understand it better. But whereas the scientific statement must correspond to the objective interpersonal fact if it is to be applied successfully in practice, the poetic statement is true if it corresponds to imagined, actual or possible human experience.

We shall see in the sequel how the early Richards' belief in the primacy and universality of scientific method for establishing truth led to his attempt to outline a descriptive psychological theory of value, and drove him to adopt a subjective view of the nature of the aesthetic evaluation, and an emotive-expressive analysis of the aesthetic judgment. On the other hand he never put his psychological theory of value into practice, and in his practical criticism (in contrast to his theory) he insists on the equivalence, if not the primacy of recognition and understanding over emotional response in aesthetic appreciation.

My main objection to Richards' theory of language is thus that his categories are unclear and make it impossible to distinguish the scientific from the poetic use of language, including assertive language. The main points of my criticism are:

1. We must separate the referential use of language from the statement-making use of language. As
Strawson has shown, there are different linguistic rules for referring (or mentioning), and rules for attributing and ascribing.

Nearly all uses, except pure ejaculations, are 'referential' in the broad sense, i.e., contain certain expressions used to refer to things (in the vaguest sense of that word, covering anything mentionable). Commands, questions, most exclamations, requests, etc., all contain references but do not make statements. Poetry (except nonsense verse, and even this really - see Lewis Carroll's word by word explanation of the meaning of the words used in 'Jabberwocky') is clearly referential in this sense.

2. We might separate the 'scientific' referential use of language (in Richards' sense of 'scientific') from the general referential use; as consisting of expressions used to refer to sense-perceptible objects, and to such objects as are merely theoretical aids to explaining the sense-perceived behaviour of such objects.

But poetry just as much as science refers to roses and rainbows, though it makes different sorts of assertions about them.

Assertions can be made about other sorts of objects, e.g., the virtues and vices, Beauty, Goodness, etc., though it may be that references to such objects
must be connected with statements about sense-perceptible ones in some way if they are to be significant, as must references to electrons, vitamins, phlogiston, the ether, etc.

3. Considerations of ease and determinacy of interpersonal verifiability might then lead us to accept some objects as basic and statements about these as verifiable in a primary sense; and to the view that all language whatever gets what interpersonal significance it has from its logical connections with such statements (though these connections must be envisaged as of very complex and varied character if the view is to be plausible at all). Some such view might be an acceptable version of Richards' anti-metaphysical position as to the status of Beauty etc., while leaving scope for rejecting his account of the relation these notions must have to his 'basic' statements in order to retain significance, but

4. We must recognise the various types of assertive utterance (utterances which can be used to make assertions) and the various kinds of truth and falsity distinguishing them,

   e.g. those which are true-or-false of particular facts in the world which may be

   private (about misery, synaesthesis) or
   public (about this rose, this worm);

   those which are true-or-false of some general
aspect of reality or human life referred to or described as such,

  e.g. All matter is composed of atoms.
  
  Some love corrupts;

those which are true-or-false of some general aspect of reality or human life referred to indirectly by means of direct reference to some imaginary particular situation, e.g. Blake's rose.

A reference to an imaginary particular situation mediating a general truth may look like a reference to an actual particular situation about which the statement would be false. "I am miserable today" might be written by a happy poet who had found a way to describe truly human misery via a particular but imaginary self-description.

It should be clear from the above that no simple exclusive dichotomy of referential and emotive uses, or of scientific and poetic uses, of language is possible.
a) Rejection of the Metaphysical theory of value

"Realise thyself, Amoeba dear," said Will: and Amoeba realised herself... And in the latter days Homo appeared... And when Homo came to study the parts of speech, he wove himself a noose of Words. And he hearkened to himself, and bowed his head and made abstractions, hypostatising and glorifying. Thus arose Church and State and Strife upon the Earth...

Then had Reason compassion on him, and gave him the Linguistic Conscience, and spake again softly: "Go to now, be a Man, Homo! Cast away the Noose of Words that thou hast woven, that it strangle thee not. Behold! the Doctrine of Symbolism, which illumineth all things...

Thus the Realisation of Amoeba ended in the Realisation of an Error..."

("The Meaning of Meaning", Appendix E, p.449)

I have quoted from the Fable of the Amoeba at length, because, in spite of its apparent tone of self-mockery, it was meant to be taken seriously. It is important because it gives Richards' view on many problems and their solution in a nutshell.

If we try to extract the literal meaning from its metaphorical language, it comes to this: all the problems that have preoccupied man from the earliest time to the present day, the pivotal questions of Philosophy, Ethics and Aesthetics, are merely 'pseudo-problems'. Man has lived and died for Abstractions he himself
created. Now that he has woken up at last to realise his error, (thanks to the revelations of linguistics) the golden age of Reason is at hand. With the help of the Science of Symbolism, the study of the influence of language upon thought, and the theory of Definition, all the ambiguities of meaning of words like Truth, Reality, Beauty, Goodness, and the ghostly Universals and Values such words were thought to stand for, 'will vanish to airy nothing'. In short, all, or at least most, philosophical problems were merely "Phantoms due to linguistic misconception."¹

Of these metaphysical phantoms, Beauty is one of the most important and elusive. In The Foundations of Aesthetics, The Principles of Literary Criticism, and to some extent in The Meaning of Meaning, Richards is intent to prove that all the aesthetic theories of the past were mistaken because they were theories of Beauty - a metaphysical phantom, based on the mistaken "belief that there is such a quality or attribute, namely Beauty, which attaches to things which we rightly call beautiful."² Richards holds the same view about all the following aesthetic terms: 'construction', 'form', 'balance',

'composition', 'design', 'unity', 'expression', 'depth', 'movement', 'texture', 'solidity', 'rhythm', 'stress', 'plot', 'character', 'harmony', 'atmosphere', 'development'; these are all, wrongly, taken to stand for "qualities inherent in things outside the mind." They "do not apply to such objects but to states of mind, to experiences."  

We saw in the foregoing chapter that for Richards the literal meaning of a word was what it referred to; hence the literal meaning of "Beauty" must be sought in what 'it' refers to. But, says Richards, "To think about Good or Beauty is not necessarily to refer to anything," because Beauty has no referent. What we take to be its referent is only a 'linguistic phantom'.  

It is in order to do away with such 'linguistic phantoms' that the method of Definition is put forward. It "consists in the substitution (for any doubtful concept) of a symbol or symbols which can be better understood" and accordingly on Richards' theory of meaning, "It involves the selection of known referents as starting-points and the identification of the definiendum by its connection with these." Its task is to find out the referent to which people are actually referring when they use ambiguous concepts like Beauty.  

With this view of Definition, Richards divides  

1. P.L.C., p.21  
2. P.L.C., p.22  
3. P.L.C., p.264  
4. M.M., 387
all aesthetic theories into three main groups according to the objects they take to be referred to by means of the concept of Beauty.

1. Doctrines which "begin with the object itself" (i.e. with the beautiful object).

2. Doctrines which "begin with things such as Nature, Genius, Perfection, the Ideal", (i.e. such general conceptions as these).

3. Doctrines which begin with the effect of beauty on us.

Each group is in its turn further subdivided so that we get an "approximately complete" list of definitions of the expression 'is beautiful'.

And this is the 'approximately complete' list of definitions:

1. "Anything is beautiful which possesses the simple quality of Beauty.
2. Anything is beautiful which has a specified Form.
3. Anything is beautiful which is an imitation of Nature.
4. Anything is beautiful which results from successful exploitation of a medium.
5. Anything is beautiful which is the mark of Genius.
6. Anything is beautiful which reveals (a) Truth, (b) the Spirit of Nature, (c) the Ideal, (d) the Universal, (e) the Typical.
7. Anything is beautiful which produces Illusion.
8. Anything is beautiful which leads to desirable Social effects.
9. Anything is beautiful which is an Expression.
10. Anything is beautiful which causes Pleasure.

1, 2. M.M., p.247.
11. Anything is beautiful which excites Emotion.
12. Anything is beautiful which promotes a specific Emotion.
13. Anything is beautiful which involves the processes of Empathy.
14. Anything is beautiful which heightens Vitality.
15. Anything is beautiful which brings us in touch with exceptional personalities.
16. Anything is beautiful which induces Synaesthesis."

The first fifteen definitions are rejected by Richards as either false, (involving an hypostatization of Beauty), vague (what is Imitation and what is Nature?), or insufficient (it is true that the experience of the beautiful heightens vitality but many other experiences also do so). Although in his general criticism he is far more lenient towards other psychological theories of beauty, they err in assuming a special kind of pleasure, the aesthetic, which is taken to be superior to all other pleasures, or a special kind of aesthetic emotion unrelated to practical life, or by ascribing to the aesthetic experience a special form "disinterestedness, detachment, distance, impersonality, subjective universality," which distinguishes it from all other experiences. Richards also rejects these modern theories of beauty, because his introspective evidence does not corroborate the special aesthetic experience, or emotion, or form, they postulate.

Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, Boileau, Burke, M. Arnold, Ruskin, Croce, Clive Bell, Roger Fry, Münsterberg, Lipps, Vernon Lee, — philosophers, aestheticians, poets and critics throughout the ages — have, in short, unconsciously fallen into their own linguistic pitfalls because their problem (What is Beauty?) was only a pseudo-problem which could not be significantly answered.

Richards now is confident that, armed with the scientific method of Definition, he will escape their fate. This method will enable him, he thinks, to transform Aesthetics from a barren branch of Speculative Philosophy into a Science. Its function will no longer be the positing of unanswerable questions and it will not try to probe into the ultimate nature, meaning and value of Beauty. Convinced that only Science could tell us what 'Beauty' really referred to, viz. Synaesthesia, a psychological phenomenon, Richards, on his rejection of Metaphysics turns to Psychology.

And so, Aesthetics will now pose problems which can be solved, and will thus consciously limit its field
of inquiry to the description of the describable, viz. the actual psychological processes and attitudes aroused, i.e., the effects produced on us, by works of art.

"Critical remarks are merely a branch of psychological remarks"; "no ethical or metaphysical ideas need be introduced to explain value" and it follows that Aesthetics loses its raison d'être as an independent discipline and will become a branch of Psychology.

Richards thus brings to its conclusion his long inquiry into the nature of Beauty and the meaning of 'beauty' with the coining of a new term for a psychological state - Synaesthesis - which is to be the corner-stone of his scientific theory of Aesthetics. Having rejected all traditional and modern theories as unscientific and emotive, he now concludes that the theory of 'Synaesthesis' "may perhaps be regarded as the Theory of Beauty par excellence". The single, exhaustive definition has been found at last; the much-criticised term 'beautiful' has come back redefined as a simple description = "productive of such and such feelings in so and so."

Now as a matter of fact, there is a branch of Psychology which deals with responses to acknowledged works of art, and in so far as 'Synaesthesis' is put forward merely as a name for the typical response of

of this kind, Richards *is* doing science (even if not very well-grounded science) in investigating such responses, in so far as he is doing merely descriptive work; and 'beauty' in this definition becomes a merely classificatory descriptive word. But he does not and cannot stick to plain description, and we find him in practice smuggling in a value-content; for not anyone's response to a work of art, on any occasion, qualifies as the proper aesthetic response; the synaesthesia occasioned in the vulgar mind by a sentimental appeal to 'stock attitudes' evokes his sternest reprobation. Moreover, in retaining the misleading term 'beauty', even in its sterilised, newly defined sense, Richards must have been conscious of a certain irony in this situation. In the summary on the Meaning of Beauty (in *The Meaning of Meaning*) he adds an explanation: If "we elect to continue to employ the term Beauty as a shorthand substitute for the definition we favour, we shall do so only on grounds of ethics and expediency" ...¹ He seems to have overlooked the fact that his distinguished predecessors might equally well have been doing exactly the same. But in view of his criticism of their practice it is far more serious to find in him this candid admission of following it "on grounds of ethics and expediency",

¹. M.M., p.388.
i.e. using beauty not as a precisely defined term now freed from misleading associations, but as an emotive expression still carrying those misleading associations - a Word of Power.

As regards the Definitions of Beauty, it is not clear whether they have been used as Richards thinks they have, i.e. as equivalent symbols (what he calls substitute-symbols) for 'is beautiful' or whether they were generally put forward as necessary and sufficient conditions, offering criteria of Beauty,\(^1\) itself to be taken as a rather general value-term. I think the latter position is that taken by most aestheticians. But if Richards himself offers 'synaesthesia-inducing' as an empirically testable term containing the whole literal meaning of 'beautiful', any additional effect of the latter term being purely emotive, then he is committed to the former position. And in so far as we take 'X is beautiful' to be a value-judgment and 'X induces synaesthesia' to be empirically testable we must hold him to commit the 'naturalistic fallacy'.\(^2\) We will consider this aspect of Richards' theory later. Here we can notice his motive for offering such a definition.

Just as the naturalistic philosophers in Ethics

"are unwilling to admit the existence of any characteristics which cannot be reduced to empirical terms" so Richards and other naturalistic philosophers in aesthetics hold that we could never be justified in asserting (and as a matter of fact never are asserting) more by 'This is beautiful' than what can be analysed in empirical psychological terms, in this case, 'the occurrence of synaesthesia'.

Now although there are some cases in which the speaker uses 'beautiful' naturalistically and he can therefore be taken as meaning "This induces synaesthesia in me here, now", it neither follows that the meaning of 'beauty' is identical with the meaning of synaesthesia-producing, nor, therefore, that any evaluative conclusion can be deduced from a non-evaluative premise.

In brief, Richards' argument in his theoretical, anti-metaphysical, pro-scientific moments is as follows:

There is no one valued property common to all objects which we call beautiful, i.e. there is no Universal 'Beauty' (Fact).

But there is just one valued experience which we signalise by any judgment that X is beautiful i.e. there is a psychological state of 'Synaesthesia' (Fact).

Hence we say 'X is beautiful' when and only when
X gives us Synaesthesia' (Theory).

Hence 'X is beautiful' means 'X gives us Synaesthesia'
(Theory).

Hence 'Beautiful' = 'Synaesthesia-inducing'
(Definition).

Hence the (descriptive scientific) theory of
the occurrence of Synaesthesia = the theory of aesthetics.

This argument is acceptable if the theory of
meaning and therefore the definition of 'beautiful'
is acceptable in any such form as 'X is beautiful
if and only if X gives [at least one
(some specified person(s))
(most people]
synaesthesia,' where the definiens is empirically
ascertainable. (This leaves open the question as to
whether this is so with Synaesthesia.) But if we take
'beautiful' to be a value-term (rejecting Richards'
theory of meaning) it commits the Naturalistic Fallacy.
In his scientific moments Richards adheres to his theory
of meaning and his definition and is unmoved by this
objection.

But in his practical, literary-critic moments
he forgets his theory of meaning and his definition and
takes instead:

'X is beautiful' if and only if X gives the right
sort of Synaesthesia' (no 'stock attitudes'), where the 'right sort of Synaesthesia' is obtained from responding to the right poems, and the 'right poems' are such as have characteristics which Richards is willing to indicate. Clearly Richards is forced to make a genuine value-judgment (not any sort of scientific prediction about actual experiences) and we find him doing so in those very words he wants to throw out as representing linguistic phantoms, but which he has to use for their evaluative force.

Synaesthesia, in so far as it is a distinguishable psychological phenomenon, might well be a necessary condition in our valued aesthetic experience, but its occurrence is not a sufficient condition for our aesthetic judgments and its avowal is not a logically adequate substitute for them. Ewing's argument against a naturalistic definition of 'good' applies mutatis mutandis to 'beautiful' here:

"Suppose a future physiologist were (as is logically possible) to discover a specific modification of the brain which accompanied every good experience or action" (or experience of beauty). "The brain-modification would then be an infallible sign of goodness", (or of beauty) "but it still certainly would not follow that 'good'" (or beautiful) "just meant 'accompanied by this new brain-modification' or that goodness" (or beauty) "was identical with the property of being thus accompanied. If it were, no people who lived before this physiological discovery could have meant anything by 'good'."1 (or beautiful).

If therefore we hold that the meaning of 'beauty' is not analysable in terms of any non-value description, it does not follow that it is to be rejected as redundant or a linguistic phantom. Even if the occurrence of certain emotions is a necessary condition of valued aesthetic experience and judgment it does not follow that the judgment is about the psychological phenomena occasioning it. Therefore Richards' naturalistic definition of beauty must be rejected.

We conclude from the foregoing that, if 'beauty' is a value-term, then one must reject not only metaphysical theories of beauty because they are metaphysically descriptive but psychological theories as well.

Thus the quest for a descriptive Science of Aesthetics is doomed to failure from the outset: its subject, Beauty, cannot be given a descriptive definition. And if we find Richards himself using it as a value-term in his practice, and thus according to his own theory using purely emotive noises, this may seem reason enough for rejecting out of hand any non-value definition offered. And in effect we shall find that even in his theory, in his attempts to define 'is beautiful' he has to employ other value-terms, such as 'order', 'coherence', 'balance', 'being fully alive', etc. For although it is often not clear what terms count as purely descriptive,
(i.e. roughly, classificatory simply for the sake of convenient classification), and what terms as at least partly evaluative, in Richards' use these terms are clearly evaluative.

There is perhaps room for a search for proper criteria of an empirically testable sort on which to base beauty-judgments. But, even if we try to define 'Beauty', like Richards, in terms of psychological phenomena, we should have to define it in terms of the proper occasions of psychological phenomena, where 'proper' implies the use of standards which refer us back to qualities of objects rather than individual responses.

Therefore, Aesthetics in so far as it is the theory of beauty must be the study of the character of special qualities of objects and not the study of psychological phenomena.

We have above examined two points of Richards' protest against earlier theories of aesthetics:

1. That Beauty is not a metaphysical entity or quality.

2. That valuing is a psychological activity of which we can construct a descriptive empirical theory, i.e.: that what we need is a scientific psychological theory of value.
We found that his first objection was justified, but we pointed out that his second objection directs attention to the psychology of aesthetic appreciation where aesthetics concerns the correct or incorrect performance of valuing. It is this latter type of theory which metaphysicians were concerned to establish, and with which Richards himself is concerned in practice, and to which he appeals in the development of his notion of synaesthesia.

b) The quest for a Science of Aesthetics

We saw that Richards wanted to save aesthetics from the hands of speculative philosophers, and to put it into the competent hands of men of science who had no particular metaphysical axe to grind and could therefore be trusted to keep to facts.

Now Richards is quite right in rejecting certain metaphysical theories of beauty as vague and inadequate, for the invocation of 'Intuition', 'Nature', 'Genius', 'Form' is certainly not the invocation of empirically instantiated concepts. Already before Richards, Roger Fry, in his Essay 'Retrospect' (1920), had arrived at the same conclusion:
"Like our predecessors we sought for the
criteria of the beautiful, whether in art or nature.
And always this search led to a tangle of contradictions
or else to metaphysical ideas so vague as to be
inapplicable to concrete cases."¹

On rejecting metaphysics, Richards turned to
psychology on the basis of which, he thought, the
empirically verifiable concepts relevant to aesthetics
could be found. Henceforth, he declared, the function
of Aesthetics as a Science will be the description and
ordering of the attitudes evoked by art, ² and not the
description and ordering of the objects of art which
evoke these attitudes.³ But Richards is aware that modern
psychology has not yet reached the stage of an exact
science like botany or chemistry, and he repeatedly
gives warning against the excesses of psychoanalysis,
while praising the work of Stout and Ward.⁴ But his praise
of these psychologists is no more than lip-service if
we judge by his practice, for Richards adopts the outlook
and the terminology of the Behaviourists in trying to
transform Aesthetics into a science. Psychology indeed
was not yet an exact science, but at least in its
neurological form it was on the way to becoming one.
Watson had done some reliable experimental work on the
three 'primary emotions' - fear, rage and love, - without

2. M.M., p.271
3. PLC., pp.20-22 and passim.
using that necessary evil of the traditional psychologists, introspection, and its key term, 'experience'. For these he was able to substitute observed "interaction between stimulus-situation and response."¹ So he dispensed with talk of emotion, feelings, thoughts, mind and consciousness altogether, and replaced it by talk of different modifications and adaptations of the nervous system to external stimuli.

It seemed thus reasonable to Richards to hope that he could do the same in Aesthetics, and could replace the traditional term 'aesthetic experience' by 'interaction between stimulus-situation and response'. At all events, the new terminology sounded reassuringly scientific.

Now in order to use this behaviouristic terminology aesthetics must be restricted to a definitely limited and specified field, viz. the description and 'ordering' of attitudes evoked by art. So whenever the term 'beautiful' is used by Richards, he will avoid what he calls the 'Utraquistic subterfuge', i.e. he will not be referring to "qualities of the beautiful object", but "to emotional effects of these qualities on the beholder."² Thus whenever Richards asserts 'X is beautiful' he will not mean that

¹ "Behaviourism" by J. Watson, reviewed by Richards, The Criterion, 1925-26.
² M.M., p.239. (My italics).
it is beautiful, but he will mean "that it causes an experience which is valuable in certain ways."\(^1\) He justifies this by his statement that "the remarks we make as critics do not apply to such objects but to states of mind, to experiences."\(^2\)

From the above quotations it is apparent that Richards, while trying to escape from one extreme, fell into another. True, the quest for a simple quality or Form of beauty where this was confined to a study of the objects thought to manifest it had had the bad consequence that, taking a restrictive definition of beauty as their premise, such inquiries proved theoretically rigid and gave what Richards thought to be implausible and irrelevant results like studies of the ugly, the charming, the grotesque and the ridiculous. Richards on the other hand, declares that although the business of the aesthetician is the pursuit of scientific or factual truth, it is scientific or factual truth only about the experience of the spectator, and the aesthetician may not go beyond the experience of the spectator in its subjective aspect. This is surely as extreme and implausible a view as that of the pure objectivists.

True also, in modern times, the same search for an all-embracing definition of beauty has led to an

inquiry into the specific emotion (Croce, Bell, Fry) or
the supposed specific imitative movement (Lipps'
'Einfuehlung') aroused by art. But most of these theorists,
though sometimes one-sided, held firmly to the view that
the true object of their inquiry was the work of art,
as picked out by this emotion, the aesthetic object,
as distinct from the spectator (although by its very
nature as an artefact it is meant for him). But even if
we accept Richards' definition "anything is beautiful
which induces synaesthesis", the conclusion he draws
from it as to the proper field of aesthetic inquiry is
not warranted by the premise. Even if 'beautiful' =
'inducing synaesthesis', then the science of the beautiful
is the science of those objects which induce synaesthesis
and not just of the synaesthesis itself.

As H. Osborne (in Aesthetics and Criticism)¹ has
shown, Richards' position really springs from an epistemo-
logical muddle. The problem whether the quality of
beauty and, indeed, that of redness are objective (in
the sense of inhering in objects) is a separate problem
from that of the analysis of 'beautiful' as ascribed to
objects.

When I say: "This object is beautiful", the
incontrovertible grammatical point is that beauty is
predicated of the object and not of my feelings. Except

¹. H. Osborne: Aesthetics and Criticism, p.212. (Routledge &
in the context of a general epistemological theory, this judgment cannot be adequately paraphrased by "This object gives me a valued (or a valuable) experience." In the case of redness, in the judgment "This object is red", the inadequacy of the analogous paraphrase (i.e., "This object gives me a perception of red") is clear, and constitutes the objectivity of the quality. The proof of this point is that the statement "This object is red but does not give me an experience of redness" is not self-contradictory (I may know that I am colour-blind). Now if I say "This object is beautiful but does not give me an experience of beauty", my judgment again is not self-contradictory because I may know that others better qualified than myself judge it beautiful, or that I have special non-aesthetic reasons for disliking, and therefore not appreciating it. Richards takes our assumption that 'red' is an objective quality to mean that we "assume a universal 'redness' because red things are every one of them red."¹ Not at all, we only mean that the judgment "This is red" may be truly made even by a colour-blind person who cannot experience the redness.

Thus neither 'redness' nor 'beauty' should be taken to be mere reflections of anyone's individual states of mind, i.e. wholly subjective. True, it was not

¹ M.M., p.194.
a philosopher who said, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," whereas nobody but philosophers (amateur or professional) have said this about redness. As a matter of fact, it is quite easy to convince a man that he is colour-blind, but very difficult to convince someone who thinks himself to have exceptionally advanced tastes that he simply has bad taste. In the first case we appeal to common usage, and whether the man who is colour-blind accepts or rejects it, the appeal is decisive. In the absence of accepted criteria for the application of words like 'red', the use of colour language, and probably any language, would be impossible. In the second case where a value judgment is clearly involved, we proceed in much the same way, i.e. by an appeal to general (expert) opinion; perhaps by showing that the objector takes a purely personal preference to be a generally based value-judgment; or, if he invokes what he takes to be an aesthetic principle, by pointing out that this, if accepted, would entail the rejection of some acknowledged masterpiece as a bad work of art. But if our opponent still clings to his conviction, there is nothing more we can do. This means that the correctness or incorrectness of aesthetic judgments cannot be logically proved, that in such unfavourable cases they are ultimately undecidable, (though, of course, empirically they are continually being decided). In the absence of accepted criteria for
the application of words like 'beauty', the use of such language leads to talk at cross purposes. But not, as it would in the absence of such criteria for the application of 'red' and other simple observation predicates, to a general breakdown of communication by language at all. In this connection, Prof. Gallie's 'essentially contested concepts' hypothesis is useful in pointing to the actual situation with many value-judgments; which is, that there in no final solution of our problem, and that if there were, the concept of Art as we know it would be superseded altogether.

Further, if Aesthetics is to become the description, classification and ordering of states of mind, as Richards suggests, there arises the important preliminary problem: "How do we distinguish between states of mind?" In the case of synaesthesis it cannot be by reference to the objects stimulating it, for Richards admits that the same state of Synaesthesis can be produced by the most different objects: "It can be given by a carpet or a pot or by a gesture as unmistakably as by the Parthenon, it may come about through an epigram as clearly as through a Sonata." If the most different objects can induce synaesthesia this seems to show that consideration of the object is irrelevant. But the real difficulty posed by this situation

2. F.L.C., p.245.
is this:

In virtue of what are our reactions to such different objects grouped together as cases of synaesthesia, if this is not a specific detectable emotion? And if there is any detectable experience common to our reactions to all and only these objects, must this not be precisely the specific aesthetic emotion Richards has denied? However, whether there is or is not a specific, detectable emotion or experience induced by different works of art, in studying psychological phenomena in Aesthetics, we must constantly refer back to the works of art which aroused them. If it were otherwise, Aesthetics would indeed become superfluous as an independent discipline, and would have to become a part of the general psychological study of Perception and Emotion, though, even this, is also the study of the objects perceived and of the objects arousing emotions.

We saw how Richards, in his quest for a new Science of Aesthetics, chose the occurrence of Synaesthesia, a subjective, psychological criterion, as the basis of his new theory. But no more than other psychological theories of Aesthetics, can Richards' theory give a satisfactory solution to the resultant problem of distinguishing the occurrence of the relevant experience. His own criticism of a similar theory is both apposite and relevant here. In criticising Miss E.D. Puffer's view
as put forward in her Psychology of Beauty, where she takes the experience of balance to be the experience of a certain form of objective balance, inferred from a subjective state, Richards writes: "This objective balance must be capable of being independently ascertained, not merely inferred from a subjective state." ¹

In short, there is no logical relation between the character of the actual psychological state aroused by an object in a given person at a given time and the character of the object, although there is some logical relation between some characteristics of objects and the occurrence of some psychological phenomena, and this does in fact suggest a more plausible development of Richards' theory. Take for example the characteristic 'appalling': it is objects which are appalling, yet it would surely be odd to say "X is appalling but nobody has ever been or ever will be appalled by X."

Perhaps the most plausible suggestion for Richards is that a similar logical relation holds between "X is beautiful" and an appropriate psychological state, which we may continue to call synaesthesis, such that it is logically odd to say "X is beautiful but nobody has ever experienced or will ever experience synaesthesis owing to X." He might strengthen this to: "X is beautiful = most

¹. The Foundations of Aesthetics, p.88. (My italics)
cultivated people usually experience synaesthesia owing to X." But Richards expressly warns us against jumping to any conclusions from the occurrence of the subjective state to the qualities of the object arousing it: "The balance" (in Synaesthesia) "is not in the structure of the stimulating object, it is in the response."¹ Thus he destroys an important field of inquiry for a Psychology of Aesthetics, viz. the study carried out, for example, by Dr. Eysenck of "the relation between a stimulus (picture, poem, piece of music) and a person who reacts to this stimulus in certain conventional ways,"² the comparison and correlations between different responses of different individuals and cultural groups to the same kind of aesthetic stimuli (shape, colour, sound) from which statistical data certain conclusions might be drawn "regarding the physical properties associated with high-ranking and low-ranking objects respectively."³ Such psychological phenomena - which include valuations - and the factual relations holding between them and some characteristics of objects are the proper study of the Psychology of Aesthetics, though Eysenck's own experiments on atomistic 'aesthetic' preferences seem to have little to do with aesthetic preferences proper.

(Pelican, 1957)
Dr. Eysenck's procedure was scientific, but was based on a self-consciously naturalistic definition of 'beautiful' as "most generally preferred appearance."\(^1\). From this he was able to draw approximately based aesthetic conclusions. Let us suppose thus on the basis of his somewhat arbitrary definitions, viz.

'beautiful' = 'most generally preferred' (statistically ascertainable)

'objective' = 'resulting in generally agreed ascriptions' that beauty can logically be in this sense as 'objective' or 'subjective' as greenness. Then on this basis one can begin a scientific psychological theory of aesthetic preferences (or evaluations). But to take this as a theory of value implies its self-conscious naturalistic definition of beauty as 'most generally appearance', and depends on taking as basic the whole stimulus-response situation. In so far as Richards also takes this to be the basic aesthetic situation, Eysenck can be regarded as carrying out Richards' programme.

We shall see in the sequel that Eysenck concerns himself with ascertaining:

1. What this generally preferred appearance is in different contexts.

2. How general the agreement is, and how individual judgments build up to 'good' or 'bad' taste

1. ibid, p.313.
(i.e. average/divergent preferences). (It is to be noticed that on this view it would be bad taste to like Bartok and good taste to like Victor Sylvester.)

In Eysenck's experiments, he started from the simplest stimuli (single colours and shapes) and gradually proceeded to more complex aesthetic stimuli like pictures by the same painter or by different painters. He claims that his subjects were drawn from widely distributed cultures, I.Q. groups, etc., and that his experiments enable him to conclude "that what is true of simple colour judgments is also true of judgments regarding colour combinations,"\(^1\) namely, that in both cases there was a certain marked degree of agreement in preferences or 'objectivity' of the value-judgments based on them, and that persons sharing the most common preferences among simple stimuli also did so among complex ones, i.e. he could sort out persons with 'good' taste in all tests. From this he concludes that the judgment of 'good taste' is neither dependent on culture nor on individual intelligence but "is firmly anchored in biology" and that ultimately our judgments of beauty depend on "inherited properties of the central nervous system."\(^2\) But since for him 'good taste' = 'average preferences' this is not a surprising conclusion!

1. ibid, p.316.
2. ibid, p.324.
It is moreover relevant to our purposes to notice that having established the existence of a generally operating biological basis for our judgments of 'beauty', Eysenck turned his attention to the stimuli of these and tried to arrive at "a formula, of a completely objective nature, for the measurement of beauty."¹ This is a concern which Richards would take as based on an illusory phantom-property. But Eysenck found that "The most preferred objects seem to be those having a high degree of complexity and a high degree of order."² However he admits that only the formal aspects of art

"lend themselves to measurement and, hence, to the formulation of laws and the accumulation of experimental evidence so desirable when exact statements of relationships are required."³

Thus even for Eysenck only the formal aspects of stimuli of aesthetic experiences are "amenable to scientific laws."⁴ But the aesthetic experience which depends on a work of art, and the aesthetic judgment which results from it, refer, besides to this formal aspect to others as well (e.g. content, treatment) and these cannot be expressed in numerical form. Moreover (and this is most important) we must remember that Eysenck only provides pseudo-aesthetic conclusions in which the word 'beautiful' means no more than 'generally preferred' and 'good taste'

¹. ibid, p.325  
². ibid, p.329 (author's italics)  
³. ibid, p.331  
⁴. ibid, p.332
no more than 'average preferences'. This is of course totally unplausible and unacceptable to Richards himself.

We must therefore conclude that neither Ethics nor Aesthetics are or can be descriptive sciences like chemistry or zoology. If sciences at all, they are normative sciences telling us what we ought to approve, not necessarily what we do approve. Within the field of aesthetical enquiry there are special branches having connection with other sciences. Thus the historical, social, cultural and psychological contexts of aesthetic experience have to be taken into account in a theory of Aesthetics, in as far as it is the study of works of art. If, as I think with G. Boas, "the arts are instruments originally, instruments for satisfying real interests which real human beings possess,"¹ then the study of works of art must take into account the psychology of the man who creates them and of the men for whom they are created, and to this end a Psychology of Aesthetics, though perhaps not the statistical enquiry outlined by Eysenck, has a real contribution to make. But Aesthetics itself, being a normative science, if a science at all, looks for the criteria on which we should pass judgments of value on works of art. If these criteria were applicable only to experiences and not to objects, as Richards'  

theory of Synaesthesis implies, then Aesthetics would cease to be a normative science of judgments of value concerning art and would be reduced to a wholly subjective description of states of mind.

Thus Richards' quest for a Science of Aesthetics having Synaesthesis as its corner-stone fails, since Synaesthesis, being a subjective, psychological criterion applicable only to the responses of the individual subject and not to objects causing these responses, cannot become the ground for any objective, i.e. impersonally valid judgments of value. Synaesthesis would be the lone criterion of the lone response of a lone experience of a lone observer, on which no system or theory of Aesthetics whatsoever could be constructed.

When Richards came to apply his criterion in practice, it proved so utterly inadequate that he quickly abandoned it. In fact he is not really concerned any more than any other aesthetician with the evaluation of private experiences, nor does he accept Eysenck's naturalistic definition of beauty when he condemns 'stock-attitudes' as non-aesthetic. His practical aesthetic judgments actually refer to the work of art in question, and not to his momentary state of mind.

In one word, there is complete divorce between Richards' aesthetic theory and his practice.
c) The new criterion of value: Synaesthesis

If Aesthetics was to become a branch of psychology, or rather of neurology, then the metaphysical theory of value had to be replaced by a psychological theory of value. Richards hoped that, while the terms used in the former had been vague, ambiguous and emotive, the latter would be scientific in its aim, method and terminology.

He found no aesthetic value-terminology which could fill the role of scientific, i.e. precise and unambiguous language, (as being connected in known ways with known, observable, referents), so he defined the aesthetic value terms he needed by means of those of behaviouristic psychology, which was, in the twenties, just coming into vogue. This had an exhilarating effect on the younger intellectuals and seemed to satisfy a definite intellectual and emotional need. Perhaps there was a need for a new prophet - and Richards found him in Watson, the author of Behaviourism. He dreamed of the approach of a new age of science, when man would accept "Watson in place of the Bible, or in place of Confucius or Buddha, as a source of our fundamental conceptions about ourselves." Happily, his dream has not come true and Behaviourism has not ousted the Bible as the basis

1. P.C., p.323.
of our understanding of ourselves and others.

Richards was a revolutionary not so much in removing the emotive power-word 'Beauty' consecrated by tradition and great names, but in being the first to apply the new power-words of science to it. Christopher Isherwood, in his autobiography Lions and Shadows, describes Richards' impact on his generation:

"After attending Richards' lectures on modern poetry, in a moment, all was changed... Poetry wasn't a holy flame, a fire-bird from the moon! it was a group of interrelated stimuli acting upon the ocular nerves, the semi-circular canals, the brain, the solar plexus, the digestive and sexual organs. It did you medically demonstrable good, like a dose of strychnine or salts. We became behaviourists, materialists, atheists... We talked excitedly about the 'phantom aesthetic state'. But if Mr. Richards enormously stimulated us, he plunged us, also, into the profoundest gloom. It seemed that everything we had valued would have to be scrapped."1

The last statement is significant, because it shows not only a possible misinterpretation of Richards' theory but its inherent weakness if it could thus be misinterpreted.

Talk in terms of response and appetite, order and coordination of impulses, and synaesthesia, had ousted the absolute values Beauty, Truth and Goodness, i.e. behaviouristic psychology had replaced Metaphysics. It remained only to apply the new terminology and to realise the promise that most problems

of Aesthetics would be shown to be unreal, due to verbal muddles, while the remaining ones would be clarified and rendered open to scientific solution.

Let us now try to analyse the pivotal terms of the list:

SYNAESTHESIS

Fully aware of the linguistic snares that beset the unwary, Richards took care not to commit any of "the antics of the Fundamentalists". He decided to avail himself of the terms coined by Watson and "to describe and explain all human behaviour entirely in terms of interaction between stimulus-situation and response." Regarding Behaviourism, replacing observable phenomena for dubiously introspectable states of mind, as a radical departure from traditional Psychology, and trying to bring about the same radical departure from traditional Aesthetics, Richards adopted the new terminology as a means to this end. But pending the satisfactory development of behaviouristic technique, he decided to continue using such vague and ambiguous words as 'consciousness' and 'experience' for lack of better terms, while assuming that 'consciousness', 'experience', or 'awareness' could be taken to mean some unspecified happenings in, and modifications of, the nervous system. Richards is not

altogether happy about this situation for we find him reproaching Watson for trying "to persuade people that they have no consciousness."1 Nevertheless Richards wishes to treat such expressions as 'thoughts', 'feelings' and 'experiences' as freely interchangeable with 'reactions to stimuli' and 'adaptations of the organism'.

If all human behaviour and hence all human experience could be explained as a series of stimulus-response situations, and all responses described in terms of homogeneous neurological events or impulses, the only difference between experiences would have to be in terms of the quantity of these events, and not in the quality of the experience. Quantity of impulses would then become the new unit of aesthetic measure. It is obviously very important to know what Richards means by 'impulse'. The best help he gives us to understanding this is as follows:

"The process in the course of which a mental event may occur, a process apparently beginning in a stimulus and ending in an act, is what we have called an impulse. In actual experience single impulses of course never occur. Even the simplest human reflexes are very intricate bundles of mutually dependent impulses, and in any actual human behaviour the number of simultaneous and connected impulses occurring is beyond estimation. The simple impulse in fact is a limit, and the only impulses psychology is concerned with are complex. It is often convenient to speak as though simple impulses were in question, as when we speak of an impulse of hunger, or an impulse to laugh, but we must not forget how intricate all our activities are."2

From this it is clear only that we are left with the vaguest

possible definition of our key notion, viz., "a process apparently beginning in a stimulus and ending in an act."

On the basis of this scientific account of our responses to stimuli of any kind, Richards wants to deny the existence of a specific "aesthetic experience", which had been taken for granted by most aestheticians, and also to assert the continuity of artistic and all other human activities and their qualitative similarity: "When we look at a picture, or read a poem, or listen to music, we are not doing something quite unlike we were doing on our way to the Gallery or when we dressed in the morning."¹

Only in so far as looking at the picture, or reading a poem, or listening to music, yields a more finally satisfying experience (= more highly valued experience) than the other activities, can it be distinguished from them. Thus, in Aesthetics, we must henceforth refrain from using such misleading terms as 'beauty' and 'aesthetic experience', and replace them in 'stimulus-response' terminology by, for example, "having properties such that it arouses, under suitable conditions, tendencies to self-completion in the mind." Richards rejects 'Beauty' itself as an aesthetic concept for the simple reason that beautiful things "have nothing in common beyond this purely abstract property of 'being such as to arouse, etc.'."²

2. P.C., p.359. (author's italics)
But Richards wants to do away not only with the concept of 'beauty', he even wants to play down the stimulus, that property of things by virtue of which we experience beauty. Thus he says that "Stimuli are only received if they serve some need of the organism and the form which the response to them takes depends only in part upon the nature of the stimulus, and much more upon what the organism 'wants', i.e. the state of equilibrium of its multifarious activities."^1. Of course, "Tendencies to self-completion in the mind" as an adequate substitute for the value-term 'Beauty' is simply meaningless unless further explained, and as Richards never does so more clearly than in his references to 'equilibrium' etc., it can be interpreted in as many ways as there are different types of people, different minds, and different conceptions of the self and self-completion.

This notion of Synaesthesia as 'an experience of self-completion' raises two questions:

1. Can and does Richards give a description of it by which it can be recognized independently of what stimulates it?

If not, the whole project of investigating the psychological effects produced on us by certain stimuli, becomes vacuous until pinned down by reference to aesthetic

2. If he does, can this experience be associated with other than aesthetic stimuli? If not, why not? If it can, how is his study of Synaesthesis relevant to aesthetics in particular?

Richards' initial position can be summarised as follows: "There is Beauty", just means "Here is Synaesthesis" and the ultimate value of Synaesthesis is in the experience itself and not in the thing experienced. Later however, when Richards comes to describe the distinctive features of this aesthetic experience (whose occurrence he had earlier denied) without any reference to the special conditions or context of the experience, i.e. without any reference to the objects which evoke it, he is forced to use terms like 'immediacy', 'complexity', 'richness' of response, terms which are vacuous until we are clear as to the immediacy, complexity, richness of what is involved. We are told that when we experience Synaesthesis "the inhibitions which normally canalise our responses are removed" and we feel "a sense of satisfaction and repose;" and that Synaesthesis itself is such a complete systematisation and intensification of impulses "as will preserve free play to every impulse, with entire avoidance of frustration. In any equilibrium of this kind, however momentary, we are experiencing Beauty." 

1 and 2. The Foundations of Aesthetics, p.75.
We all know what "a sense of satisfaction and repose" is, but even if we accept Richards' definition of the "systematisation and intensification of impulses" in terms of it, we must object that many non-aesthetic situations also give satisfaction and repose, and far from all valuable aesthetic experiences give it. In default of an account of what is to count as 'an impulse', and what is the type of systematisation and intensification of non-frustrated impulses envisaged, this notion is useless as a clarification of our concept of beauty.

For Richards' general notion of equilibrium is neither new nor original. In fact, it is indistinguishable (except in its terminology) from a well-established traditional notion with a long and respectable history.

d) Richards and earlier accounts of aesthetic equilibrium

In The Foundations of Aesthetics, Ch. 7, Richards refers to Kant's Critique of Aesthetic Judgment as the work in which the notion of harmonious activity as the characteristic of aesthetic experience is first put forward. This is Kant's description of it:

1. All the quotations are from Richards' Foundations of Aesthetics, Chapter 7.
"The quickening of both faculties (imagination and understanding) to an indefinite, but yet, thanks to the given representation, harmonious activity, such as belongs to cognition generally, is the sensation whose universal communicability is postulated by the judgment of taste." (Critique of Aesthetic Judgment).  

Richards explicitly objects to the above formulation because of the ambiguity of terms like imagination and understanding (though it might be held that Kant has made his use of them moderately clear and unambiguous), and because 'harmonious activity' can and sometimes does characterise an ordinary balanced mind, "or some form of self-contained and controlled sensibility", which may be not specifically aesthetic. His main objection then is that Kant did not here provide a criterion differentiating between aesthetic and non-aesthetic experience. We saw that Richards' account of Synaesthesia is open to the same objections. But is Kant's? Richards seems to overlook the crucial proviso in Kant's definition, namely, that this activity must be grounded in "the given representation" if it is to be correctly the subject of the judgment of taste. When expanded in the light of Kant's terminology this might provide the criterion Richards looked for in vain. But we shall see in the sequel how Richards systematically tries to minimise the importance of the aesthetic object as the ground of the aesthetic experience and judgment.


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to him, Beauty is experienced when the two opposing impulses, the sense-impulse and the form-impulse, whose objects are life and shape, are united "in the most perfect equipoise". This theory is clearly much vaguer than Kant's. Richards' objections are the same as those he had against Kant. He points out that an oversimplified view of the balance required might lead to its being adopted as a recipe for the production of works of art. He suggests indeed that Goethe might very well have adopted Schiller's 'recipe' when he wrote "Wilhelm Meister".

The poet and critic to whom Richards admits being most deeply indebted for his description of the synaesthetic experience is Coleridge, who also derived his theory from Kant. In Coleridge's description of Imagination Richards finds "the essential characteristic of poetic as of all valuable experience". Imagination, says Coleridge, is "that synthetic and magical power", which "reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities, the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects ... a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; ..." (Biographia Literaria II, p.12). This is the most important source for Richards' theory of equilibrium of opposed impulses as the distinctive feature of all valuable experiences. We shall examine Richards' theory in detail in Chapter 3. Here we shall only notice that if an impulse
is a behaviouristic response it would seem that an equilibrium of opposed impulses amounts to a cancellation of them; Coleridge's impulses cannot therefore be such simple responses; yet Richards' should be if his theory is to be a scientific neurological one.

Passing to more modern views on the subject, Richards finds in Ethel Puffer, an American psychologist and student of Münsterberg, the only exponent of a similar account of the aesthetic experience. In her *The Psychology of Beauty* she describes "the beautiful object as possessing those qualities which bring the personality into a state of unity and self-completeness."¹

Here again, just as in Kant's definition, we find the same emphasis on the aesthetic object as possessing those qualities which give rise to the state of aesthetic repose, and at the same time of "enhanced life". She then describes the aesthetic experience as "... the condition of equilibrium, or balance of forces - wherein by hypothesis we are given complete arrest, but tension, aliveness to the nth degree."²

She later tries to relate the experience to the objects which brought it about and she finds in "this concept of equilibrium, of excursion from the center, and return, a principle for explanation of the details

of the elements of picture, poem, drama, symphony, which, each in its own way, leads us on an excursion of experience, and brings us back, stimulated to unity and self-completeness."

We see that the main assumption in Miss Puffer's description of aesthetic experience is the existence of a correlation between the nature of an aesthetic object and the nature of our organism, so that, given certain qualities in the object, "a state of unity and self-completeness" in the personality results. For example:

"The symmetrical picture calls out a set of motor impulses which 'balance' ... the sonnet takes us out on one wave of rhythm and of thought, to bring us back on another to the same point; the sonata does the same in melody."2

Again we must notice that the elements of such responses must clearly be much more complex unities than the mere undifferentiated motor-reponses in terms of which neurology must work.

It seems that Miss Puffer did not give a name to the experience she was describing, but that Richards, after eliminating from it those features he objected to, termed it 'Synaesthesis'. His main criticism of the former as a criterion of aesthetic worth was, what seems clearly to be its saving merit as an account of specifically

1. Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy, p.450 (Author's italics).
aesthetic worth, namely, the attempt "to find the cause of balance in the construction of the work of art."
Although he admits that the objective 'balance' may predispose a spectator to equilibrium, this does not necessarily happen and he proceeds to give examples to show this:

There are cases where attention to the formal characteristics of the object is followed by synaesthesis (in Richards?), for example Bridges' "The passer-by". But there are also cases of formal balance in the object, attention to which is not followed by synaesthesis (at least in Richards!), for example in another poem by Bridges:

"Thou, careless, awake!
Thou peacemaker, fight!
Stand England for honour
And God guard the Right." etc. 1

If then the formal characteristics of the object are not a sure indication of the occurrence or non-occurrence of synaesthesis, and hence of aesthetic value, we are left with the only alternative which Richards is intent to provide, i.e., to find in the structure of the experience itself, the ground of value.

Richards compares two groups of poems, one of which he holds to be passably good, the other to be "the greatest kind of poetry". He finds that the difference

between, for example, Tennyson's "Break, break, break" and Keats' "Ode to the Nightingale" is "not one of subject but of the relations inter se of the several impulses active in the experience."\(^1\) In the first case the impulses are parallel and homogeneous, in the second case they are opposed and heterogeneous. It is just in the resolution and reconciliation of the many distinguishable impulses, and the ensuing state of balance and composure, in the experiencing of impulses together, that Synaesthesis consists.

Remembering that Richards is taking the occurrence of Synaesthesis as the criterion of aesthetic value, we can see that, though Richards thinks that he has proved his point against Miss Puffer's theory, he has also left his own theory open to criticism, as follows:

Whose experience is it that provides the criterion of psychological value—positive in the first case, negative in the second? Presumably Richards' own. But we can well imagine another reader who responds in exactly the opposite way and proceeds to the contrary judgment, viz.: "The passer-by" induces no synaesthesis and is valueless, but the second poem induces synaesthesis and is valuable. And another reader may respond to both poems with synaesthesis, and could say that Richards was simply

insensitive to formal beauty. Richards would then be forced back on a purely subjective theory.

We have examined in this chapter Richards' criticism and justified rejection of the Metaphysical theory of Beauty on logical grounds; we have examined his quest for a Science of Aesthetics and rejected it for two reasons:

1. Synaesthesis, as a psychological phenomenon, is not behaviouristically verifiable, and hence does not qualify as a scientific phenomenon. (Introspection as the only evidence for the occurrence of synaesthesis is not a scientific method, according to Richards, who would reject it in favour of neurological evidence if possible.)

We examined Dr. Eysenck's procedure in apparently carrying out Richards' programme for a scientific aesthetics based on a naturalistic definition of beauty and have pointed out its limitations and its insufficiency as a theory of value.

2. We found that no factual study, even when the facts are psychological ones, can be a system of Aesthetics, viewed as a normative science, i.e., a study of aesthetic values. (What this involves we shall see in Chapter 6.)

We have examined the similarities and differences between Richards' account of Synaesthesis and earlier accounts of 'balance', and have indicated that Richards' attempt to discount the aesthetic object raises many difficulties, both theoretical and practical.
a) Criticism of the theory of Synaesthesis

It will be remembered that Richards had defined Synaesthesis as "A complete systematisation (which) must take the form of such an adjustment as will preserve free play to every impulse, with entire avoidance of frustration."¹

Before proceeding to a detailed analysis and criticism of the notion of Synaesthesis, I should like to quote H. Osborne, who in his Theory of Beauty says the following about it:

"Equally certainly the presence of a large number of emotions and impulses balanced in equipoise among themselves like a donkey surrounded by a ring of equidistant carrots, has never been noticed by anyone in aesthetic contemplation, nor ever can be".

and later on he concludes that "the theory of synaesthesis is one of the most blatant examples of modern scientific mystagogy."²

Let us now inquire whether this sweeping criticism is justified.

First of all we should admit one point in favour of Richards' theory of synaesthesis: If Richards could

1. The Foundations of Aesthetics, p. 75.
give us an explanation which allows us to identify actual occurrences of synaesthesia in our experience, he would have replaced an hypostatisable empty notion (i.e. the universal quality Beauty) with an empirical one. But if this apparently empirical notion of Synaesthesia is an advance when compared to the metaphysical one, it raises problems of its own. In the first place it brings any attempt to define 'beautiful' in terms of "inducing Synaesthesia" within the scope of the "Naturalistic Fallacy".

Secondly, if Synaesthesia is an introspectible experience of equilibrium and balance, there is nothing to link it necessarily with works of art and to distinguish it from certain forms of religious experience, mystical states, or pathological states induced by drugs and narcotics.

Thirdly, "Systematisation of impulses" is, at the least, as vague a term as 'a profound aesthetic experience' which Richards wants to oust at all costs from his scientific account. At all events the term so vehemently rejected by him is inoffensive enough because understood to be vague, while the former leads us to expect some new discovery about the workings of our minds. Instead, it gives us merely scientific double talk, or rather words without any definite meaning. What counts as an impulse? What as a systematisation of impulses? Can it
be merely the coordination of desires with minimum frustrat-
ion? But any kind of successful activity, the satisfaction
of different desires and the pursuit of instinctive
tendencies, brings with it an intensification of well-being
and perhaps of awareness (rather than of impulses) and
its corollary of 'lack of frustration'. In parenthesis,
on the usual view of an impulse as 'a desire to' ... 'intensification of impulses' would seem to describe
exactly the contrary state to that described by 'satisfact-
ion of impulses'. Richards himself distinguishes between
a work of art which is 'stimulative' i.e. one which
induces an intensification of impulses resulting in overt
action, and a work of art which is 'beautiful' i.e. which
induces satisfaction of impulses and yet also the
activation and rejuvenation of the whole personality.¹

Fourthly, "Free play to every impulse" evidently
means that the satisfaction of every impulse is equally
necessary to the occurrence of synaesthesis, and since
Richards allows no qualitative distinction between
impulses, the only means by which we can decide whether
one experience is better or more valuable than another is
by the number of impulses satisfied. As Richards candidly
puts it, "to compare different experiences in respect
of their value ... is a quantitative matter."²

But Richards' whole conception of 'impulse' and their quantitative measurement raises the difficulty of "personification". For Richards talks of the impulse as if it were the whole person and assumes that "X is frustrated" = "Most of X's impulses are frustrated". Though we can say that impulses are frustrated or satisfied, what is important is that the frustration or satisfaction of an impulse (or even of most impulses) does not entail the frustration or satisfaction of the person whose impulse it is: the satisfaction on the instant of every whim of a millionaire's spoilt child may result in his overall utter dissatisfaction and frustration.

In fact, as Richards admits, the neurological impulse cannot be a unit of measurement, and different experiences cannot be evaluated by counting the impulses they involve. Naturally, Richards never attempts to differentiate quantitatively in this way between experiences of works of art. He himself admits that "... in any actual human behaviour the number of simultaneous and connected impulses occurring is beyond estimation." If therefore, even the simplest 'impulses', e.g. the impulse to eat or to laugh, are really complex processes not amenable to measurement, then the measurement of an aesthetic experience where "we have to gather millions of fleeting semi-independent impulses into a momentary

structure of fabulous complexity,"¹ is naturally out of the question.

Richards is therefore forced to introduce a new criterion for the differentiation of experiences and this criterion is no longer quantitative. He now asserts that the comparative values of our experiences are estimated "inevitably in terms of that order or disorder among impulses..."²

But whereas an impulse looks like a single, observable, countable thing, and therefore a number of impulses satisfied looks like a descriptive criterion, any disposition of things can be seen as ordered (e.g. can be subsumed under a general description) or can be rejected as chaotic or trivially repetitive, that is, the criterion of degree of order involves a value-judgment and is circular as an 'empirical' criterion of aesthetic value.

Let us relent a little, and try to see what can be said in the defence of such a view. It could be argued, for example, that although any collection of units can be subsumed under a formula this is more obvious and simpler in some cases than in others. (It is not of course at all clear intuitively that this is a criterion of aesthetic merit.) Richards is then perhaps simply combining here

2. The Criterion, October 1932. "The literary mind, its place in an age of science" by Max Eastman, reviewed by Richards. (My italics).
multiplicity and obvious order. Thus the experience valued of the experience of synaesthesia is said to be
1. a large variety of impulses satisfied
2. the systematic satisfaction of a large variety
3. the simplest systematic satisfaction of the largest possible variety.

But the notions of impulses, interests, systematization, intensification, order, etc., are all so vague that our criticism of them as inadequate terms for a scientific (i.e. precise) description of aesthetic value still holds.

And Richards did not remain satisfied with his requirement of order among impulses; another description of aesthetic value is vaguer still, though perhaps more attractive:

"As we realize beauty we become more fully ourselves. Our interest is not canalized in one direction rather than another. It becomes ready instead to take any direction we choose."¹

Now what is the force of "realizing 'beauty'" in this passage? Does it mean just perceiving its sensuous manifestations, or undergoing synaesthesia, or becoming more self-conscious about it, or recognizing more occasions which should induce it? Or perhaps it means what Richards says elsewhere, that as we undergo synaesthesia progressively we become more aware of the possible relevant impulses stimulated by any object, and thus have more scope for

¹. The Foundations of Aesthetics, p.78
developing them. This interpretation of Richards' meaning seems to be correct, as can be seen from the following:

"The equilibrium of opposed impulses, which we suspect to be the ground-plan of the most valuable aesthetic responses, brings into play far more of our personality than is possible in experiences of a more defined emotion. We cease to be orientated in one definite direction; more facets of the mind are exposed and, what is the same thing, more aspects of things are able to affect us... At the same time since more of our personality is engaged the independence and individuality of other things becomes greater."¹

This description of the ideal and complete aesthetic experience would be acceptable, though this would not allow the response to bad art to be an aesthetic experience. This is an untoward doctrine for Richards to maintain, for he wants to admit that "this same facilitation of response is also ... the explanation of the peculiarly pernicious effect of bad but competent art."²

It seems, therefore, that if the direction of our interests and attention is to be the right direction, if it is to be synaesthetic, this must be determined by the aesthetic object, to the extent that if the object is bad art, our interests and attention will be misdirected and, pace Mr. Richards, there is a causal relation between the pattern of the stimulus and the pattern of our response.³

I think that in the presence of a work of art, we are first of all concerned to find out what 'is there' and not what is going to happen to us as a consequence. To make the avoidance of frustration of impulses the cause of our direction of interest is to put the cart before the horse.

horse. It is only because of the direction of my interests and the quality of the work of art that I experience frustrated or satisfied impulses in considering it. And these do not provide an automatic index of the aesthetic value of the work of art. The satisfaction or the frustration may have different causes. For example I may know that a certain poem is considered a good one, and if I fail to appreciate it, I may feel dissatisfied and hence frustrated. This would be because I believed the poem to be beautiful, and would not lead me to deny its beauty. Or I may know that the poem is bad, and still find it satisfying because it accords with my general state of mind at the moment. (If I was aware of this, I should not report my satisfaction in an aesthetic judgment.) Or I may be neither satisfied nor dissatisfied but indifferent because exhausted; but again I should not make this the ground of an aesthetic judgment. Thus neither the satisfaction nor the frustration of impulses nor of the person whose impulses they are, can be in themselves the necessary and sufficient conditions of aesthetic value.

But again, this criterion too is abandoned! Something wider is needed, capable of accounting for those experiences called aesthetic: "The ultimate value of equilibrium is that it is better to be fully than partially alive."¹

We have come a long way from our first definition of beauty as that which produces the maximum number of

¹. The Foundations of Aesthetics. Conclusion.
satisfied impulses. Now synaesthesia itself is only of value as constituting 'a full life'. Although we should expect Richards to say that 'a full life' was simply a life of permanent synaesthesia he does nothing of the sort: a full life, he tells us, is possible only if "the full richness and complexity of our environment can be realized."¹ In fact this is a new non-psychological version of synaesthesia!

Artistic creation and enjoyment of works of art are the means to this realization. But in view of the new, vacuous character of 'synaesthesia' this amounts to the common view, which most critics, aestheticians and philosophers have held in the past and still hold: "Poetry expresses most adequately the universal element in human nature and in life,"² said Aristotle long ago, and in our own time Eliot says: "It is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order in reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness and reconciliation..."³

Richards the revolutionary critic has turned out to be a radical in not much more than his terminology.

1. ibid.
b) The fallacy of Richards' Theory of Value

Richards' notion of Synaesthesis is closely connected with his psychological theory of value, which we shall consider presently. In Chapter 6, where we shall develop a different theory of aesthetic value we shall follow some of J.O. Urmson's suggestions on the subject as put forth in his article "On Grading". Here it suffices to summarise the main points:

1. That a theory of value (as against a theory of psychological processes accompanying evaluation), be it moral or aesthetic, implies the acceptance of certain norms or standards.

2. That value-judgments are valid if they are in accordance with the relevant norms.

3. That the difference between the statement that the norms implied by the value-judgment are fulfilled, and the actual value-judgment, lies in their difference of function, the one descriptive and the other evaluative (perhaps prescriptive or commendatory).

4. That the meaning of value-terms like 'good' and 'beautiful', is not identical with that of the descriptive terms whose applications form the criteria on which they are applied.

Keeping these points in mind, we will now analyse Richards' theory of value, its implications, and the consequences which would follow if it were true.

Richards' definition of value, or rather of 'is valuable', is: "Anything is valuable which will satisfy an appetency without involving the frustration of some equal or more important appetency."¹

Now Richards openly admits that his view has "close connections with Utilitarianism,"² and as such, it seems to fall into the same logical fallacy as Mill has been accused of, viz. the Naturalistic Fallacy. Let us see how far there is an analogy between their theories:

1. Mill rather clearly is not defining anything more than he can help. He does define "A desires X" as "A finds X pleasant", but this is a familiar technical philosophical stretched use of 'pleasant' or 'pleasure'.³ He also says the only relevant evidence (not proof) that anything is desirable is that it is actually desired.⁴ To deny this would be to assert either that it would not be flying in the face of evidence to hold that X was desirable although nobody ever had, ever does, or ever will desire X, or that there is other evidence, relevant independently of that as to what people do desire, which is relevant in deciding what they ought to desire. Both of these

². ibid. Footnote 2.
⁴. ibid, p.32.
assertions seem, at least to a non-religious mind, obscurantist. In any case he certainly did not define 'desirable' as 'desired'.

Richards on the other hand goes a long way towards defining 'valuable' as equivalent to 'valued' where this is equivalent to 'inducing synaesthesis'. He can thus be taken to commit the Naturalistic Fallacy, in that he seems to agree that "X is beautiful" at least implies "X induces a valuable experience". Then, in so far as synaesthesia is a specific introspectible experience, "X induces synaesthesia" cannot imply "X is a valuable experience" (some may value being shattered or excited more highly) and cannot be a definition of "X is beautiful"; or, if "X induces synaesthesia" is an adequate definition, it must imply "X is a valuable experience", and cannot merely report the occurrence of the introspectible experience of the type described.

Later, when Richards comes to deal with 'stock responses', he has immediately to modify his definition of 'valuable' as 'synaesthesia-inducing', and is forced to admit that the identification of what people usually value with what is really valuable does not hold, at all events in the case of the aesthetic judgment. This creates a tension between his 'scientific' account of synaesthesia as the experience which we value, and his literary account of synaesthesia as the experience in which we fully

1. P.L.C., Ch. 7.
2. see p. 106.
respond to a work of art.

2. The parallel between Mill's notion of measurable quantities of pleasure and Richards' notion of a measurable number and degree of organisation of impulses is again to the latter's disadvantage. In the case of Mill, we can reduce his quantitative measure to a felt scale of preferences, at least in the case of one person, without rendering it vacuous, though the extension to interpersonal relations must be vague and of a rule-of-thumb lack of precision. But we saw that Richards himself admits the impossibility of measuring the number of impulses involved in even the simplest mental process, so that their estimation must therefore be derived from some feeling of satisfaction, i.e. his view could be restated as: "Those objects (especially works of art) are most highly valued which give us the most satisfaction." And this is no more informative than the tautology: "Those objects are most highly valued which are most highly valued". Thus what he offers as a definition of value is merely a description which is either vacuous or perhaps equivalent to the common sense 'feeling of satisfaction', presumably the variety of physio-psychological accompaniments to what is called aesthetic experience.

3. Richards is satisfied with his definition of 'what is valuable' because he thinks it scientific
and because "no special ethical idea is introduced." ¹
Let us now examine whether this is really the case.

As R.M. Hare (in his The Language of Morals and elsewhere) has pointed out, in any definition of a non-naturalistic expression in what purport to be naturalistic terms there "will nearly always be found some word in the definiens which is itself a value-word," ² which goes to show that such a definition is impossible.

In the above case words like 'satisfy', 'equal' and 'more important' are not merely descriptive, but are themselves value-words. Now Richards clearly intends to commend valued objects (and especially poetry and the other arts), for effecting a satisfaction of impulses, and for causing order and organisation in the personality as a whole. But his definition of 'valuable' in these very terms would make such a commendation impossible because it amounts to claiming that to value an object is equivalent to attributing to it, and therefore does no more than attribute to it, these effects. He would probably agree that "what produces synaesthesia is valuable" is a tautology in which "produces synaesthesia" merely elucidates 'valuable'. On the other hand it seems

2. Mind lx, 1951, p. 432. Review by R. M. Hare of Value, a Cooperative enquiry, ed. Ray Epley (Columbia University Press, 1949)."If you are looking for a 'referent' for a value-word, you may think you have found one when you have given a definition of it in which the definiens appears to consist of words having unambiguous descriptive meaning. But...unless the definition is obviously inadequate, there will nearly always be found some word in the definiens which is itself a value-word."
impossible to give the descriptive account of synaesthesia that he needs if this is to be an elucidation. He is then forced to give subsequent explanation for the terms he uses, such as 'more important impulse', which he describes as depending on "the extent of the disturbance of other impulses in the individual's activities which the thwarting of the impulse involves."¹

Objections to this definition are many, including:

a) How do we identify and count the impulses disturbed?

b) How else can we measure their frustration-value?

c) At a level where 'impulses' are recognisably 'to do or feel X' is there really no difference of value between wholly integrated organisations of an equal number of impulses each, but different sets of impulses?

Since the answer to this last question is definitely that there is a difference of value, our criticism of Richards' Synaesthesia, even as a criterion, let alone a definition of value, is justified.

So far we have examined the logical fallacy of Richards' psychological or naturalistic definition of value. Let us now examine the consequences if we held him to be offering a true and comprehensible criterion of value.

1. **It leads to aesthetic subjectivism.** The view that values cannot be attributed to objects except as causing actual states of mind means, since these are measurable only by introspection, that every individual is capable of knowing only his own more or less valuable states of mind, no matter what objects caused them. In Richards' defence it must be admitted that this kind of aesthetic subjectivism is widely accepted by modern critics, as can be corroborated by themselves. Thus Kenneth Tynan, the dramatic critic of *The Observer*, writes:

"...I see myself predominantly as a lock. If the key, which is the work of art, fits snugly into my mechanism of bias and preference, I click and rejoice; if not, I am helpless."  

But *The Observer* must consider Tynan's mechanism more discriminating than most or they would not pay him to tell other people about it.

2. The individual becomes the only and the ultimate authority and judge of values for himself. But since states of mind are continually changing and what seemed valuable yesterday will not seem so today, even to the same individual, this aesthetic subjectivism inevitably leads to an almost Heraclitean flux. You logically cannot experience numerically the same state of mind twice, and even while you experience it, it is already changing.

1. quoted in *Universities and Left Review*, No.1, 1957, in an article by Lindsay Anderson.
Not only is it true that "You cannot step into the same river twice," but here "You cannot step into the same river once," since even Richards admits that "...the order and precedence of our needs incessantly changes for better or worse."¹

The state of mind is, in short, the most elusive, transient, and unstable of standards.

4. If so, comparative value-judgments become meaningless. Thus he says, "when our interests are developing in opposed directions we cannot agree in our ultimate valuations and choices."²

Suppose two critics make contrary judgments about a work of art, for example Leonardo da Vinci's Self-portrait.

A says: "This portrait is a good painting."

B says: "This portrait is a bad painting."

They are not making (if Richards is right) contradictory statements, but may be making equally true statements about their respective experiences. A does experience synaesthesia, B does not experience it. A cannot convince B, or be convinced by him as to the value of the picture; they can only compare subjective states. The result is that one who makes his value-judgments depend on the

1. P.C., p.349.
2. P.C., p.347.
assertion of a subjective state cannot infer from it anything beyond itself. Thus

5. There is no logical relation between the analysis of the characteristics of the subjective state of balanced and harmonious impulses and the objects which give rise to them,¹ and as the objective balance attributed to the work of art is, (according to Richards), merely inferred from the subjective balance and therefore cannot be independently ascertained, criticism is reduced to introspective self-description and loses its normative function.

Now let us see how (and whether) Richards confines himself to such a subjectively relevant ascription of value in his practical criticism. We shall see that when he undertakes to test his theories by practical application, we get, in Practical Criticism, a series of case-histories and Richards sets up not as "a judge of values" of the twelve poems which form the subject of the protocols, but as a judge of the comparative values of the responses aroused by the poems in the students criticising them. He does not judge the poems as good or bad, but he judges the reasons adduced in support of the respective judgments. But the only reason which Richards' theory admits as relevant is the effect a poem has as a means of ordering our minds.² We therefore find that:

1. Richards' theory prevents his judging the

¹ cf. P.L.C., p.248, "The balance is not in the structure of the stimulating object, it is in the response."
² cf. P.C. p.348
poems as distinct from the responses they evoke, so that
to judge a poem one has to wait for the reader's response.
(And there is no sense to 'the poem's value'; it has as
many different values as it has readers whose responses
differ.)

2. But Richards gives a differing value to these
responses, labelling some as 'correct' and others as
inadequate 'stock-responses'. To do this on his own theory
he would have to operate with a measure of degree of
organisation and quantity of impulses applicable not
merely to the states of mind of one person, but to the
states of mind of different persons. This he has never
provided, nor is it clear why a stock-response should
invariably be composed of fewer or less highly organised
impulses than a novel but perhaps not comprehensive
response.

3. In any case even if he can evaluate responses
in this way, how can he leave room in his theory for
appreciating the 'wrong' poem for the 'right' (i.e.
synaesthesia-inducing) reasons? (For, he says, "It is
quite possible to like the 'wrong' poems and dislike the
'right' ones for reasons which are excellent"!)

Either
the poem does or it does not in any one reader evoke
synaesthesia. How can this fact ('This poem induces

1. P.C., p.349.
synaesthesia') be 'wrong'? Richards is assuming that some poems properly evoke synaesthesia and others improperly evoke a para-synaesthesia based on 'stock-attitudes'.

As all the protocol-writers (who presumably belong to the upper 5% in respect of intelligence and education) show a lack of adequate response to the right poetry, i.e. fail to respond with synaesthesia to those of which Richards approves, Richards labels their responses 'stock-responses', i.e., responses impoverished by conventional conditioning, thereby coining a new aesthetic negative value-word. But, as I think that very few people, probably only highly-trained literary critics, could have brought off the experiment of the protocols 'well' (in Richards' view), there remains only one conclusion to be drawn from his exercise here:

1. Most of our responses to poetry are stock-responses and therefore worthless.

2. We thereby forego "the most serviceable means to artificially strengthen our minds' capacity to order themselves."\(^1\) Hence,

3. We are doomed to pass our lives "in consonance with bad poetry. And, in fact, the idle hours of most lives are filled with reveries that are simply bad poetry."\(^2\)

But there is nothing in Richards' general theory to warrant the above statement. If the private poetry

\(^1\) and \(^2\) P.C., p.320.
of our dreams effects the satisfaction of most of our impulses, then according to Richards' theory of Synaesthesia, it is good and valuable. If Richards says that it is bad poetry, on his own theory he must be asserting that it disorganises our impulses, neither a very relevant nor a very plausible claim. In practice he is of course judging it without reference to any independent standard of impulse-ordering; with reference indeed to an external standard derived from the poem itself.

It is just this unconscious intrusion of an external standard, a norm, by reference to which a response is judged good or bad, correct or incorrect, adequate or inadequate, that Richard invalidates his own theory. The only possible role for his theory would be a really descriptive psychological account of the state of mind (in terms of whatever concepts psychologists use to analyse states of mind), which is characteristically occurring on the utterance of a sincere value-judgment. The validity of the said judgment could never be affected by the applicability or non-applicability of this description.

By his own practice Richards shows the failure of Synaesthesia as a criterion of aesthetic value. As long as the psychological theory of value is kept within its limits as a theory of the psychological accompaniment
of evaluation, it can perhaps be justified provided we can accept its unexplained concepts as comprehensible (impulses, synaesthesis, degree of order, etc.). But as soon as the theory is used as a value-theory and has to be translated into practice, as soon as its validity as such is to be tested by experience, its epistemological failures and logical fallacies become clear. What better proof of this do we need than Richards' own practice! When he forgets this theory, when he judges the value of contemporary poetry and poets, like Eliot, Hopkins, Lawrence, then we know what he is talking about - i.e. the actual work of art, the poem under consideration. And in judging it, we find that Richards applies standards which he never explicitly states. We must try in the sequel to discover what his implicit standards are. And we shall find, to our surprise, that they are not very different from those used by most traditional critics, e.g. that poetry should treat of "the most incomprehensible and inexhaustible objects for meditation," e.g. of those topics which are permanently and universally relevant.

1. P.C., p.291; and see Chapter 5, p.187.

1. P.1.C., p.5.
We quoted earlier from Aristotle and Eliot to show that Richards' criteria, when stripped of their pseudo-scientific appearance of precision, are not very different from those used by other critics. From the earliest day when man first began to think seriously about the reasons governing his preference of this rather than that poem, critics have expressed these reasons in different ways, but their underlying similarity is unmistakable. From Longinus' "Poetry is chiefly conversant about general truth"\(^1\) - to Matthew Arnold's dictum that poetry is "A criticism of life," "the aim being to know ourselves and the world" by means of knowing "the best which has been thought and said in this world,"\(^2\) philosophers and critics seem to agree that in major works of (literary) art it is with reference to the universal problems of life and death, and the relevance of the work of art to them, that it ought to be judged. So, as we saw earlier, with Richards. In this he follows in the footsteps of the greatest critics from Aristotle, Longinus, Arnold to Eliot, and like them, his theory of the place of poetry is not independent of his view of life in general.

But whereas the traditional critics could support the criterion of important subject-matter by reference, for example, to a theory involving art as statement of universal

truths, Richards could only explain this on his psychological theory, if he had left room for such a criterion of 'correctly' as against 'incorrectly' occurring synaesthesia. As against earlier critics who held definite views about the nature and value of art which formed the ground of their aesthetic theories, and whose critical practice followed from their theoretical premises, we find in Richards a dualism of theory and practice, in which these are unrelated and unrelatable. A purely psychological theory of value can, in short, not become a guide to critical practice. I shall therefore let Richards' practice speak for itself, or rather, for those of his implied criteria of artistic excellence, some of which Richards never explicitly states.

We have examined and criticised in this chapter Richards' theory of Synaesthesia; we have indicated that the notion of synaesthesia is really a conflation of two different concepts - psychological and aesthetic; that it is consequently an incoherent notion, being sometimes viewed by Richards as merely a certain introspectible and valued experience of equilibrium due to the balancing of a large number of neurological impulses; and sometimes as a complex, aesthetic attitude which should but may not be induced in a reader by great poetry, involving an
adequate, balanced, practical, directed response to a many-sided situation in, and experience of, life. And we have suggested that in his practical criticism Richards is not concerned with the occurrence of synaesthesia as an actual phenomenon, but as an attitude which certain works of art ought to induce, or would induce in a qualified spectator, owing to their aesthetic value.

We have examined Richards' psychological theory of value; we have compared and contrasted it with Mill's theory of pleasure; we have pointed out the logical fallacy of Richards' theory of value and its practical inapplicability.

We shall now proceed to examine Richards' theoretical standard of poetic value as implied by his view of the nature of poetry; and finally, we shall examine Richards' practice with the view to discovering his actual value-judgments and his actual criteria of value.

2. P. C. p. 204.
a) The nature of poetry

In accordance with his psychological theory of value, we find Richards defining a poem (presumably a valuable work of literature), as a class of experiences: "a class of experiences which do not differ in any character more than a certain amount, varying for each character, from a standard experience", which is "the relevant experience of the poet when contemplating the completed composition."¹ Later (in Practical Criticism) the poem is again defined as "Roughly the collection of impulses which shaped the poem originally, to which it gave expression, and to which, in an ideally susceptible reader, it would again give rise."²

Now, although Richards does not give us a definition of experience, that most elusive and ambiguous of all psychological and aesthetic terms, he does tell us about some of its constituents. We find once again his odd sense of 'impulse': "Impulses are the essential and fundamental things in any experience."³ This implies either that there are other less important things in it, or that some less fundamental elements, constructs out of

2. P.C., p.204.
impulses, will be more convenient to handle in analysis. Soon, in fact, mention of the impulses in or of the experience is superseded by mention of such further elements, or perhaps constructs out of anonymous impulses, viz. "the attitudes evoked which are the all-important part of any experience."¹ Thus we only think that we are talking about this poem, we are actually talking either of impulse-experiences, or of attitude-experiences. These have the inconvenient feature of varying from individual to individual: "What is good for one mind may not be good for another in a different condition - with different needs and in a different situation."² Moreover, these experiences vary in the same individual as well: "What will be thought or felt next year seems uncertain, for what seemed fundamental last year seems today hardly worth notice."³ It is not clear what this is which could seem fundamental last year and hardly worth notice today, except an idea, a suggestion as to a truth, a belief. Not, at all events, an ordinary experience of impulses. But this change in our attitude, or change in the value of our states of mind of whatever sort, need not worry us too much, for we still have a supposedly fixed standard.

¹ P.L.C., p.132
² and ³ P.C., p.348.
of comparison, "the experience of the poet when contemplating the completed composition". To take a concrete example:

1. My experiences of "The Waste Land" in 1956 are near enough to the poet's to count as the poem, and I value them highly, i.e. synaesthesia takes place.

2. My experiences of "The Waste Land" in 1957 are also near enough to the poet's to count as the poem, but I do not value them highly, i.e. synaesthesia does not take place. But how can my experiences of 1956 and the poet's involve synaesthesia, and my experiences of 1957 not, while all being the same poem? Or is this enough to show that my experiences of 1957 do not approximate near enough to the poet's and so are not the poem I approved of in 1956? There is of course also the usual difficulty with such theories, i.e. we are justified in asking, how can we know what the poet's experience was? Yet Richards warns us "we shall miss in many cases much that is essential unless we are able to react with similar impulses."¹

And since the poet himself is only a fallible human being, whose experiences and values change continually, it is to be assumed that even he does not have an available, fixed, standard experience. On this point we could take the word of T.S. Eliot, who writes

..."in one sense, but a very limited one, he (the poet) knows better what his poems 'mean' than can anyone else; he may know the history of their composition, the material which has gone in and come out in an unrecognisable form, and he knows what he was trying to do and what he was meaning to do. But what a poem means is as much what it means to others as what it means to the author; and indeed, in the course of time a poet may become merely a reader in respect to his own works, forgetting his original meaning - or without forgetting, merely changing."

Moreover, poets often judge the value of their poems differently from us. Thus, whereas we think highly of it, Coleridge thought "Kubla Khan" merely "a psychological curiosity"\(^2\), without poetic merits. It seems we cannot use his experiences as the poem if we wish to keep "Kubla Khan" in our anthologies.

Other poets might think highly of works we do not prize highly. Landor's poem, "I strove with none, for none was worth my strife", probably recorded what was a valuable experience to him and he probably thought it a good poem. But if to us it is a slightly comical piece, we are presumably not reading the same poem. We are left therefore in an evaluative void and even in a position which could be called aesthetic solipsism, with nothing to rely on but "the need of the moment"\(^3\) not merely to inform us of the worth of a literary work but to constitute it. And our need of the moment has of course no relation

1. T.S. Eliot: The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism, p.130 (my italics). (Faber & Faber, 1933).
3. P.O., p.349.
or relevance to the needs of others.

We must reject such a negative, relativistic and subjective view of the nature and value of poetry and the other arts. We may conclude with T.S. Eliot and commonsense "that the feeling, or emotion, or vision, resulting from the poem is something different from the feeling or emotion or vision in the mind of the poet,"\(^1\) and with Philip Wheelwright and commonsense that "The object of literary criticism is the poem under consideration, and not either the poet's supposed feelings or the reader's expected benefits."\(^2\) We must recognise that 'the poem' is first of all an existing, created object, made of words, manifested in print or sound, and not a 'class of experiences' as Richards defined it. An experience, however valuable for the poet or the audience, must first of all be embodied in some form in which it can be generally manifested before it is a work of art. We can say that certain experiences have led to or arisen from a poem, but not that they are the poem. If it were otherwise, intelligible discourse about 'this poem' would become impossible.

We should be reduced to talking about our impulses, our appetencies and withdrawals, to merely describing actual states of mind, which, in themselves without a relevant

context or situation, can be called neither good nor bad, neither valuable nor valueless. "A state, in itself, is nothing whatever." In fine, if our discourse in Aesthetics is to have meaning, we must refrain from talking about those mystical entities 'Beauty', 'Truth', 'Goodness', but also about their modern counterparts 'valuable states of mind', appetencies, coherence and ordering of impulses. If we want to be understood (and we do), if we want to be able to communicate intelligibly with one another, we should rather talk of this poem or that picture and not of Poetry or Painting in general. When we discuss a particular poem, we find no difficulty, we see that we are in fact talking about one and the same thing, whether we agree about it or not; but on Richards' theory (unless we take the poet's experience as the poem in which case neither of us is able to talk about it), you are talking about your feelings and I about mine; no question of agreement or disagreement can arise. But it does, and once again practice, or everyday usage, (not least his own) disproves Richards' theory. (See Appendix A on Defining a poem).

b) Poetry and Life

Given Richards' view that poetry is experience, he is naturally led to identify the elements of poetic experience with the elements of non-poetic experience. There is, says Richards, no gulf between "the material of poetry" and life:

"There is no gap between our everyday emotional life and the material of poetry. The verbal expression of this life, at its finest, is forced to use the technique of poetry, that is the one essential difference. We cannot avoid the material of poetry. If we do not live in consonance with good poetry, we must live in consonance with bad poetry. And, in fact, the idle hours of most lives are filled with reveries that are simply bad private poetry."

This assertion of the continuity of life and art was a justified reaction against the view of the Formalists, and is justified even now, when the gulf between life and art seems to be deepening, e.g. in works like Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, much modern poetry, abstract art, Action painting, Constructivism. The question "What relation is there between, say, an action painting and 'life', what comments - if any - is the painter making by means of it, and how are we to understand and interpret his work," simply cannot arise, because much modern art is just not intended as a comment on, or expression of, non-artistic experience. 'Art for Art's sake' enjoys a new lease of life. Thus Richards' assertion that there is not, or rather

should not be, a gap between the material dealt with in art and life is still relevant.

When Richards asserted this over 30 years ago, it was put forward against the Formalists' postulation of a unique aesthetic value peculiar to works of art alone, (rather than any claim to special artistic material,) an aesthetic value "different in kind and cut off from the other values of ordinary experience."¹ Clive Bell had formulated his Aesthetic Hypothesis as follows:

"To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions."²

This Formalist view probably has two sources: one in historical conditioning, the other a personal one. Historically it might well have developed from a quite justified impatience with pre-Raphaelite message-pictures and Tolstoy's theory of art as the propagator of Christian morality; it was also, however, understandably a generalisation from its author's specific response to the formal elements in paintings. Richards rightly criticises the Formalists' unproved assumptions, but, as usual, falls into the opposite extreme.

What exactly does Richards mean by "the material of poetry"? He clearly does not mean the terms which

poetry must use. This would be uninteresting, since poetry must consist of words and in so far as we express our everyday emotional life in language, the words will be those which poets also must use. Does he mean the topic of poetry? This is a more promising interpretation in view of the assertion that a fine life is somehow 'consonant with' good poetry and that a not-fine (poor?) life is 'consonant with' bad poetry. The view that 'fine' real life experience can only be (adequately) expressed in poetry, and that bad poetry would express a poor (aesthetically?) real-life-experience, or the imaginative reverie of one whose experience of real life is poor, suggests that Richards is treating life as aesthetically judgeable, and as the inevitable subject matter of poetry. And this ethico-aesthetic evaluation of life is quite consistent with Richards' division of men into two classes; on the one hand, the uncultured majority, victims of stock attitudes, who, whether they know it or not, simply "inhabit chaos"¹ (and I think he would put most well-educated people and literary critics in the same class), and on the other hand, the very small élite who can understand and enjoy 'good poetry' simply because it is a reflection of their inner life. Richards of course cannot prove this view of the correspondence between

¹. P.C., p.325.
the appreciation of good poetry and a fine life or bad poetry and a poor life, and I take it to be a characteristic sample of emotive language. We have T.S. Eliot's word for it that "Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality." ¹

However in asserting the continuity between our everyday emotional life and poetry, Richards was probably really concerned to assert the continuity of everyday and aesthetic experiences in general:

"When we look at a picture, or read a poem, or listen to music, we are not doing something quite unlike we were doing on our way to the Gallery or when we dressed in the morning." ²

Although Richards does not make it clear here in what the 'unlikeness' or qualitative difference which he is denying would consist, he reduces the difference between the two activities and their concomitant experiences to one of complexity, unity and order within the experiences. Thus, in admitting that aesthetic experiences can be distinguished from ordinary experiences, Richards holds that

2. P.L.C., p. 16.
"... they differ chiefly in the connections between their constituents, and that they are only a further development, a finer organisation of ordinary experiences..."1

We will examine this statement at some length because it forms the basic proposition of Richards' theory of art and literary criticism.

The first objection to Richards' criterion of an aesthetic experience is that it will not work - i.e. the difference between an aesthetic experience of looking at a picture and a non-aesthetic experience is not a matter of the quality of the experience, of whether it is complex, ordered or unified. There are many experiences which are complex, ordered and unified but are not aesthetic, and vice versa. The primary aesthetic experience is that of understanding a work, not of evaluating it. In the primary aesthetic experience of looking at a picture, any activity involved (e.g. posture of the body, movement of the head and eyes, etc.), is an active preliminary to understanding. The end of the activity is not the feeling to which the activity may give rise, but getting to know the picture. In striving to understand it, I bring to bear on it everything relevant in what I have learnt of other pictures, my general knowledge of the historical situation and

outlook of its presumed painter, his technical means and methods, his subject-matter and treatment, the formed content presented by his picture. How is this experience different from that of a scientist examining a new specimen? Not necessarily in its ordered complexity. If it results in some such ordered complex feeling, I may indeed pass a favourable judgment on the work, but seeing all there is to be seen in a picture is itself an aesthetic experience which does not include passing a judgment on the picture's worth; and in any case such a judgment would be a judgment as to the value of the picture, not a judgment about my experience. Otherwise, such critical statements as "I have a blind spot for this kind of work but I know this is a good example of it" would be impossible. The fact that they are made and understood and therefore possible, shows that there is a difference between a personal judgment about one's experience of, or reaction to, a work of art and a judgment of its aesthetic value.

Aesthetic experiences then, are not to be identified with highly valued experiences, nor is it clear whether 'ordered complexity' is the invariable characteristic of such experiences.

If we try to apply Richards' no-gap theory to the theatre, the result would be disastrous. Richards would be the first to upbraid the innocent spectator who, carried away by a performance of Othello, shouted at the
Yet we must experience Othello's situation in a certain way (a way distinctly aesthetic) if we are to understand the play; and this distinction is not to be explained in Richards' terms. Perhaps all Richards means by his no-gap theory is: "Do not work yourself up into a holy religious attitude, do not regard aesthetic experience as a kind of mystical experience, possible only to the few experts", we can agree with him. But I think he meant more than this, and in his refutation of the 'specific aesthetic experience' theory, he put forward the contrary theory of the total indistinguishability of experience of life and of art. We shall see in the sequel that his theory is divorced from his practice, and what he says of A.C. Bradley is also true of himself: "His is that welcome and not unfamiliar case of the critic whose practice is a refutation of his theory."  

c) Poetry and Science

We saw that Richards regarded poetry sometimes as experience, sometimes as a method of expressing experience. The latter view is more consistent with Richards' general theories and followed from his

distinction between the emotive and the referential uses of language. So let us now examine Richards' distinction between poetry and science:

first, with regard to the character of what they express; secondly, with regard to the method with which they express it;

thirdly, with regard to the function of such expressions.

Throughout Richards' writings his fundamental preoccupation is the gulf between science and art, between our investigation of facts and our expression of what we value. He tried hard to bridge this gulf, to use the methods of science in the investigation of values. Even in his latest book, *Speculative Instruments* (1955), he still has not given up the belief that "...we have ... to seek a way by which values might unrestrictedly come into the care of science." But in our world, where science is making enormous strides, these are not in the direction of settling value-questions scientifically; and nevertheless the arts seem to be relegated into a corner. In such a time of 'transvaluation of values', Richards, deeply convinced of the importance still of the arts for man, is trying to prove this to a sceptical, practical and scientifically-minded audience.

In fact he seems himself to be unclear how science

could ever settle value-questions, and at times we find him assuring us that not science, but only art expresses and embodies values. The values embodied in art are not mysterious, abstract entities; they are not unknowable "denizens of a world of being"; they can be understood but not within the context of science itself, because "Science can tell us nothing about the nature of things in any ultimate sense." It can tell us that certain facts are the case and how they came about but it "cannot tell us what we are or what this world is." If we want to find out that and if we want to find out about the relative importance and value of these 'facts' for us, we must turn to art: the arts are "our storehouse of recorded values." And of all the arts, poetry is, "at least, the most important repository of our standards." Of great literature, because of his theory of the continuity of poetry and life, he is led to say that it enables us to see "more clearly what our world is and what we are who are building it to live in"; "The immortal pages are the great exercisers of the spirit," and their value is in their "inexhaustible fertility". They are

5. P.C., p.249.
7. Ibid, p.11.
"the most constant sources of reasonable moments,"¹ 
"when we know more completely what we are and why we are so" and thus "see into the life of things more deeply than in our everyday routine of existence."² Thus "good poetry owes its value in a large measure to the closeness of its contact with reality..."³

I think that all these sayings express our common view of the nature and value of art, at least of great works of literary and poetic art, though they conflict with his hope that values can be brought into the care of science rather than art. But there is also a near-contradiction between this view and the other view of Richards', repeated throughout his writings, namely, that art in general, and poetry in particular, do not and should not make statements about life and men and the world which are true in the sense of being in accordance with facts. If indeed (as Richards thinks) there were no such thing as poetic truth, poetry and literature could never tell us anything about ourselves or other men or this our world, and we should not be able, thanks to it, to see more deeply into the life of things. But is truth irrelevant to the value of poetry? Let us consider John Clare's description of the primrose, taken by Richards to illustrate

1. Richards: How to read a page, p. 11
2. Richards: How to read a page, p.15.
3. Richards, F.C., p.251
the difference between scientific and emotive language:

"With its crimp and curdled leaf
And its little brimming eye"...

Is this just emotive language? The description tells us more about what 'the' primrose means to us in our non-botanical lives than any scientific statement of its exact size and colour and weight and botanical family connections ever could; and therefore it at least implies true statements about real primroses. To call such a description a 'pseudo-statement' i.e. "a form of words which looks like a statement but should not be taken as one," though permissible in a treatise on logic, is quite misleading in a discussion of poetry and cannot explain the value of poetry in our eyes, but will have the opposite effect. One of the main reasons why men read and write poetry is that by using language just in this way they can reveal more than was ever dreamt of in science and in philosophy.

To revert to Richards' more plausible view, the arts, and especially poetry, can fulfil this function because, says Richards, great works of art are created by men who are "the masters of life." I think Richards

means here what we all mean by calling a poet great, i.e. not that he necessarily is a great man in his own particular life, but that he sees life steadily and sees it whole, and that he communicates his vision by means of his art. But as D.G. James remarks, "the view of poetry as the expression of imaginative prehension is a sufficiently ordinary one, and is certainly not new."¹ Here Richards is in traditional company, and he has not succeeded in making the doctrine much clearer.

We call a work of art great when it "is concerned more extensively, more profoundly and more subtly with the main tendencies in human nature and in things"² says the metaphysician S. Alexander. And the same view of what makes a work of art great comes from a writer with a completely different — indeed Marxist — outlook, who is by training and profession a scientist. Prof. Hyman Levy says:

"those writers who have continued to have value for succeeding generations of readers are those who have expressed the highest truths of their time with the most impassioned imagination."³

We must agree that poetry and literature are concerned with the world of men and of things as recreated or created by the poet's imagination, and that their

greatness and permanent value depend on the measure of their contribution to our understanding of ourselves and other people, of human actions and experience.

If then "the arts are our storehouse of recorded values", we must regard e.g. the Bible, Aeschylus' and Shakespeare's Tragedies as embodying these values. And Richards rightly asserts that "Value cannot be demonstrated except by the communication of what is valuable." Just as beauty and goodness cannot be demonstrated except by pointing out beautiful objects, or persons or actions which are good, we cannot demonstrate or point to the 'value' of objects, except by presenting the valuable object. This is what great literature does, as Richards says. Perhaps Richards meant this to be taken more specifically in accordance with his theory, as meaning that value cannot be demonstrated because communicating it consists in the transmitting of synaesthesis which can only be experienced, but he clearly takes 'great literary works' to be those which in his opinion should transmit synaesthesis and will do so to a properly qualified audience.

Now just as we grade human actions according to their degree of goodness or moral value, just as we grade material objects according to their usefulness for certain

purposes, we may also grade works of art according to the sort of values embodied and revealed in them. But in talking of the value of art, we must not try to find one, all-embracing, universal characteristic of Value, unchanging and unchangeable. Firstly, there are different bases of assessment e.g. a work might 'embody' very 'high' (generally important) truths but if these are only vaguely or unconvincingly presented, we will not appraise it as 'a great work of art', though we might appraise it as 'a work of great moral worth'. Secondly, there are different arts each capable of expressing a different content according to its special medium. We must not commit the critical mistake of condemning a certain piece of music because it does not express an attitude to life, or omit to take this consideration into account in praising a poem. Yet in our scale of values as applied to works of art, there may be a series of requirements increasing from those indicating the lowest or minimum aesthetic value (perhaps: satisfying the technical criteria differentiating a piece of literature from a piece of writing), to a value which all 'good' works of art in a given medium or genre possess. And this 'goodness' of works of art must be, in general terms, their capacity to "heighten awareness, deepen and intensify experience, broaden and sharpen understanding
Every work of art, taken in isolation, obviously cannot fulfil so vast a function, but if taken as a whole and living process, art as well as science, though by a different method, has this function to fulfil. To regard science and art as two completely different spheres, as Richards, in his more theoretical moments, does, using different methods for the attainment of different ends (i.e. factual truth on the one hand and the emotional reorganization of experience by means of pseudo-statements or emotive utterance on the other), is only to deepen the already existing gulf between fact and the creative imagination, between science and art. As against Richards, D.G. James insists that "a process of imaginative construction" is necessary to both science and poetry; and to H. Levy it has seemed worth noting that "Both literature and science are instruments of discovery and instruments of change."

But there is of course a great difference of method between them:

"a primary distinction between a science and an art is that while the former deliberately excludes judgments and values as far as possible and is directed towards communicating facts and their relations, the arts deliberately set out to communicate values and judgments

2. D.G. James: Scepticism and Poetry, Ch. 3.
and their associated feelings, using facts and imagination to this end."1

We must admit of course that there is a certain disparity between scientific and artistic accounts of 'reality' just as there is a certain disparity between both of them and our everyday experience. But if we hold that both science and art aim at truth, and that the basis of assessment for art and for science is their content and its truth, then we must agree that they are not totally different in aim (as Richards thinks), but complementary activities of the human mind. It always takes some time for newly discovered scientific facts to be absorbed into the integral vision of life presented in the arts. Moreover, because of the immense extension of our scientific knowledge, this integration is by far more difficult for modern poets than it was for poets in the past.

But this - the partial disparity between scientific knowledge and artistic vision - is not really what Richards is concerned with. When Richards speaks of the gulf between science and art, he really means the present disparity between current works of art and men's current beliefs. And this is his problem: Poetry reflects - directly or indirectly - men's beliefs about the world, metaphysical, philosophical, ethical, psychological, religious. What,

1. H. Levy, op cit., p. 133.
asks Richards, is poetry to reflect now, in our time, when "all the answers which have for ages been regarded as the keys of wisdom are dissolving together"?¹

"All the answers" means all the answers given by religion and philosophy to the eternal questions: what is man's place in the universe, what is the role he is to play, and what is the purpose of his life? Richards thinks the answer religion gave to these questions outdated. But he also thinks the answers of philosophy outdated and finds that "At present it is becoming increasingly difficult for anyone, who is not linguistically naive, to hold any philosophical position"²... on such questions. And if this is so, what is there left for poetry to reflect, since it was supposed to reflect men's 'beliefs' and now both his religious and his metaphysical beliefs "are dissolving together"? Richards attempts to answer this crucial question by introducing his new notion of: "beliefs which are objectless, which are not about anything or in anything; beliefs which cannot be stated."³ But as this notion of 'objectless beliefs' seems to be not even clear to him, he cannot make it clear to us and I take him to mean that poetry will simply have to shift without any beliefs.

Moreover its task will be far more exacting than it was

before, since it will nevertheless have to save us from
the "mental chaos" created by the crumbling away of
traditional beliefs. For although Richards envisaged the
future as "a mental chaos such as man has never experienced,"
yet he hoped that Poetry is capable of saving us
from this.  

Thus Richards' attitude to this question of the
relation of science and poetry is very pessimistic indeed.
He is convinced that the advance of science has destroyed
not only the 'magical' view of nature, but also the basis
of all later traditional beliefs; and although he admits
that "science can tell us about man's place in the
universe and his chances", he immediately adds the warning
not to be too hopeful since "the place is precarious,
and the chances problematical." 2 In the meantime, however,
we can go on immersing ourselves in poetry and like the
child, the primitive man and the peasant indulge "in this
happy condition of real intellectual disconnection." 3
In short, "Poetry is good for you."

Would it be rash to conclude from the foregoing
that Richards wanted poetry to be the opium of the people?

1. Richards: Science and Poetry, pp. 82-83.
2. Richards: Science and Poetry, p. 53
d) **The method of poetry**

Richards' view of the nature, method and function of art in general and of poetry in particular is a direct outcome of his behaviouristic theory of meaning, and of his psychological theory of value. These enable him to give a unified account of art.

Having defined a poem not as an object but as an experience, Richards has to give some content to this experience. But he tells us "A poem ... has no concern with limited and directed reference. It tells us, or should tell us nothing." Its only function is "to induce a fitting attitude to experience" and to attune us to existence. This he thinks it can do, though he also holds even that "Poetry may be almost devoid of mere sense, let alone thought, or almost without sensory or formal structure, and yet reach the point than which no poem goes further." Let us examine the above statements, for they raise more problems than they solve. First of all: Which experience have we to have a fitting attitude towards? Those of which the poem speaks or experience in general? And how, when we have identified the experience in question, do we decide on a 'fitting attitude'? e.g. do we have to be French

1, and 2. M.M., p.270.
revolutionaries to approve aesthetically of the Marseillaise? Or does the poem itself indicate the 'fitting attitude'; is the poem the evocation of certain experiences plus value-tone, is it simply a question of experiences-viewed-with-a-certain-attitude? Richards never explains his notion of a "fitting attitude to experience", and we are left to interpret it as we please. But it would seem that he did not take fittingness too seriously. For, according to him, the method of poetry is "to use an evocative term in connection with an evocative matter" and "It is not necessary to know what things are in order to take up fitting attitudes towards them, and the peculiarity of the greatest attitudes which art can evoke is their extraordinary width."¹

This expressly repudiates the aesthetic adoption of an attitude and, as M. Black has pointed out, "the puzzle is to know how a poem that 'tells nothing' can induce a fitting, or valuable attitude."² If we do not know what things are how can we decide whether an attitude towards them is fitting? What is a 'great' attitude? What is a little one? It seems that Richards uses all these terms as emotive words, in order to emphasize his belief as to what in poetry is important and valuable. Because he thinks

¹. M.M., pp.270-1.
². Max Black: Language and Philosophy, p.207.
that literary critics and teachers of literature have over-emphasized the importance of meaning in poetry as against feeling, he writes to tip the balance in the opposite direction. Unfortunately he tips it so violently, that he seems to throw off sense, thought, or meaning from poetry altogether. When he says that a poem may almost be devoid of sense, of thought, of sensory and formal structure and yet be a good poem, he must support such a statement by illustration if we are to believe him. The very fact that he does not do so, leads us to suspect that such a poem does not exist, and that if it did, it would be a bad poem: at best it would be a kind of primitive ritual chant (which, of course must have sensory structure), made to arouse an emotional frenzy but surely not synaesthesia. Perhaps all he wanted to say is that sense, thought, meaning, sensory and formal structure are not sufficient conditions for making a poem good. But at least some combination of them is a necessary condition. As to the "extraordinary width" of attitudes evoked by art, I think Richards perhaps refers to the multivalence in time and place of every great work of art, i.e. its capacity to mean many things or one eternally valid thing to many people at different periods, (though of course he has denied the necessity of meaningfulness at all).

"The extraordinary fact is that works of art do have 'that potency of life in them which makes them of
continual, if of differing interest to men. Our Shylock is not Shakespeare's; our Phaedra not Racine's — nor was Racine's Euripides's"...1

If we agree with this we might conclude that Shylock and Phaedra, Hamlet and La Gioconda are great artistic creations not because they are "means of ordering our minds", but because they are inexhaustible sources of discovery of new relations and new truths. "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." — Richards might be taken to mean this if it were not so thoroughly inconsistent with his other dicta.

Every literary critic — from the writer of literary reviews in the daily press and magazines to the aesthetician bent on developing a consistent body of philosophy of art, continually differentiates between the good and bad, the beautiful and ugly, even the right and wrong in art, and may also try to enunciate rules or principles of correctness in assigning aesthetic merit. On this major point, as we have seen, Richards himself says: "it is possible to like the 'wrong' poems and dislike the 'right' ones for reasons which are excellent" 2, though he also says that all that really matters is that we should be "able to use them both as a means of ordering our minds." 3

1. G. Boas: Wingless Pegasus, p. 63
2 and 3. P. O., p. 349.
But we are justified in asking, what, in the context of such a theory as Richards' makes a poem good or bad, right or wrong? If our only means of judging and evaluating it is "through its power over us" every work of art which has power over us will be good, and that which has no power over us will be bad. But we should usually wish to distinguish between art aimed at popular appeal and effect and art created for its own sake. Richards is very conscious of the need for a definite distinction between the two if the second kind of art is to have a chance of survival. But according to my last quotation, Richards commits himself to taking all art to be good or bad according to its popular effect, so why should (and how can) he distinguish? Hence he is led to such extremes as holding that:

"Keats, ... is a more efficient poet than Wilcox, and that is the same thing as saying that his works are more valuable." ¹

Although Richards took strong exception to Eliot's definition of his view, it seems very apposite: "Good is Efficiency, a perfectly working mental Roneo Steel Cabinet System" for the organization of impulses. ² And indeed, when Richards describes the ideal reader who has "developed

1. P.L.C., p.206
2. T.S.Eliot:"Literature, science and dogma", The Dial March 1927.
clearing-houses by which the varying claims of different impulses are adjusted\(^1\), and whose "... completed mind would be that perfect mind ... in which no disorder, no mutual frustration of impulses remained"\(^2\)... we have the impression that he does not speak of a human being, but of a machine. Such an ideal, together with Richards's definition of synaesthesia as the equilibrium of impulses and as the experience of beauty and value generally, echoes the views of the Oriental thinkers whose influence on Richards is apparent: S. Motokiyo (Practical Criticism), Mencius (Mencius on the Mind) and the Chung Yung of Confucius (The Doctrine of the Mean) (The Foundations of Aesthetics). The state of mind of the ideal reader as envisaged by Richards would seem to be a kind of Nirvana, a mystic union between a perfect mind and a perfect universe, a petrified equilibrium. There would be no need and no possibility of further experience, no need for further search. How far this experience matches those we actually have in reading great poetry, and how far the latter are all of one single type, we must each decide for ourselves. But since Richards holds that this balanced poise "... can be given by a carpet or a pot or by a gesture as unmistakably as by the Parthenon, it may come about through an epigram as clearly as through a Sonata,"\(^3\)

then it follows that for him our division between, and
our differentiation of arts according to their medium,
and the different kinds of responses required by the
different arts, are really immaterial to the beauty,
goodness and value of their products. If the Kreuzer
Sonata, a Persian carpet, an Etruscan pot arouse an
equally valuable response and hence are equally valuable,
they are for Richards arousing indistinguishable
approximations to synaesthesis. Then how do we differentiate
between them, assigning to the one its valued musical
qualities, to the others their valued qualities of
design, structure and texture? It may be that we do
not call these objects good or beautiful or valuable in
different senses of good, beautiful or valuable, but we
certainly do so on the basis of different features in
each case.

When Clive Bell asks:

"What quality is common to St.Sophia and the windows
at Chartres, Mexican sculpture, a Persian bowl, Chinese
carpets, Giotto's frescoes at Padua, and the masterpieces
of Poussin, Piero della Francesca, and Cézanne?" 1

he goes on to his categorical but unsupported statement:

"Only one answer seems possible - significant form -
... and 'Significant Form' is the only quality common
to all works of visual art." 2

1 and 2. Clive Bell: Art, p.8. (My italics)
Richards asks the same question and offers just as categorical and unsupported an answer as Bell's: the only common quality is their inducing synaesthesis in the ideal spectator.

In both cases (Bell's and Richards') the single answer had to follow from the single question, and it is the wrongness of the question which brings with it the wrong type of answer.

e) The function of poetry

We saw that Richards held synaesthesis, or valuable emotional effect, to be the one common quality shared by the most different objects in virtue of which we called them beautiful. From this it followed that the ultimate aim and function of art is remedial. As long as the effect of a work of art is conducive to mental health and efficiency, the approach to synaesthesis, the question of its quality, its goodness or badness, is settled, because its goodness is its therapeutic effect.

Poetry is the most serviceable means to "artificially strengthen our minds' capacity to order
themselves."¹

But how are we to know what will prove to strengthen or weaken "the form and order" of our whole personality? Probably the only way is to suspend judgment until we find out, to break away from all particular, restricted, personal "presuppositions and critical preconceptions", and so empty our mind for the isolated act of intuitive union with the poem. (Though what leads a mind emptied of all previous judgments to selective union with certain poems, I cannot imagine). Then, in this supreme moment "a sheer choice has to be made without the support of any arguments, principles, or general rules."² But how can this be a choice? Either synaesthesia supervenes or it does not, and if it were really a matter of personal choice, we should all, and always, choose to experience synaesthesia and feel happy. Moreover, how can we or Richards himself (as he does in Practical Criticism), check on these choices as to whether they are right or wrong, due to genuine or spurious intuitions, if no reasons can be used to support them? Here we must distinguish between, on the one hand, finding the

1. P.C., p.320. (My italics)
reasons for a choice made 'intuitively' (i.e. not determined by reasoning), and on the other hand arriving at a choice determined by reasoning, simply by bringing general principles to bear.

Richards is right in rejecting the latter, but wrong in rejecting the former. If no reasons for making this rather than that choice can be given, all choices are equally right. But in fact they are not, even for Richards; therefore in judging a choice as right or wrong, we are evaluating the reasons for making it.

Perhaps Richards is merely warning us not to allow logical considerations to distract this act of untrammelled choice: "Judgment in these matters is not a refinement upon choice but a degradation." But he does not seem clear as to what could determine the choice, for even to his insistence upon an act of choice which is undetermined by reasoning, he adds the warning: "It is not the intensity of the conscious experience, its thrill, its pleasure or its poignancy which gives it value," since "There are plenty of ecstatic moments which are valueless...."  

1. P.C., p.301.  
3. P.O., p.305. (Author's italics)
It is much easier, it seems, to describe what is not valuable, than what is... Even in his much later book, Coleridge on Imagination, we find again Richards' description of poetry which is not valuable, or of only minor value. Thus,

"Poems which have a destination, a final solution - whether it be the enunciation of a supposed truth, or suasion to a policy, or the attainment of an end-state of consciousness, or some temporary or permanent exclusive attitude to the world, to society, or to the self, have only a subordinate value."1

And again,

"The poem is a quest, and its virtue is not in anything said by it, or in the way in which it is being said, or in a meaning which is found, or even in what is passed by in the search."2

In poetry then, "The journey is its own end, ..."3 yet this journey determines the direction of future development of the whole person.

"...Critical certainties, convictions as to the value, and kinds of value, of kinds of poetry, might safely and with advantage decay, provided there remained a firm sense of the importance of the critical act of choice, its difficulty, and the supreme exercise of all our faculties that it imposes."4

This is an odd description of the intuitive union of an

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1. p.213.
2. p.217.
3. p.213.
4. P.C., p.305. (Author's italics)
empty mind with a poem. One difficulty would seem to be the logical one of finding a fit exercise for all our faculties in such a reasonless 'choice'. But there is also the aesthetic difficulty that since "we have nothing to rely upon in making our choices but ourselves,"¹ those who are modest enough to doubt their infallibility must conclude that only to few is it granted to immerse in poetry and come out renewed and reorganized, though such favoured ones will then "need nothing more."² But unless we are allowed to make a gap between art and life, the experience given us by the poem and our experience of life generally, we always need something else and something more, for life, both biologically and mentally, goes on, involving an unceasing overcoming of internal stresses and external pressures, a surmounting of conflicting needs and desires. The attainment of a state of more than momentary perfect synaesthesia is impossible. Richards' ideal might be a critic's Heaven, but it would surely be a reader's Hell to have to read every work under such a threat for the future. It is not on the effect the poem has on our future development that our interest in and valuation of it depend, but on the quality and intensity of the mental and emotional activity aroused

¹ and 2. P.C., p.351.

1 and 2. P.C., p.351.
in us when grappling with the poem itself — its meaning, content, structure, form, and message (if any). The particular satisfaction — we can call it aesthetic or contemplative or disinterested satisfaction if we please — lies in the activity itself and not in the effect of the activity on our future development. Some poems it is true, and those perhaps the greatest, though possibly not the most nearly perfect, may entail such a reorganization of our mental and emotional outlook. But certainly not every good new poem or new picture does so. Indeed there are well-integrated individuals who find value in art, (and how could they if Richards were right?) just as there are people whose concern is with art, who know what great poets have written, and yet never attain such internal order and organization which is for Richards the only valuable experience.

Although on Richards' view of the nature, method, and function of the arts, criticism would lose its raison d'être, he is perfectly aware of the need for sound criticism and disturbed by the lack of a body of reliable critical opinion. In discussing the "qualifications of a good critic"¹, he does not use the language of mysticism, but that of common-sense, and

goes so far as to set down rules. However these turn out to be tautological. His statement that the critic "must be a sound judge of values"[^1] is plainly analytic. And — in view of Richards' equation of understanding and experiencing, — that the critic must "be an adept at experiencing"[^2], that he must be capable of distinguishing between experiences, of passing judgments on them, deciding which is good, bad or neutral, simply means that he must be able to evaluate works of art and justify his value-judgments. While the meaning of "a sound judge of values" is quite clear, the question left unanswered by Richards is: what are the criteria or distinguishing marks of a sound judge? Twenty years in the English Literature school in Cambridge? Agreement with Dr. Richards? In his practical criticism, Richards quite naturally adopts the role of a judge of values. We shall have to discover his standards indirectly because he never states them in so many terms, lest he seem to commit the inconsistency of setting up rules, canons or principles of criticism, which he so strongly condemned in other critics. In complete consistency, as he holds that "Value cannot be demonstrated except through the communication of what is valuable," we should expect him to present us with treatment of poetry and science with regard to the.

with his chosen poems and withdraw into the background so that the communication of the valuable can take place directly between the poem and us. But, happily, he accepts the task of mediating the communication and not only passes comparative value-judgments on the poems and their authors, but also explicates his judgments by other-than-literary standards. He does in fact what every serious critic does, namely, not only passes "a just judgment but a constructive and satisfying statement of the reasons intellectually justifying a judgment."  

And now I shall let Richards the practical critic speak for himself and we shall find that a false theory is not necessarily fatal to practical appreciation; I shall also try to extract from his practical criticism some guide to a more acceptable theory.  

"The theatre is not a hospital," purgation is not the point of tragedy; equally, pace Richards, "Poetry is not a method of psycho-therapy."  

We have examined in this chapter Richards' theory of poetry. We saw that Richards defines poetry sometimes as experience, sometimes as a method of expressing experience; and that he identified its elements with the elements of non-poetic experience. We saw that he contrasts poetry and science with regard to the

character of what they express and their method and function of expressing it. We agreed with Richards that poetry must deal with real-life experiences, but we denied that it is the organisation and multiplicity of the experience expressed that gives the expression its sole worth as poetry. We pointed out that this implies a criterion of poetic worth in the truth of the poem's expression of experience as corresponding to the experience.

We agreed that there is a difference between science and poetry, but denied that it can be drawn in the simple terms Richards uses; and we pointed out that Richards is thus led to maintain two contradictory theses about poetry and truth:

**Thesis 1** That poetry neither makes nor implies statements whose truth is relevant to its merits as poetry; that the 'fittingness' of the attitudes it evokes is not conditioned by the truth of the expression of experience on which they are based. (It is not clear what does make an attitude fit what.)

**Thesis 2** That great poetry is great because it evokes fitting attitudes towards experience in general (in an appropriately responsive reader), by conveying generally valid truths and correct value-judgments. Thesis 2 contradicts Thesis 1.

Richards also has a subsidiary and unclear notion that a scientific approach can be made via Behaviourism.
to identifying experiences valued (i.e. experiences of synaesthesis), and hence to checking the correctness of value judgments. This is not worked out owing to the impossibility of measuring the behaviouristic units involved, and is ignored in his practical criticism.

appeared not in book-form but in literary reviews like The Criterion and The Dial, or in the Appendices to his books. From this I draw the conclusion that it is when he is comparatively free from his theoretical preconceptions and dealing with particular works, that he can most easily write literary criticism. Although this seems to accord with Richards' own view, viz., that the good literary critic should be free from any theoretical preconceptions and canons of criticism, we yet find him referring to his own theories even if it seems irrelevant to the point at issue. The following analysis of his literary criticism is based on his articles:

1. "A background for contemporary poetry" (The Criterion, 1924-5)

In his short review of "The poetry of T.S.Eliot", Richards sets himself a double task: First, to defend Eliot against adverse criticism, and secondly, to show his importance as a modern poet.
RICHARDS AS A PRACTICAL LITERARY CRITIC

It is a significant fact that Richards' most valuable and revealing criticism of poetry and of poets appeared not in book-form but in literary reviews like *The Criterion* and *The Dial*, or in the Appendices to his books. From this I draw the conclusion that it is when he is comparatively free from his theoretical preconceptions and dealing with particular works, that he can most easily write literary criticism. Although this seems to accord with Richards' own view, viz., that the good literary critic should be free from any theoretical preconceptions and canons of criticism, we yet find him referring to his own theories even if it seems irrelevant to the point at issue. The following analysis of his literary criticism is based on his articles:

1. "A background for contemporary poetry" (*The Criterion*, 1924-5)

In his short review of "The poetry of T.S.Eliot", Richards sets himself a double task: First, to defend Eliot against adverse criticism, and secondly, to show his importance as a modern poet.
Eliot's poetry was attacked in the twenties, (today, when his reputation as one of the great modern poets is firmly established these criticisms are silenced) for being over-intellectual, i.e. for making use of so many and varied literary allusions as to make his poetry obscure to all but the literary scholar. Middleton Murray found his poetry ambiguous and therefore falling short of the canon of good poetry. Others were bewildered by his yoking together of opposite feelings, which, as the poem develops, change places or even are fused together. Even some of the best critics could not tell what the poetry was all about. The poet, as has often happened in the past, and will no doubt happen again in the future, (for it is one of the typical features of poetry) had to create a new poetic language adequate to the expression of his time and his generation in its own characteristic predicament. He used a language of new symbols in a new poetic technique. Today it has become familiar, part and parcel of the literary scene. Disciples and imitators have arisen, for the Eliot manner has come to represent the literary aspect of "The Establishment".

In the twenties however things were different, and Richards with his "new criticism" came to the defence of the new poetry. He countered the attack against Eliot's over-intellectualism by an extraordinary denial of the
importance of "any coherent intellectual thread" in poetry: "These things" (i.e. Eliot's literary quotations and allusions) "come in for the sake of the emotional aura which they bring and the attitudes they incite." Now this type of defence comes straight from Richards' synaesthesia-theory, and so far there is no conflict between his theoretical assumptions and his practical comments. He goes on to say that only those will be able to react adequately, with a "unified response" (i.e. with a synaesthetic response) to Eliot's poetry "who still know to give their feelings precedence over their thoughts, who can accept and unify an experience without trying to catch it in an intellectual net or to squeeze out a doctrine." In short, as long as you feel, it does not matter whether or not you understand the poetic images and the metaphoric language used to evoke these feelings. If, as Richards says, Eliot's poetry is a "music of ideas", you can passively immerse yourself in the music, which, in due course, will result in your experiencing "a peculiar liberation of the will". Poetry is "there to be responded to, not to be pondered or worked out." Nevertheless, Richards provides a long reading list compulsory for anyone wishing to respond even without intellectual understanding to 'The Waste Land'. The obvious difficulty in such a kind of critical

approach is, that if you try to play a "music of ideas" with words significant of ideas only to a reader who has had an extended classical and general education and has remembered it all, you will be writing a code-notation of no more general significance than an unreadable archaic script. It is not a matter of putting feelings before comprehension, but of never having heard of half the expressions in the relevant context and therefore having no feelings at all to put before comprehension.

Notwithstanding his critical advice, which is clearly based on his theory of value and must have been a comfort to all those who found Eliot's poetry meaningless, Richards quietly proceeds to throw doubt upon his own acceptance of it by giving his own interpretation of "A Cooking Egg" and even of "The Waste Land" (as a comprehensive treatment of the problem of sex). Indeed, the former he explains section by section. Why should he feel it necessary to do so, after stating the supreme importance of response independent of grasped meaning? For the simple reason that he never escapes his initial dichotomy of theory and practice, of declared and implicit criteria.

Richards tells the reader whose attitude is one of intellectual suspicion to relinquish it, and offers him the comfort that "The poem as a whole may elude us
while every fragment, as a fragment, comes victoriously home."¹ This contrasts oddly with his earlier advice not to judge a poem by its details, but its details in the light of the whole.² He saves himself, however, by attributing a fault here to us rather than to Eliot. Our lack of synaesthetic response simply shows up poorly here as a criterion of value, probably because "we have been trying to put the fragments together on a wrong principle."³

Richards' implicit criteria of poetic excellence emerge in his summing up of Eliot's importance as a poet:

"... some readers find in his poetry not only a clearer, fuller realisation of their plight, the plight of a whole generation, than they find elsewhere, but also through the very energies set free in that realisation a return of the saving passion."⁴

Thus in spite of, and in contradiction to his earlier suggestion that feeling, not thought, unified response, not understanding, are primary in poetry, Richards now finds that Eliot's importance as a contemporary poet is in his understanding of our current predicament and in his success in giving us the same understanding of ourselves and our world. According to Richards, Eliot has created in his poetry in general, and in "The Waste Land" in particular, an imaginative 'objective correlative'

². cf. "It is never what a poem says which matters, but what it is." "Science and Poetry," p.25, and also P.C., p.303.
⁴. ibid., p.295.
(Eliot's own term)\(^1\) to our actual human situation. By our recognition of our real Waste Land in Eliot's fictional Waste Land, by our discovery in it of unsuspected aspects of our real situation, and by our sudden realisation that "this is us, and this is our world,"\(^2\) we may hope to find a way out of "The Waste Land" itself.

If we try to connect Richards' theory of emotive language with his present critical comments we could perhaps make out a case for him, viz., that poetry, even if it uses only pseudo-statement to do so, is valuable in so far as it leaves us with a certain belief or beliefs about the world. Although, in his theory, Richards holds that poets do not make assertions, nor should they leave us with limited stateable beliefs\(^3\), at most with some 'objectless beliefs' or 'imaginative assents', as a practical critic he is forced to evaluate poetry by reference to the truth of its implicit or explicit objects of belief. And as we saw in the case of Eliot, Richards agrees with Eliot's beliefs about our contemporary situation as embodied in his poetry. I am tempted to say that Richards's belief in the possibility of 'objectless beliefs' is merely an 'objectless belief' or rather a feeling of conviction or a

1. T.S.Eliot: The Sacred Wood, p.100."The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."

2. A Background for contemporary Poetry.

3. cf. F.L.C., Ch.35.
belief without any actual referent.

Finally, Richards regards "The Waste Land" not only as a vivid and convincing presentation of our situation in a fitting light, but, because of this, also as a practical guide to action: "it has shown the way to the only solution of these" (i.e. our) "difficulties."¹

These then are Richards' standards of poetic value as they emerge from his analysis of Eliot's poetry:

1. That poetry is important for what it makes us feel independently of whether we understand it. Hence it does not matter whether or not there is a coherent intellectual thread through his poetry in general, because we must feel, not think.

2. That Eliot's importance is due to his relevance to the current social problems, to his correct portrayal of them, his correct diagnosis of their origin, and his suggestion of their correct practical solution.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that these two standards contradict each other.

In discussing Hardy's importance as a modern poet, Richards compares him to the great tragic poets in that "only the greatest tragic poets have achieved an equally self-reliant and immitigable acceptance of death and the "indifferent universe."²

1. "A background for contemporary poetry".
2. "A background for contemporary poetry".
Richards here implies (I think rightly) that the great tragic poets are not only great poets but also great men, at least in so far as their personalities emerge from their work, and it is this that makes them "great tragic poets". But, since we are well aware that there are also great poets who are not great men, the distinction between a 'writing self' and the historical man himself, is relevant at this point; the self which is important for the value of a man's books is his writing self, and what we judge are the values he gets into his books, not his life.

The great tragic poets, says Richards, have looked on human life, on the world of men and the world of nature, and have become convinced of its inexorable laws. They know life and accept it as it is, they do not count on any divine will and salvation, (Aeschylus? Racine in Athalie?) but rely on themselves alone; and through their tragedies they make others feel and accept as well that man lives, plays his part, and dies, and that in the 'indifferent universe' the drama of man's life can leave no mark.

To sum up, Richards' standard of the value of the great tragic poets (and Hardy) is again their capacity to evoke synaesthesia (or catharsis?) by having the correct view of life, successfully embodying this view in their work.
In passing from Hardy to poets who had a less 'tragic' attitude to life - Yeats and Lawrence - Richards praises both as being "very serious poets": "neither seems to have envisaged the possibility of a poetry which was independent of all beliefs, probably because, however much they differ, both are very serious poets."¹

Now in his critical evaluation of Lawrence, Richards really examines the value of his beliefs as embodied in his poetry rather than his poetry itself. He regards Lawrence's emotional revulsion from conventional morality as valuable, but thinks that as soon as he tried to formulate the logical grounds of his attitude "he deprived his revolt of the greatest part of its value."² He admits that a modern poet must adopt some attitude to the problem of the relation of thought and feeling. Indeed, says Richards, "A poet today ... is inevitably plagued by the problem of thought and feeling... Mr. Lawrence is probably not the last poet who will go astray through mistakes as to their natural relation."³

Richards thus ascribes the failure of Lawrence as a poet to his failure as a thinker and psychologist. Throughout, he judges his poetry not by its qualities as poetry, but as a system of mistaken beliefs, and thus

¹. "A background for contemporary poetry". (My italics)
² and ³. ibid
commits the very critical fallacy he repeatedly warned against: that of taking poetic utterance as if it were scientific statement. Richards says something like this: "These are the connections between thought and feeling expressed or postulated in Lawrence's work, and they are shown by psychological research to be not so simple as, or quite different from the view of them we get from Lawrence." And then he proceeds to treat Lawrence's poetic portrayal of a given situation as if it were a statement about it, and hence as either true or false; and criticises his poetry as poetry because it is false.

There is probably another reason for Richards' regarding Lawrence's poetry as minor poetry. Already in The Principles of Literary Criticism, Richards had indicated what he took to be the main difference between minor and major poetry, between "specialist and universal poets", viz. that the sensibility of the former is inconsistent with the general development of their contemporaries, whereas the sensibility of the latter is consistent with it. And he summed up his whole view of the modern Irish school and of "the exquisite poetry of Mr. de la Mare" as being specialist or minor poetry because "its sensibility is a development out of the main track." On the other hand he regarded Hardy's and Eliot's work as major poetry, because their sensibility was in

consonance with that of their contemporaries.

These then are Richards' standards of poetic value as they emerge from his analysis of Hardy, Yeats, and Lawrence:

1. That major poetry must be consistent with the general development of 'sensibility'.

2. That major and serious poetry must be based on some beliefs, whether religious or philosophic, and that in judging the poetry we inevitably take account of the beliefs to which it is related. Again this is hard to reconcile with the injunction to feel rather than think in responding to poetry.

Richards' analysis of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poetry (in *The Dial*, 1926) is most revealing, and discloses several value-judgments which are fundamentally different from those we could derive from his theory of value.

Defending Hopkins against the charge of obscurity in his poetry, he says:

"There are arguments for some slight obscurity in its own right," since "the effort, the heightened attention, may brace the reader, and that peculiar intellectual thrill which celebrates the step-by-step conquest of understanding may irradiate and awaken other mental activities more essential to poetry." This seems an unjustified minimising of the essential character of
understanding in appreciating the poem, as we can see from Richards' usually placing feeling before understanding in reading poetry. Even here, where he explicitly allows for an intellectual thrill differentiated as such by its accompanying an intellectual effort, he explicitly says that this is not (very) essential to the poetic value of the poem. Its true value is its capacity to awaken other "more essential" activities, presumably arising from the equilibrium of our impulses.

In his critical assessment of Hopkins Richards explains that Hopkins' "poetry was for the ear, not for the eye" and that "he uses words always as tools" (a saying strangely reminiscent of Wittgenstein's later views), and he then goes on:

"I have to confess that The Windhover only became all right for me, in the sense of perfectly clear and explicit, intellectually satisfying as well as emotionally moving, after many readings and several days of reflection."3

This is an explicit account of what gives a poem its due value (makes it "all right for me") i.e. its capacity to be both intellectually and emotionally satisfying. The interest of this passage is the unconscious confession that the value of the poem was in the poem the whole time, when Richards had not yet discovered it, and was not changed by his discovery, and also that its value depends

1-3. The Dial, September 1926.
on the possibility that attentive and perceptive readers, like Richards, should be able to find something intellectually satisfying, etc., in it. This does indeed refer to states of mind, but to appropriate states of mind, not actual ones. And the actuality of which value is predicated, is the poem and not the states of mind.

Richards himself admits this when, pointing to "the marvellous third and fourth lines" of "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves",

"Her fond yellow hornlight wound to the west, her wild hollow hoarlight hung to the height
Waste; her earliest stars, earl-stars, stars principal, over bend us,
Fire-featuring heaven."^2

he calls them "the supreme example" of synaesthesia. This must mean that the harmony and equilibrium pertain to the words and rhythm and meaning of the lines, and not to any actual reader's state of mind, although this should be dependent on the lines read.

Again with Hopkins, Richards finds that the lines

"Of a rack
Where, selfwrung, selfstrung; sheathe-and shelterless,
against thoughts in groans grind."^4

are good poetry not only because of their technical excellence, but because they are a good statement of modern man's and the modern poet's predicament. Again

1-4. The Dial, September 1926.
we find the poet required to make statements, and true
ones and Richards praises Hopkins for the directness
and candidness of his handling experience, which implies
truth to life as a criterion of poetic value. Finally
Richards concludes with some interesting remarks concerning
'beliefs'. We find, for example, that Hopkins' "stature
as a poet will not be recognized until the importance of
the Belief problem from which his poetry sprang has been
noticed." And later that "like the rest of us, whatever
our beliefs, (Hopkins) needed a change in belief, the
mental attitude, itself."¹

But why Hopkins needed a change in his mental
attitudes, and why this need should be relevant to his
stature as a poet cannot be understood except when we
recognize that Richards regards the value and importance
of a poet as depending upon the truth and importance of
his beliefs.

In his general critical assessment of contemporary
poetry, Richards takes the view that it "must have sprung
from the contemporary situation. It must correspond to
the needs, impulses, attitudes, which did not arise in
the same fashion in the past", and moreover, in judging
the value of this poetry "criticism also must take notice
of the contemporary situation"; "We cannot leave these

changes out of account in judging modern poetry". The job of the modern poet, says Richards, is faithfully to portray our attitudes, rather than our opinions: "What we have to consider is not men's current opinions but their attitudes - how they feel about this or that as part of the world." And Richards goes on to explain that by men's attitudes he means "what they are prepared to sacrifice for what, what they trust, what they are frightened by, what they desire. To discover these things we must go to the poets".¹

This seems to show that Richards was aware of the near-inconsistency of his views about poetry and thinks he can evade it by distinguishing between expressing attitudes which cannot be true or false and expressing opinions and views as to facts which can be true or false. But this distinction is not helpful if any standard of fittingness is to be applied to attitudes because this would refer directly to the truth or falsehood of the supposed facts towards which the attitudes are adopted. (There is more to fittingness but there is at least this.) Richards' final judgment of the value of contemporary poetry and poets is pragmatic and utilitarian, viz. they are valuable according to the amount of change they produce or fail to produce in us by means of their poetry: "The poets are failing us, or we them, if after reading

¹. "A background for contemporary poetry" (My italics)
them we do not find ourselves changed". But does Richards consider the direction of the change sufficiently?

We shall now try to summarize Richards' actual standards of poetic value as used in his assessment of some modern and contemporary poets:

1. That in poetry, feeling is primary and thought is secondary; that we must respond to it without first trying to think what the poet is saying and thus to rationalise our response.

2. That therefore the value of the poem is not in its 'doctrine' or any logical scheme but in the "unified response" it accords to the right kind of reader.

3. That nevertheless, the poem must spring from and reflect the contemporary situation.

4. That therefore the value of the poem lies in its correct presentation of the human situation and its presentation or suggestion of the correct solution of its difficulties.

5. That the kind of beliefs held by the poet determine the value of his poetry (thus Lawrence's mistaken beliefs weakened his poetry whereas Hardy's was enhanced by his correct beliefs about man's fate and place in the universe).

1. ibid.
6. That major or universal poetry reflects the main trends of the development of 'sensibility'.

7. And that on the other hand, minor or specialist poetry only reflects the particular sensibility of the poet or of a minority.

8. And one point which is never explicitly stated but is implicit in all Richards' judgments on contemporary poetry - that the 'content' of the poem is both aesthetically and morally relevant for our value-judgment.

9. Finally that good poetry must have a practical, ascertainable effect, and that the value of the poetry will vary with the value of the effect.

So far I have not commented in detail on the above views. I shall now do so, at the same time comparing (and contrasting) them with Richards' other views; first those based on his theory of poetic language as emotive, and secondly those based on his psychological theory of value, or theory of synaesthesis.

The first two considerations listed above derive directly from Richards' theory of the two uses of language, viz. referential and emotive, with the corollary that in poetry the language used is essentially emotive. It will be remembered that Richards had asserted that "A poem..."
has no concern with limited and directed reference. It
tells us, or should tell us nothing."¹ Thus for Richards,
"The Waste Land" was a godsend, since it seemed to justify
his theory that a poet is making (or ought to make) no
particular references (i.e. to a particular primrose or
a particular office-girl) or ordinary limited statements;
that at most he is making (or ought to be making) only
general references by means of his vivid and convincing
presentation of a situation. And that if the poet is
successful he must leave us in a state of "imaginative
assent"² or "objectless belief"³ so that the question of
its truth or falsehood does not or ought not to arise.
Richards' practical judgment on the primacy of feeling
in Eliot's poetry was in consonance with his theory that
"A direction of the will and a development of feeling
often seem to me in reading poetry to come before any
sufficient cognitive apprehension of an object upon which
this will and feeling are directed."⁴

But we may find it difficult to understand how
volition and feeling can take place in a vacuum, without
an object towards which our will is directed or by which
our feelings are aroused. Moreover, the remaining
considerations listed above, embodying Richards' assumption

¹ M.M., p.270.
² Richards: "Belief", The Symposium, October 1930.
³ P.L.C., p.280 and cf. Chapter 4, p.145.
⁴ Richards: "Belief", The Symposium, October 1930.
that what a poem does, "or should do, is to induce a
fitting attitude to experience," prove by reference to
Richards himself that this cannot be done merely by means
of pseudo-statements which refer to no particular objects
of experience. His practical critical criterion that a
poem must spring from and reflect the contemporary
situation, the emotions and attitudes of people, the
things they value, their desires, hopes and fears,
requires some correspondence between the poem and life,
some implied statements about life which must be true.
Secondly, if the value of a poem depends on its
correct presentation of the human situation and its
capacity to evoke the fitting attitudes towards it, the
attitudes involved cannot simply depend on the synaesthetic
ordering of undirected (objectless) impulses. Therefore
the occurrence or non-occurrence of synaesthesia in the
right (or any other kind of) reader, cannot in itself be
a criterion of aesthetic value; and we saw that in the
case of Hopkins, Richards actually, perhaps in desperation,
attributed the value of the poem to the synaesthesia
somehow present in the poem, and not to his own response
to it. Finally, we have seen also that his declared
criterion of psychological value, i.e. the maximum order
and coordination among maximum unfrustrated impulses,
could never become a guide to practical critical judgment and appreciation, and was, in fact, never used even by Richards himself.

How then do Richards' practical standards or criteria of value contrast with his theoretical ones?

He uses, I believe, a double criterion of aesthetic and ethical value, i.e. his implicit questions are two:

1. Is this a good poem? i.e. does it give an imaginatively adequate expression of the poet's meaning? (aesthetic criterion).

2. Is this poem valuable for our generation? i.e. does it give us an adequate statement of our crisis of beliefs, both religious, intellectual, and emotional, and could it thus become a means to its solution? (ethical criterion).

If this is a fair comment, we see that far from judging the value of a poem by totting up the number of satisfied or frustrated impulses, Richards actually makes a single ultimate value-judgment comparable to that made by any philosopher propounding a teleological system of ethics. And in fact we find him stating this in so many words. In the Appendix A "On Value" in The Principles of Literary Criticism he says: That the most worth-while achievement and that by reference to which all other valuable
achievements are valuable is an attitude to life combining the maximum response to the maximum variety of its desired aspects co-ordinated so as to afford the minimum frustration of any other such responses.

But such a kind of aesthetic Utilitarianism (if I may call it so) has no determinate meaning unless a basis for measuring response-quantities against scope-of response-quantities is provided. It has of course a rule-of-thumb meaning (in which it is fairly traditional as the measure of the appeal of great literature - of general relevance, illuminating interest and intense emotional effect) which Richards uses in his own literary criticism. But he has attempted to make it scientifically determinate by talk of homogeneous atomic impulses which could be quantitatively measured if we could isolate them, and in terms of which the scope-of-response value would reappear in quantitative terms. We have seen that he has to abandon this attempt almost immediately as based on an ideal abstraction. Moreover, though he never acknowledges this clearly, his theory of value in terms of synaesthesis is not a scientific descriptive account of what people do value but his own judgment as to what they ought to value. Hence the oddity of combining an apparently scientific descriptive synaesthesis-theory with a condemnation of stock-responses.

Also he has in fact further value-judgments in the background, limiting the 'desirable' aspects of life: he would probably reject the work of a Marquis de Sade, even if it did produce synaesthesia, as valueless, because it arises from a distorted view of life and because it portrays as desirable its 'undesirable' aspects. On the other hand, since as I have shown Richards usually judges literature by a double standard of aesthetic and ethical value, he would probably accept a book like Henri Alleg's "La Question" as valuable because, although it describes man's bestial cruelty to man, its intention is essentially moral - as a protest on behalf of the dignity of man.

We see, in fact, that Richards, in his practical judgments never applies his psychological theory of value. He never judges the poem as good or bad by considering the quantity and organisation of his impulses, but, like all of us, by considering the kind and range of values the poem embodies - aesthetic or formal values and ethical or life-values. As a literary critic, Richards has left (consciously or unconsciously) his psychological theory of value, and has returned to a "hierarchical organization of choices", though perhaps not metaphysically based, of the good and true and beautiful.

Richards' practical criticism and his constant preoccupation with the problems of "Poetry versus Science"
and "Poetry versus Belief" reveal, as Eliot puts it, that Richards "is engaged in a rear-guard religious action" ("Somewhat in the spirit of 'religion without revelation'.")\(^1\)

Whether we agree or disagree with Eliot's interpretation, it is clear, I think, that Richards is really much more concerned with the function of poetry in the crisis of beliefs and the crisis of Western culture in general, than with their specific expression by different modern poets. He believed that the underlying cause of this crisis was "the Neutralisation of Nature, the transfer from the Magical View of the world, to the scientific." He believed "that Poetry, together with the other Arts arose with this Magical View" and he was naturally led to the conclusion which he dreaded most, namely, "that Poetry may pass away with it."\(^2\)

(In his Autobiography Lions and Shadows, Christopher Isherwood describes the consternation of the students during a Literature lecture at Cambridge, when Richards announced: "According to me, it's quite possible that in fifty years' time, people will have stopped writing poetry altogether."\(^3\)

After all, Richards might well be right!)

3. op.cit., p.121.
This fear, the fear that exact knowledge and a scientific view of the world were about to oust poetry and would make poetic inspiration irrelevant, seems to have been the mainspring of Richards' long struggle to prove by all means at his disposal - both theoretical and practical - that we could still change the course of events. His whole attitude towards poetry was one of "intense religious seriousness" and he probably thought of himself as a Crusader, albeit for a cause whose success was doubtful; and he self-consciously reminds us that he is writing on poetry "in an age when, in the majority of social circles, to be seriously interested in art is to be thought an oddity." Still, if he could help in the rehabilitation of Poetry, being thought an oddity (by the Philistines presumably) seemed to Richards not too high a price to pay. He was deeply convinced of the need man has for poetry; he knew that throughout the ages poetry had given voice to man's deepest hopes and fears, his dreams, his mortal and immortal longings. Therefore he expects great poetry to treat of man's age-long (if not necessarily eternal) problems:

"1. Man's loneliness (the isolation of the human situation).
2. The facts of birth and of death, in their inexplicable oddity.
3. The inconceivable immensity of the Universe.
4. Man's place in the perspective of time.
5. The enormity of his ignorance."¹

These then are the **life-values** Richards demands of poetry, and probably of **great literature** as well. This is indeed very far from judging a poem "according to the need of the moment,"² or in terms of order and interdependence of impulses evoked or satisfied by it.

As they stand, these criteria of value might have universal and eternal relevance only because they are so general as to be vacuous. As Eliot asks: "In what sense is Man in general isolated, and from what? What *is* the 'human situation'?" And on the second point he ironically comments: "I cannot see why the facts of birth and of death should appear odd in themselves, unless we have a conception of some other way of coming into the world and of leaving it, which strikes us as more natural."³

But my main criticism of these five points is that they clearly do not involve any values of an aesthetic nature. Although many great poets have, in fact, treated some of these general problems, many mediocre poets have done the same. It is surely the **content** and the way it is handled,

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¹. P.C., p.290.
². do p.290.
the formed content, that makes us distinguish the aesthetically good in poetry as in the other arts. And if Richards intended to provide us with "a technique or ritual for heightening sincerity," he seems to have overlooked the fact that we can be just as sincere (in the ordinary non-technical sense) in our appreciation of the second-rate as of the best poetry.

I should like to summarise now Richards' view of poetry as a practical literary critic: It is that the function of poetry is both to present the human situation and by its emotively forceful presentation to work on people's attitudes towards it so that they improve it. And in his credo that Poetry is capable of saving us from "mental chaos", he aligns himself with Matthew Arnold and all those who regarded poetry as a means to moral regeneration.

On the analogy of a famous saying, I should venture to say that Richards believes that poets have usually only interpreted the world but the point is to change it.

In an age like ours where many artists disclaim moral responsibility for their work because it expresses their own unconscious or the 'collective unconscious';

in an age where every day some new movement in art is initiated, to die as rapidly away; where conformism to the latest fashion in 'advanced' taste demands the rejection of standards in art (since art as an expression of pure, irrational emotion admits of no standards\(^1\)) - in such an age Richards' doctrine of poetry embodies a positive and progressive view. It is only to be regretted that his subjective, pseudo-scientific theory of value and its terminology obscured what was best in him.

Richards' theoretical views have no actual or possible connection with his critical practice, and our refutation of the former was only a logically necessary step to our acceptance of the latter.

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1. For example: "An American called Corso, who has written verses in praise of nuclear weapons, stated in a recent interview: 'Our poetry is Wham-bam, whatever comes into our mind. That's our message.' Quoted by R. Reynolds in The New Statesman, 5th July, 1958."
Summary of Richards' theory of value and of poetry, as expounded in the foregoing five chapters.

1) A value judgment is a report of a valued experience.
2) A valued experience is a unified attitude to life's demands - synaesthesis.
3) This is physiologically due to the organisation of our impulses, i.e. the maximum order among maximum unfrustrated responses to stimuli.
4) This experience is so far only identifiable by introspection.
5) But upon it can be based a descriptive psycho-physiological theory of value.
6) Only so will we free our literary criticism from metaphysical vacuity.
7) To do so we must treat works of art as sets of experiences occasioned by what we commonly call the work of art. These experiences can then be measured psycho-physiologically to give them merit-rating.

Objection: This would be a purely personal, singular judgment of the experiences occasioned by one reading of a poem in one person. No other value-judgments would be possible, except generalisations of these.

Further objection: In particular there would be no sense to the question: "Am I reading as much into the poem as, and not more than, should be read into it?" Nor could the
answer to the question "Is the (unified) attitude occasioned in me by the poem based on an apprehension of true beliefs about the world?", matter, in assessing the value of the attitude. Yet the notion of synaesthesis is so developed that the most valuable experience would be a coherent unified attitude towards all the truths there are. (Hence Richards' demand for a poetry with themes of perennial interest.)

8) That such an attitude based on the whole of reality is the only measure of value, all other valuable things being such either according as they approximate to it, or according as they have the general effect of disposing us to approximate to it. (Here Richards is like any other teleological philosopher.)

9) That what we in fact value is an attitude like this in being unified, but prone to be unified only in respect of a partial grasp of reality and a large element of false or short-sighted beliefs; (hence his condemnation of stock-attitudes); that ideally the scope and intensity of various actual attitudes is a matter of psychological fact and provides a scientific descriptive theory of value, whereby to evaluate objects evoking such attitudes.

Objections: 1. Are all attitudes equally valuable providing they are equally broadly based and equally unified?

2. Is all art valuable only by reference
to its evoking this kind of response?

10) That therefore we can derive a theory of poetry from its aim: a poem is good in so far as it evokes an attitude approximating to that of the unified acceptance and (or) understanding of the whole of reality. The criteria of valuable poetry are therefore:

i. powerful effect,

ii. scope of truths assimilated and truth of these,

iii. direction of unified attitude towards acceptance and (or) control of 'reality'.

11) That this powerful effect (10(i)) depends on the emotive effect of the mere presentation of certain aspects of life in such a way that we are led to refer them generally to reality and adopt a unified attitude (10(iii)) towards it in consequence. (Hence Richards' requirement that modern poetry should be currently relevant.) But with the advance of science and the scientific approach to sociology and psychology this emotive (magical) effect may fall into disrepute and fail. Richards has an ambivalent attitude on whether this is good or bad for poetry and for the people who read and enjoy it.
PART II

The moralist: "He wants to know what is good in what is good that makes it good; and the whole wretched difficulty is that one is forced to reply either that what is good in what is good makes the good in what is good good, or that it is, in fact, made good by things which are not in the least good at all." (William H. Gass: "The Case of the Obliging Stranger". Philosophical Review, July 1957.)

And beautiful?
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And beautiful?
A THEORY OF AESTHETIC VALUE

a) The aesthetic judgment - a judgment of value

In our examination of Richards' theory of aesthetics we saw that it originated with an unreal dichotomy to which Richards' theory of language committed him, viz. that 'X is beautiful' must be either an ordinary statement of fact or an emotive noise. Richards chose the former and argued that the aesthetic judgment is a judgment of psychological fact rather than of metaphysical fact. We saw that Richards substituted for the original judgment 'X is beautiful' what he takes to be its expanded synonym - 'X induces synaesthesia' (where this is a psychological fact), and made it the basis for his descriptive scientific theory of value. Granting his equations, this science would still only be a science of what people in fact value, not of what is valuable. The development of linguistic analysis has shown that the logic of a value-term like 'beautiful' is far more complex than Richards and other defenders of 'emotivism' realised. Let us therefore consider some of those specific features of 'beautiful' as a value-term and the features of the value-judgments where it is used.

Ever since the time of Socrates the quest for
Truth, Goodness, and Beauty has been regarded as the special field of the philosopher. The quest for the proper understanding of these notions has been long and tortuous and not altogether as barren as those modern thinkers who decry Metaphysics believe. Even if some of the problems of the philosopher have turned out to be pseudo-problems, and we no longer ask "What is Truth?" but rather "What do we accomplish in various contexts by saying 'this is true' or 'this is beautiful'?", we still continue our quest, though our method has become more down-to-earth and our object of inquiry more limited.

In this respect, Logic and Ethics have fared better than Aesthetics, probably because of their greater impact on practical thinking and on conduct. Beauty was the last of these three great terms to be brought down from its pinnacle, and even in our time idealist aestheticians like Croce, Carritt and Collingwood pursue their quest for the essential nature of Beauty or Art.

I shall pose our initial question in another way and shall probably arrive at different conclusions. I shall not look for a universal property, Beauty, common and peculiar to all those objects in which it supposedly inheres, nor shall I assert categorically (as do the naturalists) that 'beauty' is merely a shorthand term for a list of observable characteristics. I shall start from a concrete example of an aesthetic judgment and shall
try to work out its implications, and shall, I hope, justify the assumption that it does fairly represent all judgments of its kind. My question, then, is: "What makes any judgment an aesthetic one?"

When I say: "'St. Agnes' Eve' is a beautiful poem" I am making an aesthetic judgment. How do I know? Let us suppose that my answer is: "Because it is a judgment about a poem, i.e. a work of art, which is the special object of which any judgment is an aesthetic judgment." But then what kind of judgment is "This poem is written in Greek" and what kind of judgments are: "This mountain is beautiful", "This child is beautiful", "This jet air-liner is beautiful", "This mathematical solution is a beautiful one", etc.? Here we surely have a non-aesthetic judgment on a poem, and judgments on non-aesthetic objects about which the same thing is said as was said about 'St. Agnes' Eve'; judgments we should assume to be aesthetic, since the same word, 'beautiful', is used. Nor need we assume that these are 'loose' or 'stretched' uses of the word. In all these cases 'beautiful' could clearly and unambiguously mean at least 'not ugly and not neutral in aesthetic appeal'. It is, therefore, not the special object of judgment by reference to which we can distinguish the aesthetic from other types of judgment.

If there is no special object of aesthetic judgment, perhaps there is a special quality or characteristic
common to all the different objects of which aesthetic judgments are made; that characteristic in virtue of which they are called beautiful? But if we ask, "What is the common and peculiar feature possessed by a mountain, a child, an air-liner and a mathematical solution in virtue of which all are called 'beautiful'", we find that there is no possible answer to such a question. They are called beautiful for possessing different features. The word 'beautiful' cannot serve either to summarize or to classify these features.

Then perhaps the differentia of the aesthetic judgment lies in the special kind of emotion, which forms the ground of the judgment. Richards' theory seems to favour this account. Perhaps when I say "St. Agnes' Eve" is a beautiful poem" I simply assert: "Synaesthesia has occurred". But if this is the distinguishing feature of aesthetic judgments, 'synaesthesia' must be a suitable name for the very different emotions which, for example, a symphony, an epigram and a gesture (all 'beautiful' in their way) may cause us; moreover, since the judgment that a poem is a bad one is as typically aesthetic as its contrary, we should have to find a 'negative synaesthesia' to supplement this positive emotion-based account. And since the typical emotional result of great works of art, if it can indeed be isolated, seems to be paralleled by that produced sometimes by mystical experience, not to say...
drugs, it would seem impossible to regard 'synaesthesia' both as a straightforward description of a certain range of emotional responses and as the distinguishing feature by reference to which aesthetic judgments are to be defined.

When in fact are we likely to have to distinguish a judgment as an aesthetic one? Surely when we have to justify it. When I say: "'St. Agnes' Eve' is a beautiful poem" and am asked, "Why?", I may answer: "Because it encourages young lovers to escape from home"; but it can logically be retorted: "But you said it was beautiful, not that it would have a morally desirable effect!"

If, however, my answer is: "'St. Agnes' Eve' is a beautiful poem because by means of his language the poet makes us feel and see (or experience) a special atmosphere, transports us to a certain time, a certain place, a certain season; because the old nurse, the beadsman, the maiden and her lover, as well as the background of the medieval castle against which they move, fit perfectly together, seem perfectly right; therefore I call it a beautiful poem", then, although it is possible to disagree with the reasons given for my evaluation, one would concede, I think, that they are the type of reasons or refer to the type of criteria relevant to the aesthetic judgment and irrelevant to the moral, social,
historical, psychological judgments which can also be passed on the poem. It is to be observed that the type of reasons offered for a judgment give often the best means of identifying the experience on which the judgment is grounded. These being my reasons for my judgment, it is plainly aesthetic and not moral satisfaction I derived from the poem.

If it is the type of reasons offered in explanation of a judgment of the type 'X is beautiful' that show it to be aesthetic, then Aesthetics becomes, not, as Richards hoped, a branch of psychology but the clarification of "the principles on which we select the special set of criteria of value that are properly to be counted as relevant to aesthetic judgment or appraisal". This is J.O. Urmson's view, and it might appear dry and prosaic when compared with the emotive language of many aestheticians, including Richards. But Urmson makes it clear that his account of the logical analysis of the aesthetic judgment must not be taken as excluding emotions as a necessary if not sufficient ground for this judgment (in a sense which allows us to say that if emotions are absent we can adjudge an object as 'aesthetically indifferent'), or as

implying that our usual aesthetic judgments are, as a matter of fact, of such pure aesthetic type.¹ We can and we do evaluate the same object from many different points of view, very often in a single but complex judgment, and the type of reasons we adduce to support our judgments of an object are the best indication of the points of view from which we judge it.

If we can now take it that we know at least in principle how to distinguish an aesthetic judgment, can we go on to consider what my judgment meant? Does the judgment 'X is beautiful' mean no more than 'From the aesthetic point of view, X appeals to me'? Obviously it means more. The very fact that we formulate our aesthetic judgments by saying 'X is beautiful' and not 'X is beautiful to me' or 'X appeals to me aesthetically' indicates that not purely personally valid standards of judgment are presupposed. What would constitute the validity of such standards is a difficult question, but is certainly not settled by their general acceptance. That there are or are not generally accepted standards is irrelevant to the propriety of a use of 'beautiful', though general acceptance of such standards as between participants in a discussion

¹. "... There is clearly nothing to prevent our satisfaction from being multiply-grounded and thus simultaneously aesthetic and moral, aesthetic and economic, and so on." ibid., p.79.
is important for its (derivative) informative effect, and for profitable discussion, instead of an interchange of claim and counterclaim which gets us nowhere.

This characteristic of presupposing without mentioning the use of generally valid descriptive criteria shows a use of the word 'beautiful' like a use of the word 'good' to be evaluative rather than purely descriptive. The descriptive function of such words is minimal; they are primarily used to do a different job from the descriptive one. Roughly speaking, to describe is primarily to classify as conveniently as possible for informative purposes. To evaluate is not primarily to aim at information. But evaluation, like description, is a job which can be properly and improperly done (as all linguistic jobs can).

The criteria by which a value-word like 'beautiful' or 'good' is being used can be set out as descriptions to be fulfilled by objects which are to be called 'beautiful' or 'good'. But these criteria may well differ for different types of objects; they may therefore tell us what is meant by calling X beautiful, (that, for example, it, (being an apple) is red, round, and shiny), but not what 'beautiful' means. We may say, perhaps, 'beautiful' means 'good from the aesthetic point of view', or simply 'aesthetically good', though there are uses of 'beautiful' which are more restricted than this, as is shown by our tendency to distinguish between, for example,
the sublime, or the vividly expressive, and the beautiful.

In any case to call an object 'aesthetically good' instead of 'beautiful', does not get us very far, since it is the replacement of a specifically aesthetic value-term by an even more general evaluative word. But though not enlightening when stated in general terms, this replacement helps by directing our attention to the relevant features of particular uses. For, only the context of use (the explanations or justifications offered) can tell us in any given use what jobs other than evaluative the words 'good' or 'beautiful' are doing there. Of evaluative jobs, only such contextual investigation can make clear which sort of evaluation is being done.

Thus, "That poem would be good" (for encouraging the men) would be moral.

"That man would be good" (for a model for 'Youth and Strength') would be aesthetic.

"That was a good/beautiful stroke" (because it scored 4 runs) is probably a sporting evaluation, but if the reason given were "Because it was made effortlessly with a fine smooth movement and a perfect control and timing", it would be aesthetic.

R.G.Collingwood's 'beautiful' mutton may not have

1. The Principles of Art (O.U.P.1947), pp.38-39. cf."The words 'beauty', 'beautiful', as actually used, have no aesthetic implication'... "We speak of things as beautiful, with no less frequency and no less accuracy, when their excellence is one that appeals only to our senses: a beautiful saddle of mutton or a beautiful claret."...
had aesthetic appeal, though if it hadn't (e.g. if it hadn't looked good as well as tasted good) it is not clear why it was beautiful rather than good; but the test whether a use of the word is aesthetic or not is neither the class of objects to which it is applied, nor the quality of the object, nor the special emotion evoked by it, but the type of reasons or criteria offered in explanation. I should like to recall here what I said earlier about the aesthetic experience of looking at a picture (Chapter 4 b). We notice that many of the judgments which entered into (or expressed or were grounded on) this experience were not concerned with evaluation but were concerned with noticing and understanding the relevance of facts, observable or remembered. These would surely count as aesthetic judgments but not evaluations, and would be formulated as descriptions; but would constitute descriptions made relevant to a final evaluative judgment by reference to the general criteria on which the judgment depended; hence their aesthetic character is again derived from the special type of evaluation to which they are relevant. Probably most of our comments on works of art (aesthetic remarks) are in forms which combine description and evaluation in a single predicate - balance, brilliance, masterly performance, rhythm, organic unity, academic,
Now let us try to apply Richards' theory of value — or rather theories of value — to an example of a value-judgment. According to Richards' original, neurological theory of value, when I say "This stroke is beautiful" I mean "This stroke causes in me certain effects in the organisation of my impulses". Thus I cannot be conveying any information about 'it', but only about myself, and moreover, even the evaluation is not of the object or activity, but of my states of mind, because these are for me the only valuable things. We have here no clear indication as to how to differentiate the many possible value-judgments some of which were differentiated above. According to Richards' later, aesthetic theory of value, when I say "This stroke is beautiful" I mean "This stroke ought to induce synaesthesis in a sufficiently responsive spectator"; yet this judgment can only be justified by redirecting attention to 'this stroke', and is no clearer (even with the ordinary-impulse explanation of 'synaesthesis') than "This stroke is beautiful" except in special cases.

Where Richards clearly goes wrong is in thinking that states of mind are identifiable independently of the objects and situations evoking them, and hence in thinking we can evaluate them independently of these objects and situations.
On Richards' psychological theory of value, aesthetic judgment would be reduced to a detailed exchange of information about psycho-physiological effects in the makers of the judgments. Deprived of its function of evaluating objects and perhaps commending them to others, the aesthetic judgment would become a simple statement or report of psychological fact. My statement "This poem is beautiful" becomes "upon my reading this poem the effect X has occurred", a statement which could not be significantly contradicted by another's statement "Upon my reading this poem the effect X has not occurred" because both effects X and not-X could be the case.

But such a judgment as the above is of no interest to the aesthetician, who must try to find which, if any, are the relevant criteria of merit in the aesthetic judgment in general, and perhaps give some indication of the criteria proper to certain judgments in limited contexts. But to say that the aesthetician must set down criteria of aesthetic merit does not mean that he must set down precise defining characteristics p,q,r, such that any object which has them must be graded accordingly. For, even if we can formulate our reasons for saying of a given object, "This is beautiful", this does not commit us to any generalised application of such reasons (as perhaps is the case with ethical judgments). I might
say, "H. Moore's sculptures are made beautiful by the distortions he employs", where this is recognisably a reason for my judgment, yet it does not imply "Any work employing distortions (or 'distortions involving holes through the middle') would be beautiful." Admittedly this leaves the question as to how it can be a reason for the above judgment unanswered. The solution must no doubt lie in the extraordinary complexity and precision of the complete grounds for any aesthetic judgment on any object; a salient feature may be picked out for notice as especially relevant to this view but by itself it will probably be useless as a general criterion.

To sum up the above:

1. "X is beautiful" by itself never entails or is entailed by any special description, though in a loose sense it implies that there is some special description which fits X and which serves as the ground for its aesthetic assessment as beautiful.

2. The reasons for grading a given object X high aesthetically can be set out as descriptions.

3. But these descriptions cannot be generalised into generally applicable standards so that every object which exhibits them must, and no object which does not may, be equally evaluated.

There are different criteria regulating our
judgments that Le Misanthrope is good and that King Lear is good, although we evaluate both of them as good. Our emotional response to them is only one of our reasons for commending them, the one as being good comedy, the other as being good tragedy. And if we compare Le Misanthrope with A Midsummer Night's Dream as being good comedy, we must further subdivide our criteria so that we can commend the one for different features from those relevant in the case of the other.

If then there are no sets of precise and generally applicable criteria of what is beautiful, whence do we derive our standard of aesthetic value in tragedy, in comedy or any other form of literature? Is it just something in fact public and commonly accepted, fixed and eternal, as we presuppose in expressing the impersonal form of an aesthetic judgment, or is it on the contrary for ever "suffering a sea-change", here today and gone tomorrow, so that our use of this form is misleadingly impersonal? In the light of the history of art-appreciation we can see that neither the one nor the other is the case. Aesthetic, just like ethical criteria, are neither absolutely immutable, nor continuously fluctuating. They have a relative permanence: at a certain time, at a certain stage of cultural and moral development, there are certain accepted criteria with reference to which moral conduct
and works of art are judged. That does not mean that the accepted standards of judgment are necessarily the right standards. Every moral reformer and every innovator or genius in art sets out to change the existing ethical or aesthetic standards and to try to establish others in their place.

Let us take some examples from the history of art-criticism and art-appreciation which corroborate the foregoing. My examples come from the different fields of music, painting, and poetry.

In the field of the aesthetics of music (and hence of music-criticism and appreciation), a revolutionary change began with E. Hanslick's book "Vom Musikalisch-Schönen" published in 1854. He was out to overthrow the emotive-content theory of music and to prove its autonomy as an art-form. It had, he declared, no meaning, no reference beyond itself; the only ideas music could express were musical ideas: "The theme of a musical composition is its proper content." And again: "In the art of music there is no content opposed to form, because music has no form over and above its content." In view of this revolutionary aesthetic it was natural for Hanslick to reject programme music or Wagner's musical imitation and representation of emotions, as aiming at quite the wrong

features for musical merit. Whole bodies of music criticism now presuppose Hanslick's view, though it has never totally displaced its rival. To understand the descriptive force of evaluations of musical works therefore, one must know which view of music and therefore which criteria they presuppose.

In the early 20th century, Clive Bell and Roger Fry brought about a similar revolution in the criticism and appreciation of painting, by the establishment of new standards of value. They rejected the view that the representative element was either important or relevant to the value of a painting; and they suggested that its value lay in the aesthetic emotion aroused by the contemplation of the spatial relations of plastic volumes. Art-critics, they held, should not be concerned with anything but "with lines and colours, their relations and quantities and qualities";¹ and in their own criticism of different paintings and painters, their actual critical judgments and evaluations were (explicitly or implicitly) made with reference to these standards.

To turn to another field - poetry. Just as Hanslick declared the autonomy of musical significance and Bell and Fry declared the autonomy of the significance of visual form, Bradley declared the autonomy of poetry. Poetry, he said,

¹ Clive Bell, _Art_, Section 1, Chapter I.
is for Poetry's sake, "For its nature is to be not a part, nor yet a copy, of the real world . . . but to be a world by itself, independent, complete, autonomous; and to possess it fully you must enter that world, conform to its laws, and ignore for the time the beliefs, aims, and particular conditions which belong to you in the other world of reality."¹

The belief shared by these aestheticians is the autonomy of the world of art, the separateness of music, painting and poetry from the ordinary world. Their standard of aesthetic merit in music, painting and poetry was formal or non-representative, and their specific judgments on this or that piece of music, painting, or poetry, naturally presupposed these standards.

We see therefore that specific critical judgments are fully intelligible only if they derive from, and refer back to certain critical standards. How do we acquire such standards? One answer might be that of B.C. Heyl: "They are working hypotheses or codified principles which critics formulate as they study and appreciate works of art." These critical principles form "a specific frame of reference towards which specific evaluations are directed."²

The view that we derive our standards from the study and appreciation of works of art gets the blessing of authority from Aristotle's procedure in the Poetics, where he was seeking to establish standards of judgment for tragedy for the first time. Aristotle's view of tragedy is closely related to his general philosophy of the 'good' life and the means necessary to its attainment. Yet he insists that a work of art should be judged by artistic standards, which, in the case of tragedy, he derived empirically from a detailed study of the characteristics of past and current Greek plays. Aristotle's view of specific judgments on different tragedies are made by reference to these standards of tragedy.

Yet as is well-known, these standards, or a mistaken view of them, were taken to be authoritative and universally applicable to all tragedy. In the Classical period of the 17th century (especially in France), critical judgments as to the relative merits of different tragedies were of the form: does it or does it not conform to the famous unities of time, place, and action? (the first two of which were of course mistakenly attributed to him)

As at such a period there was an accepted
standard of aesthetic judgment (in this case in tragedy) and the critical problem was to apply it in particular instances. But whether in fact this simplified the critical problem, i.e., whether critical judgments really operated in this way, rather than being first made directly and then so formulated as to use the Aristotelian framework, is perhaps a questionable matter. In any case since Aristotle's standards had been derived from Greek plays which could only have been written at that particular historical time, in that particular socio-political period of the Greek city-state, the attempt to uphold them as eternally valid, unless supplemented with a gift for stretching their application by interpretation, was doomed to failure. Revolution built up; other critical standards were perforce established because new types of tragedy were being written. With the first performance of Victor Hugo's Hernani in 1830, the conflict between the Classicists and the Romantics was brought into the open. Although their controversy was ostensibly about the formal aspects of the drama, the adherence to the three unities hallowed by Aristotle's authority and the tradition of the French Classical tragedy, the true controversy was much deeper: it was about the new content the Romantics were trying to express, and it was this that determined their new dramatic techniques.
"When Victor Hugo, in the opening lines of Hernani, ventured to refer to an 'escalier dérobé', and to put 'escalier' at the end of one line, and 'dérobé' at the end of the next, he was assailed with the kind of virulence which is usually reserved for the vilest of criminals. And the abuse had a meaning to it: it was abuse of a revolutionary. For in truth, by the disposition of those two words Victor Hugo inaugurated a revolution. The whole theory of 'rules' in literature — the whole conception that there were certain traditional forms in existence which were, absolutely and inevitably, the best — was shattered for ever. The new doctrine was triumphantly vindicated — that the form of expression must depend ultimately, not upon tradition nor yet upon a priori reasonings, but simply and solely on the thing expressed."

In contrast to French dramatic literature, the Elisabethan dramatists do not seem to have been troubled by Aristotelian standards, perhaps for the simple reason that they were quite obviously writing different kinds of plays. As Lytton Strachey puts it, Racine's tragedy of crisis is one of 'concentration' for which the unities are perfectly adapted; but the Elisabethan drama in general, and Shakespeare's in particular, is one of 'comprehension' of varied characters and complex plots, for which the unities simply won't do.

In this sense, every genius in his work truly creates the standards by which his work and that of his followers is judged, by creating new forms, new techniques, new effects, and hence different kinds of excellence.

1. Lytton Strachey: Landmarks in French Literature, p.149. (O.U.P.1955)
Was there a standard for a discussion-play until Shaw's plays? No. Was there a standard for the psychological drama until *The Cherry Orchard* by Chekov? No. Was there a standard for a modern epic play until Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*? No. And in our own time were there standards for plays like Claudel's *Partage de Midi*, not to mention the plays of Ugo Betti, Osborne, Beckett, etc. But now there are standards of excellence, established by these works, and our judgment of this or that play is usually not simply: "Is this a good or not a good play?" but: "Is this a good or not a good play of its kind?" And in adding 'of its kind' we implicitly refer to some standard or principle or criteria of a general kind of play by which we are judging this one. Thus when I say "'The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll' is a good play" I do not judge it according to some standard of 'goodness' in plays in general, valid for all plays everywhere, nor do I judge it as 'good' only according to my own private principles, valid only for me here and now. When I unpack my judgment it becomes more specific, e.g. "It is a good modern serious play", in that it presents dramatically a real situation in which the characters convincingly conflict, develop, and change; it asks the important question "Must man either live in self-delusion, or in loneliness, or is there another possibility?" and it presents the answer as evolving out of the play itself.
Are these then my standards in judging modern serious plays?

Yes, these are some of the standards implied in my critical judgments of such plays, and in my discussions with others as to the merit of a play, I suppose that they too use some such standards. This of course is sometimes proved to be a false assumption. It seems indeed that one of the current fashions in criticism, especially of painting and sculpture, is the replacement of judgments purporting to be based on critical standards by more 'candid' statements of personal like or dislike as the sufficient criterion of 'good' and 'bad'. I shall quote again Kenneth Tynan's 'credo' as a literary critic:

"I see myself predominantly as a lock. If the key, which is the work of art, fits snugly into my mechanism of bias and preference, I click and rejoice; if not, I am helpless."

The only accepted principle of reasoning is 'having no principles'. Perhaps it is merely making a virtue of necessity for, tells us Eric Newton, the art critic of the Manchester Guardian,

"The truth is that no adequate vocabulary exists which could evaluate the precise quality or talent or genius on which abstract art depends. The critic must therefore fall back on adjectives that express little more than enthusiasm, apathy, or disgust, and leave it to the visitor to react in his own way. Most of us have a personal yardstick for judging a conception of a goddess, but there is no expressible standard of
To say that there is no expressible standard of judgment means that it is impossible to formulate a ground for judgment, and that assigning merit to some paintings and withholding it from others is impossible too, except as a report of a set of personal temperature readings.

We have "a personal yardstick for judging a conception of a goddess" because we have been familiar with goddesses in literature and myth, because we have seen them in paintings, etc.; and our personal yardstick is such that we can use it for evaluating others' rendering of a goddess. But since the abstract painting is represented as not representing anything of which we have a concept, we have no basis for criticising it except the simple one of 'satisfying' or 'unsatisfying'. Thus not only an accepted standard for judging abstract painting is impossible, but even a personal yardstick is impossible as well.

"For example, to transmit the meaning of an 'action painting', involving as this does the intrusion of an interpreter between what has been called 'utter directness' and the spectator, is an anachronism."

What is left to the critic, is to "describe, at length, 1. The Manchester Guardian, 21 May, 1957."
his pleasurable sensations". In short, "What the critic X 'feels', interpreting what the artist has 'felt', is in turn registered as a kind of confidential message by the 'public'."¹ And once we have accepted the view that one can express feeling by means of blots and splashes, why should we be surprised when the ICA exhibits Congo the chimp's 'artistic' experiments?

To sum up: our aesthetic judgments are primarily evaluative and derivatively descriptive. To say "X is beautiful" means "There are standards or reasons for grading X high aesthetically". In so far as these standards are generally known and accepted the judgment can be used descriptively as true or false. In the past, some aesthetic standards were regarded as universally valid (though extremely imprecise!) i.e. as objectively correct or incorrect. Often these were explained as directly depending on a specific philosophy (Plato, Aristotle, Hegel). These standards were usually believed to concern (perhaps indirectly) observable features of the objects judged. The view that standards are derived from and concern reportable effects on the person judging, though held in a much more subtle form by Hume and Kant, is in its crude form a characteristic of our own time. The shift of emphasis from the object to the subject, which began with the

¹ Peter de Francia, Universities and Left Review, No.1, 1957.
Romantic writers and critics, has gradually led to a denial of the necessity of any but a personally relevant standard in aesthetic judgment. A case in point in this development from objective to subjective criteria is the history of the judgments passed on Leonardo's "La Gioconda" from Vasari to Freud.¹ The reasons for regarding the painting as valuable or beautiful have been: First, its perfect resemblance to a live human being (Vasari); then, its incarnation of the eternally feminine (Théophile Gautier and Pater saw in it the very symbol of mysterious womanhood); and lastly, its externalisation of the artist's unconscious desires (Freud regarded it as the projection and sublimation of the painter's Oedipus complex). It is a remarkable fact that the painting is regarded as beautiful by all these critics, although the standards they use (verisimilitude, adequate symbolisation, embodiment of unconscious desires) differ so completely. It might indeed make one wonder whether we don't think up reasons to fit our judgments (as Kant claims) rather than have reasons which lead us to make our judgments. However, so far as logic goes, the fact that reasons are felt to be in place for calling the painting beautiful shows that the judgment "X is beautiful" presupposes the use of some standard, and in a loose sense it implies that there is some special description related

¹ G. Boas: *Wingless Pegasus*, p. 211.
to this use which fits X. Sometimes we can formulate our reasons why X is beautiful; at other times we are unable to do so. The judgment "X is beautiful but I cannot say why" is not self-contradictory. But even if we can formulate the reasons for our judgment, this does not commit us to generalising our judgments. This is perhaps the main difference between aesthetic and ethical value-judgments.¹

Our ethical and aesthetic standards or principles are neither universally and eternally valid nor wholly fluctuating and subjective. The aesthetic standards are derived from the particular objects, the works of art, in which laymen, critics and artists find qualities which they value. These affect us both emotionally and intellectually, but our states of mind are not identifiable independently of the objects arousing them (as Richards seems to think), nor are we directly evaluating them when we seem to be or when we are evaluating the objects. Thus "X has beautiful structure, tone, design, representational content, development of themes, etc." clearly applies to the object, and not merely to one's states of mind.

If new arts arise in the future or the existent arts develop techniques for which there is a minimal descriptive vocabulary (as in the case of abstract painting)

and no criterion of judgment except personal like and
dislike, some sort of critical standard or intelligible
frame of reference will have to be established. Otherwise
we shall have to treat all works of this art as equally
indeterminate in value and all judgments on them will be
equally purely subjectively valid. This is already
happening now.

If this is an accurate account of the logic of
an aesthetic judgment let us consider how we come to make
such (logically) complex judgments. What leads us to use
language in a way which presupposes a situation so far
from that which actually obtains?

J.O. Urmson\(^1\) in his analysis of 'good' as our
most general value-term, has adopted the technical term
'grading-label' as being of general application and not
so emotionally charged as our usual value-terms like
'good' or 'beautiful'. He showed that in our everyday
life there are many cases of physical grading (apples,
cars, shoes) and in most of them our purpose is practical,
i.e. we place these objects in order of some practical
merit, mostly of economic value. For illustration he
chooses the case of apples where the purpose of grading
them is their marketing. For this purpose, the Ministry
of Agriculture's formula for grading applies (i.e. their

'grading-labels', together with the "explicit criteria for their employment") must be accepted, because it provides the generally applied standards for a specific purpose (the marketing of apples), shared by all those concerned with this business. These are convenient, generally accepted standards directed at giving value-words a precise descriptive and in that sense informative content. If a retailer orders 'Extra Fancy' apples he knows very accurately what description of apples he will get from the producers.

Now in the case of ethical and aesthetic grading, the situation is far more complex. In ethical judgments, although primarily evaluative and not directed at information or description, our purpose in making them is still usually practical - to guide conduct in certain desired ways. But in aesthetic judgments the question why we make them at all is difficult to answer. We probably make them for various reasons in different situations; perhaps just an interest in evaluation, an exercise of discriminative appreciation; perhaps to express approval or disapproval to others, perhaps for encouragement or commendation or the reverse. But what is common to ethical and aesthetic judgments is:

1. The impossibility of an ultimate appeal to established authority.

2. The absence of generally accepted criteria.
3. The vagueness of the usual moral and aesthetic grading-labels, e.g. 'kind', 'graceful'.

4. The diversity of aims we have in assigning value to actions, to people and to works of art.

There were times when there was an accepted authority. The Church in matters of religion and morality, Aristotle in philosophy had such authority. Even when people rejected them, they did not deny that an authority was necessary for establishing and regulating principles of conduct and of evaluation. One of the primary conditions for the possibility of social communication and cooperation, for life in a community, is the acceptance of definite criteria for moral judgment within and by that community. If for example different people in a society held at the same time, some that one ought to tell the truth and some that one ought not to tell the truth, social life would become impossible, for every action of the relevant kind could be justified by reference to one of the two contrary principles, and blamed by reference to the other.

Only when criteria are accepted can 'grading' words be used successfully i.e. can you know not only how I evaluate a given object but what I mean descriptively when I use them of it, and can the question as to whether they can be applied in a special situation or to a special object or feature of it be determinable in the way that an empirical question is. (Thus the Ministry of Agriculture
has set down the precise set of criteria for the expression 'super apple' for those who use its formula.¹)

But in aesthetics, the very fact that our aesthetic judgments do not have any immediate practical purpose and effect, permits different aesthetic criteria to be held by different people. Every new aesthetician begins by setting up new criteria for the application of the same aesthetic value-terms like 'beautiful', 'admirable', 'impressive', 'great'. Such criteria are for instance concerned with "Significant Form", "aesthetic emotion", "empathy", "synaesthesis", "symbolic equivalents", "socialist realism". Then every work of art which has or produces or embodies these significant forms, emotions, movements, organization of impulses, symbols, or characters presented in a socialist-realistic way (to a greater or lesser degree), is graded accordingly as beautiful, indifferent or bad. However, in fact, as we have noticed, aestheticians and critics, if they are to be any help, must make their value-judgments first and then derive a criterion. (They may then force and stretch to cover them all so that either their taste becomes restricted or their criterion becomes vacuous.) Anything at all that Richards finds beautiful, he can say produces synaesthesis in him; anything at all that Clive Bell feels to be beautiful he can find has significant form. But real disagreements about what is beautiful or

is not beautiful are nearly always in terms of particular qualities of particular works of art whose universal relevance to evaluation is not explicitly claimed, and not in terms of these vacuous general criteria.

The heterogeneity of aesthetic theories and criteria and the multiplicity of self-proclaimed critical authorities have been caused by people who feel that they have a right to be their own authority ("X is beautiful but authoritative critics do not think so" is not inconsistent); or by people who are too diffident to pronounce any judgment at all, lest it conflict with any of the many authorities. ("X is beautiful but I do not feel it to be so" and "I do not know whether I ought (aesthetically) to like it or not" are current and not inconsistent judgments.)

b) The analysis of an aesthetic judgment

Let us now consider in more detail the jobs I may be doing in saying "'St. Agnes' Eve' is a beautiful poem."

1. I may be conveying information (perhaps to the effect that on my reading of the poem I had a deeply satisfying experience).

2. I may be expressing approval (in the sense that 'beautiful' is usually used to express a favourable
attitude towards an object).

3. I may be covertly using a standard of 'beautiful' poems by which the present poem, in virtue of some 'beautiful-making' descriptive characteristics qualifies as beautiful. (If asked for my reasons for calling it beautiful, I should enumerate these characteristics of the poem as at least the necessary conditions for my value-judgment).

4. I may be simply evaluating it, deciding that it is better or worse than other poems.

5. I may be commending the poem for those beautiful-making characteristics.

This judgment will have certain contextual implications, e.g. implications as to the descriptive characteristics of the poem which a person hearing me say "'St.Agnes' Eve' is a beautiful poem", in a situation which he takes to approximate to the normal one, would be entitled to infer from my statement, on the ground that it would be odd of me (not necessarily logically odd) to say that, if I were not also prepared to add (p, q, r, etc.,) that 'St.Agnes' Eve' had the beautiful-making characteristics of a poem of the appropriate sort. (By 'normal situation' I mean that no special explanations (referring perhaps to the peculiarity of my standards or my hearer's or the

shortsightedness of current standards or the difficulty of understanding the poem in order to appreciate it etc.) are to be understood in the situation.) It would be odd of me to say, for example, "'St. Agnes' Eve' is a beautiful poem" when I did indeed value it highly but because it referred to St. Agnes, my patron saint, and for no other reason.

Compared with a more clearly informative judgment, for example, "It is a fine day" the greater informativeness of this statement is due to there being clearer criteria for fine days than for beautiful poems; this in turn being due to a more specific and general agreement as to preferred weather as against preferred poems.

This difference would be reflected in a difference of status of the two utterances, one making a clearly true-or-false statement (in accordance with agreed criteria) where 'fine' has a descriptive meaning independent of approval, meaning 'not wet', and the other not making a clearly true-or-false statement because there are no such agreed criteria, but only an evaluative statement. If the reasons given for making the judgment are proper, (aesthetically adequate) reasons, then we are justified in concluding that the judgment was right or wrong (i.e. with reference to those reasons).

In any situation, given my criteria and the
object, my judgment necessarily follows from them or is inconsistent with them. This is what makes the criteria.

This last point brings up an important but difficult question, viz., "What is the logical character of aesthetic standards? Are they universal or particular, or neither?" On this point, as I said in the first part of this chapter, an aesthetic judgment presupposes some standards as being valid for other judges, though not necessarily for other objects; that we must allow different criteria for different kinds of objects, and even for different objects; that these criteria will not be universally and eternally valid for all objects (because they would then have to be formulated so vaguely as to be vacuous), sometimes not even more generally than for the one object judged; but they must in some sense be valid for everyone judging (or perhaps rather for everyone with a similar cultural background), and perhaps relevant for objects of a 'kind' (though this may only be definable by reference to the one judged ("Plays like this one)); also that there are some criteria relevant to, and applicable only within, different art-forms; and within the same art-forms only to certain artists, genres, schools, and cultures, (e.g. we use different criteria for the appraisal of Egyptian and Greek sculpture).

It may be held that this presupposition is
unjustified - that there are no standards which can be considered valid in any other sense than that the person using them in fact uses them, no doubt in virtue of his personal preferences. If this were true it would mean that by its logic the impersonal form of value-statement is always misapplied; is always misleading. This seems an unduly pessimistic position to adopt; it seems possible to agree that there are various standards for which good reasons can be offered which can for various art-forms and within various cultural groups be regarded as valid, and as properly presupposed by impersonal value-judgments in those fields.

This kind of position is I feel the only possible one if one tries to avoid the extremes of absolutism on the one hand and those of subjectivism in all its guises, on the other. An example of the currently popular letter type of view, is given by Stuart Hampshire, who holds a work of art to be gratuitous, and the question "Why is this work of art ugly?" to be senseless; he naturally rejects aesthetics as non-existent: every work of art must be judged individually and there is no possible relation between a particular judgment (on a particular work of art) and a general formulation of its grounds.¹

In his theory Richards holds the same position,

both in his psychological and aesthetic account of value-judgments. I have shown that in his theory of value Richards' fallacy is the logical fallacy of confounding description with evaluation. Richards indeed thought that his treating evaluation as psychological description was an original discovery as to the correct way to analyse evaluation. I have tried to make it clear that though an evaluative judgment is often in its own way informative, it is the primary purpose of the two linguistic jobs which is different - the one to describe, the other to evaluate. If, following Richards, the statement ""St. Agnes' Eve" is a beautiful poem" is merely taken to mean "An aesthetic experience has occurred", or even, as Richards does, "A certain emotional effect in me, which is valuable to me, has occurred", we could neither agree nor disagree about the truth-value of this judgment. We could take the statement as registering a subjective experience, provided the person making the statement does not lie about his experience. There is no necessary connection between any one subject's mental experience as such and an evaluation of a work of art as such.

Against this extreme aesthetic subjectivism, which necessarily leads to the rejection of any objective standards in art, (although in fact it did not lead Richards himself, or anyone else, to reject objective
standards) I am trying to uphold the contrary position, namely, that these standards are not only possible but necessary. I do not mean that in order to achieve para-scientific reasoning in aesthetics we must agree to pretend that there are objective standards, or agree to persuade ourselves that generally accepted standards are authoritative, (as often happens with moral standards), but I mean that there are standards of judgment which ought to be generally accepted because they are the right ones aesthetically - not morally or socially or metaphysically or personally. If this is so, then the aesthetician's job is to distinguish (and help us to distinguish) the proper criteria for aesthetic judgments.

Despite the subjective character of his theoretical position, and particularly in his study of literary judgment in Practical Criticism, Richards goes some way towards doing this in rejecting many of the current critical judgments on poetry as aesthetically irrelevant. By a painstaking analysis of his students' critical judgments on twelve poems, Richards found they exhibited a certain number of "fixed conventionalised reactions"\(^1\) which he called "Stock Responses". Although adduced as reasons in support of critical judgments on a poem (or any other work of art), they were usually not aesthetically relevant.

\(^1\) P.C., p.240.
at all, but depended on, for example, reference to personal associations ("This landscape is beautiful - it reminds me of the holiday I spent there"), or to political and religious preconceptions and prejudices ("The Hound of Heaven is a bad poem - there is no God"). Richards maintains that such stock-responses distort the effect of the poem by leading us to read into it what is not there, and to fail to appreciate what is there because we are "setting up an irrelevant external standard". 1

Although we may agree with his justified rejection of many critical judgments on poetry as being aesthetically irrelevant, this rejection is incompatible with Richards' descriptive theory of value. If, when we value X, this is because our impulses are coherently organised by X, then whether this organisation takes place in virtue of a stock-attitude or not, Richards ought on his theory to accept it as a fact (since his theory is an 'improvement' on the metaphysical theories just because it is based on the facts of evaluation). Richards rightly pointed out and gave a name to a widely held and mistaken attitude towards poetry, but there was nothing in his theory of value to entitle him to find fault with "Stock-Responses" and stock attitudes, much less to enable him to criticise and cure the disease of stock-attitudes. Such a criticism

1. Richards: P.C., p.244.
and improvement could come about only on a theory which permits us to point out "within the work of art what makes it good."¹ Within the work - and not within the subject. (Richards might argue that on his evaluative notion of synaesthesia, this is by definition an adequately-based organised response and cannot depend on "stock-attitudes" which are by definition inadequately based. But then this notion of synaesthesia is not that of an empirically determinable state of mind and is incapable of the sort of scientific treatment Richards envisaged.)

It has been well said that "If the question of what is good and what is bad in art cannot be authoritatively answered, if aesthetic judgment is a judgment no less of the person pronouncing judgment than of the thing judged, and if there is no quarter to which to look for a final decision between conflicting judgments,"² the result must be chaos in the arts, and the end of intelligible discourse about works of art. We can escape this danger (which seems near enough), only if we agree that there are in fact objective standards within our age and cultural environment to which appeal can be made in making impersonal value-judgments.

The belief in objective standards does not conflict

in any way with the belief that they are only relatively stable. Within the specific frame of reference which these critical standards constitute, specific value-judgments can be shown to presuppose these standards, and can therefore "become universally comprehensible." If this is possible, then aesthetics has no mean job to do. And if we still find reason to complain that even so, our aesthetic judgments will neither be scientifically precise nor universally valid, we must realise that we demand the impossible. As Aristotle said, "Our discussion will be adequate if we are content with as much precision as is appropriate to the subject-matter; for the same degree of exactitude ought no more to be expected in all kinds of reasoning than in all kinds of handicraft... Let each of the views put forward be accepted in this spirit, for it is the mark of an educated mind to seek only so much exactness in each type of inquiry as may be allowed by the nature of the subject-matter." 

3) Art and Morality

If this gives a fair account of the logical context in which aesthetic judgments function, we may proceed to ask: What is the relation between the aesthetic

and the moral judgment, or, if put into a more general form, what is the relation between Art and morality, a problem that has occupied thinkers from the earliest time of artistic creation to the present day. The fact that the problem has not yet been solved must not daunt us because it only suggests that every age and every generation must pose it and solve it anew...

Morality and art belong to our world, to the life of man in society and are the products of human activity. By morality I do not mean mere law-abidingness but the principles on which people decide on their more reflective actions and justify them. Thus a person's morality could be thought of as the general principles of conduct he sincerely held to indicate how one ought to live. Formulating these principles would be one way of describing the Way of Life he approves of (cf. R.M. Hare: "The Language of Morals", passim) and morality could generally be said to be "how one ought to live" (which, without further specification is indeed a descriptively uninformative definition). But detailed specification in general terms is impossible owing to the infinite variety of particular situations, to which such principles have to be applied with moral judgment. Hence, though these moral principles record how men think they ought to act in general, we find that the literature of a given period gives a more vivid portrayal of the principles in operation
in such particular cases, and thus can be the most "articulate formulation of life"\(^1\) made by the men of that period. In this case I refer not to the whole vast field of literature in general, but only to what is called 'great art'. We commonly distinguish between a good work of art and a great one. In the first case our judgment is primarily aesthetic, and we usually mean that the work is effective, technically finished, well-organized, etc. without any reference to the subject-matter and the moral values or the "Weltanschauung" presented and communicated by it.

But whenever we talk of 'great art' we usually refer to the artistic formulation of a certain vision of life found in the great works of literature, portraying in operation the principles of conduct and the beliefs held by men at the time.

The Psalms, the Book of Job, the books of the Prophets, are both an expression of a religious vision of life and at the same time great works of literature. Though in fact the Hebrews of that period often deviated from the standard of righteousness, their principles of conduct had their finest expression in the Bible, just as the Bible, by its very formulation of these principles,

influenced their conduct. As Susanne Langer says, "In an age when art is said to serve religion, religion is really feeding art."¹

The same intimate connection between art and morality we can observe in the art of the Greeks, though their 'vision of life' was different from the religious vision of the Hebrews, and its artistic expression too was naturally different. Thus, says Kitto,

"For generations Greek morality, like Greek military tactics, had remained severely traditional, based on the cardinal virtues of Justice, Courage, Self-restraint, and Wisdom. Poet after poet had preached almost identical doctrine - the beauty of Justice, the dangers of Ambition, the folly of Violence. It was a morality which was indeed no more practised by the Greeks than Christianity was practised by all Christendom; nevertheless, like Christianity, it was an accepted standard. When a man did wrong, he was known to be doing wrong. Here was the foundation, simple and strong, on which a common life could be built; here too is the source of the strength and simplicity of classical Greek art."²

If we agree with Kitto's analysis, we must admit that such aesthetic qualities as strength and simplicity, as well as the other characteristic features of Greek art as intellectual power, seriousness, vividness and economy of description and a passionate interest in man, are qualities of that art only because they are qualities of the Greek mind, of the Greeks' attitude to life and the world.

And if, for example, we want to know the Greek 'vision of life', the principles and beliefs which governed the conduct of Greek people, we go to the Iliad. Kitto finds that the central thought of the whole legend of the Trojan War is the very essence of the Greek vision, viz. that

"Beauty, like glory, must be sought, though the price be tears and destruction. Is not this thought at the very centre of the whole legend of the Trojan War? For its hero Achilles, the very perfection of Greek chivalry, was given precisely this choice by the Gods. They offered him a long life with mediocrity, or glory with an early death. Whoever first made this myth expressed in it the essence, not only of Greek thought but also of Greek history."1

Thus the cultural products of ancient Israel and of Greece embody in different artistic forms different visions of life and of man. This does not mean that if we approve of the Hebrew 'vision of life' we must disapprove of the Greek vision or vice-versa, since what gives a 'vision of life' aesthetic value is not what gives it moral value; and as I pointed out before, we differentiate them by using different criteria of judgment. Yet in judging or comparing their works of art we also judge the outlook, beliefs and principles expressed through them. Our admiration for Greek art, its serenity, its poise, its control and its balance is probably both

aesthetic and moral and I can see neither need nor possibility for trying to separate the one from the other.

In emphasizing the co-operation between art and religion at a certain period of history (though this period extends as it does over thousands of years, and reaches its final flowering in the paintings of the Italian Renaissance) we must not forget what is a vital point: it is only if art embodies a 'vision of life' in an aesthetically effective way that we come to consider it as art at all, and judge it from an aesthetic point of view.

In the case of 'great art' then, the aesthetic judgment includes a double standard: of purely aesthetic or "surface-and-formal values" and of "life-values".\(^1\) To the first kind, according to John Hospers, belong the look, or sound, or sensation of an object; the "formal values" refer to the more complex aesthetic qualities of balance, symmetry, organic unity, theme and variation, recurrence of motifs; the "life-values" refer to the content, to what the artist has made of his subject-matter. We find in this distinction between "surface-values" and "life-values" the traditional distinction between "form" and "content", and, no more than the latter does the former accurately comprehend the complexity.

\(^1\) John Hospers: Meaning and Truth in the Arts, Chap. 1. (The University of North Carolina Press 1956)
of our aesthetic judgments. The work of art is a whole, and if we begin to break it up into its constituent elements, if we neatly separate off its form from its content we are probably no longer actually appreciating it aesthetically, but are analysing and accounting for our past appreciation. Indeed, when accounting for our aesthetic judgments, we find some works effective because of one sort of value and others more effective because of the other. But our actual aesthetic experience and appreciation is not compartmentalized. It is as if we asked a woman in love: "Do you love John for his looks, his mind or his character?" and were surprised at her answer that she loved him for neither his looks, nor his mind, nor his character but for being John. Just as a man is not made up of separate bits, labelled 'looks', 'mind', 'character', so in appreciating works of art we are not aware of separate bits labelled 'surface', and 'content'. We know perfectly well what we mean when we call a work of art 'great', we know it by our own experience and we know it because we live in a society with common cultural traditions.

We cannot set it up as a criterion of aesthetic excellence that every work of art should or must possess both kinds of excellence - beauty and moral greatness (much lyric poetry, carpets, pots, arabesques, and music
do not embody any specific 'vision of life') - but experience teaches us that the great masterpieces of world literature do in fact possess both artistic beauty and moral greatness (to take widely different examples, Homer, the 'Prometheus' of Aeschylus, Plato's 'Symposium', 'Don Quixote' by Cervantes, Till Eulenspiegel).

Moreover the relation between life and art, between activity, conduct and artistic creation is a complex relation, and goes in two directions: "That which distils, preserves and then enlarges the experience of a people is Literature,"¹ says Kitto, and "Life as we see, act, and feel it is as much a product of the art we have known as of the language which shaped our thought," says Susanne Langer.² And since "the kinds of relations a thing can stand in depend largely upon what sort of thing it is,"³ we find that great art has the characteristic of being able to appeal over long periods of time, to different people, taking on different dimensions of relevance (though Richards, at least, in Principles of Literary Criticism, in keeping with his theory of value, denies that permanence or wideness of appeal is a criterion of aesthetic excellence).⁴

4. cf. Ch.29.
Although in an earlier chapter I have argued that aesthetic principles, just like moral principles, embody only relatively stable values "largely conditioned by and relative to specific cultural groups and periods," we must admit that there are a few absolute moral values (honesty and kindness) and the many different codes are different applications of these in different institutional frameworks; similarly, there are a few unformulatable aesthetic values which are absolute, though 'Expressiveness' 'Beauty' and 'Truth' attempt (vacuously) to formulate them.

Most of us would probably agree that the aesthetic importance of the 'vision of life' in a work of art lies in the effectiveness of its portrayal, not in its moral value and that an aesthetically satisfying vision of life is not the same as a morally satisfying one. If it were otherwise, we could not appreciate the art of the Aztecs because it embodies and expresses what to us is a hideous vision; we could not enjoy Omar Khayyam's poetry because we do not share his epicureanism; we could not enjoy Baudelaire's "Fleurs du Mal" because we do not share his pessimism; and, like Tolstoy, we would have to reject Shakespeare, Dante and Goethe because their respective 'visions' are either non-religious, or not conducive to universal brotherly love.

We are faced then with a seemingly irreconcilable

contradiction: on the one hand, we demand that art should reflect its age and period, men's beliefs and principles, their experiences, their life and their 'vision of life'; on the other hand, we are aware that as generation succeeds generation, men's beliefs and principles, men's ways of life, their values and their vision are continually changing, and concomitantly, the art in which they are embodied is changing too. In order to appreciate fully a work of art of the past, say, Dante's *Divina Commedia*, we must be able temporarily to adopt and "imaginatively reproduce the world outlook of Aquinas, and certain attitudes to woman and to chastity". Unless we do so, we cannot fully understand or respond to the work, and our over-distanced attitude would preclude aesthetic appreciation. It would seem to follow that our pleasure in appreciating the works of the past would have to be bought at the price of a chameleon-like change of attitudes, beliefs and 'visions of life' appropriate to genuine and imaginative appreciation.

I said that this contradiction is only apparent: and we must only look to our own and others' experience of works of art, works which belong to world-literature and world-culture and which will be enjoyed as long as our civilization lasts, to find the answer. Richards himself

points to a partial answer when he says that "Only so far as a work avoids the catchword type in its method, and relies upon elements likely to remain stable, formal elements for example, can it escape the touch of time."¹

The universal appeal and the universal intelligibility of works of art from different periods and cultures, is grounded in their formal excellence. This may well be a necessary condition of artistic greatness, though not a sufficient one. It must be supplemented by my admittedly vaguely-phrased statement that great literature expresses some "basic facts of human nature" and human striving. The permanence and the wideness of appeal, and the appeal at different levels which great art does in fact have, cannot otherwise be explained. "The Song of Songs", the "Venus de Medici", "Don Quixote", and "Mona Lisa", Michelangelo's "Moses" and "David", Shakespeare, to take but a few examples have appealed to men in the past and appeal to us today for very similar reasons, which 'formal excellence' does not exhaust. (By different levels of appeal I mean the same thing as Eliot when he says that "In a play of Shakespeare you get several levels of significance. For the simplest auditors there is the plot, for the more thoughtful the character and conflict of character, for the more literary the words and phrasing, for the more

¹ Richards: op cit., p.222
musically sensitive the rhythm, and for auditors of
greater sensitiveness and understanding a meaning which
reveals itself gradually.

No actual audience can in fact be so neatly
classified; and the above classification is only useful
if we apply it to the individual auditor as well, whose
sensitiveness "is acted upon by all these elements at
once, though in different degrees of consciousness." ¹

In my conclusion I wholeheartedly agree with
Richards that

"It is impossible to divide a reader into so many
men - an aesthetic man, a moral man, a practical man,
a political man, an intellectual man, and so on. It
cannot be done. In any genuine experience all these
elements inevitably enter." Moreover, "To say that
there is a purely aesthetic or poetic approach to, let
us say, the Sermon on the Mount, by which no consideration
of the intention or ulterior end of the poem enters,
would appear to be merely mental timidity, the shrinking
remark of a person who finds essential literature
too much for him." ²

But those of us who do not shrink back from
'essential literature' will have to admit that the passing
of time cannot touch works of art in which beauty and
moral seriousness and truth are inextricably blended
together. So

"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or

2. Richards: op. cit., p.79.
to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

or

"By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not."; so

The Lamentations of Jeremiah, the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, speak to all men, at all times, in all tongues. And in these simple, ancient words, the poet speaks not as a religious man, a moral man, a practical man, an intellectual man or an aesthetic man, but he speaks as a man who is all these - he speaks as Man. As T.S. Eliot says,

"The aim of the poet is to state a vision, and no vision of life can be complete which does not include the articulate formulation of life which human minds make."

It is perhaps this completeness of vision which is the distinguishing characteristic of all 'great art'.

d) Art and Truth

We saw above the intimate connection between aesthetics and morals, between 'great art' and moral seriousness. We shall now inquire into the relation of art and truth.

It has been argued that "Truth" as a concept of evaluation in the arts is not the same kind of truth as scientific truth, and we saw in the first chapter that Richards had relegated art to the limbo of "emotive meaning" where the criteria of truth-or-falsehood do not apply as they do to 'referential' or 'scientific' statements. We had rejected his view as untenable both in theory and in practice. We prefer to follow Hospers in his distinction between science and art by distinguishing scientific 'truth-about' from artistic 'truth-to'.

The difference between science and art is not that the one is true and the other neither true nor false, that the one makes statements about the world and the second merely pseudo-statements as Richards argued, (and that in art, "so far as words are used emotively no question as to their truth in the strict sense can directly arise" and again that "It is not necessary to know what things are in order to take up fitting attitudes towards them," but that there are here two kinds of truth, perhaps two

ways of expressing sometimes the same truth, at other times truth about different sorts of things.

The truth of science can in principle be empirically verified by confronting it with the facts it is describing or explaining: the truth of art cannot be verified or disproved by an appeal to the facts of the physical world but by an appeal to the facts of human experience, both actual and possible human experience. The 'truth-about' of science and the 'truth-to' of art are two different true ways of describing different aspects of reality - physical reality on the one hand, moral, psychological, and poetically experienced (or experienceable) reality on the other. I admit that the above is odd and sounds odd: How else can we describe reality except as experienced or experienceable? And what is the difference between plain reality and poetically experienced reality? I think the difference can best be illustrated by an example:

In a poem entitled "Perspectives are Precipices" by J.P.Bishop, there are the lines:

"I see a road sunned with white sand
Wide plains surrounding silence."1

This cannot be called a scientifically true statement about silence - silence cannot be treated scientifically as a physical object which can be surrounded or enclosed by other physical objects. And yet the line corresponds

1. Quoted by Allen Tate: "On the limits of poetry", p.244.
to human experience, and the poet merely gives a striking expression to what others might have felt or have felt and not been able to describe, for example, when alone in a desert, where the silence that surrounds one is so absolute that one feels it to be tangible. I myself have experienced this when driving through the Southern Negev in Israel, and when I read Bishop's poem my immediate reaction was: "How true to that feeling I had but could not express."

T.M. Greene in "The Arts and the Art of Criticism" says that "there is truth specific to art, the expression of an insight which, though original in the sense that the artist was the first to achieve it, must be such that others, following in his footsteps, can more or less closely approximate to it."¹

Thus, although the kind of truth we demand of art is not such that it can be verified by an appeal to facts (though in historical novels, biographies and autobiographies we do demand factual truth too), it is yet not completely divorced from them. Our demand for intelligibility in literature is a simple demand not to do violence to the common usage and function of language as a means of communication. In the case of works like Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (and to a lesser extent *Ulysses*),

of poetry like Gertrude Stein's, of much abstract painting, etc., we have no actual or possible standard by which to judge their truth-to anything. They remain, as far as we are concerned (exception being made for the specialist) outside our field even of aesthetic judgment as 'true'.

I do not want to suggest that 'being true-to human experience' is the only aesthetic criterion. Of course vivid presentation is aesthetically important. But as I believe that our aesthetic judgments are never purely aesthetic, that they are complex and multiple-grounded, I think myself justified in emphasizing the part played by not purely aesthetic terms like 'good' and 'true' in our experience of works of art and in our subsequent evaluation of this experience.

Perhaps the demand that works of art should be characterised by moral seriousness and of being true-to experience is not generally made except of great works of art, probably because we have been led by these works themselves to make these demands. Sometimes the discovery or the attribution of truth-value to certain works of art takes time. This explains why "A poem may be found greater in one age than in another", since its truth-value itself depends on two factors: "What the poem itself says and the fitness of the audience it manages to reach."

If the poem — or any other work of art — does in fact have value, its value will eventually be recognized; and similarly, if value was attributed wrongly to a work, its disvalue, or negative value will also be recognized in time. (As Sir Kenneth Clark in a recent Television programme, "Is Art necessary?" said, no, or only very few, fake paintings can stand the test of time; ultimately they are all found out.)

Art, or rather literature and the representative arts, reproduce, recast, and recreate human experience. From the manifold of human experience, whether actual or possible, the artist selects what seems to him important, interesting, significant. If he is a good artist, his selection from and presentation of human experience will have a meaningful, intelligible pattern. And if the pattern presented for our contemplation implies a definite attitude to life, be it religious or irreligious, be it tragic or ironic, our aesthetic demand for the attitude and the pattern to be true to human experience does not entail our own, individual acceptance and approval of the artist's beliefs which form the ground of his attitude. As T.S. Eliot puts it,

"When the doctrine, theory, belief, or 'view of life' presented in a poem is one which the mind of the reader can accept as coherent, mature, and founded on the facts of experience, it interposes no obstacle to the reader's enjoyment, whether it be one that he accept
or deny, approve or deprecate."

The vital point is that it must be "founded on the facts of experience", i.e. that it must in some way be true to human experience. Richards, on the other hand, argues that if we say of a poem, a drama, a novel, "How true" we are not judging them aesthetically at all, we are taking them to be what they are not — statements about man, about life, about the world, which can be verified or falsified by confronting them with the individuals, the facts or the states described: "The people who say 'How True!' at intervals while reading Shakespeare are misusing his work, and, comparatively speaking, wasting their time." 2

This seems to me quite unwarranted. I do not see why our judgment 'How true' is any less valid than our judgment 'How beautiful', granted that we use 'true' here in a special sense which does not imply for example that King Lear is true because there was a man called Lear, who lived and acted and suffered in exactly the way as 'King Lear'. When we say that King Lear is true we may mean several things:

That it is humanly possible that a man deliver himself into the hands of those who despise and hate him.

and torment the one who loves him; that not only is this a human situation — whether actual or possible — but the characters who find themselves in it — and perhaps who create the situation because of the sort of people they are — behave in a way which again is true to the sort of people they are. Richards himself admits that this sense of Truth, i.e. as 'internal necessity' or 'rightness' is applicable to our experience of art. All I wanted to point out is that our aesthetic demand for this 'internal necessity' or consistency and convincingness of behaviour of even 'fictitious' characters implies the existence of an external standard of comparison, viz. truth-to particular facts and aspects of human experience.

In keeping with my rejection of Richards' position that our demand of truth in art is mistaken — arising from a confusion of the use of ordinary and poetic statement — I must also reject his position as to belief or beliefs in relation to art.

According to Richards, we must — if we are to appreciate King Lear — not only refrain from judgments as to its truth to human experience but must also put away from our minds any or all our beliefs whatever; "... in the reading of King Lear what facts verifiable by science, or accepted and believed in as we accept and believe in ascertained facts, are relevant?" And the answer he gives is "None whatever." 2

If we could really divest ourselves of all our beliefs while watching *King Lear*, we surely would not be able to appreciate it as a tragedy. If we had no beliefs as to the natural bonds of love between daughters and father — how could we feel the unnaturalness of Lear's daughters? If we had no beliefs as to the suffering inflicted on a father when disowned, despised, rejected, by his own flesh and blood — how could we feel for Lear and with him? All these are not, indeed, "facts verifiable by science", but they are beliefs grounded in and verifiable by human experience. This is the sort of truth we demand in art, and in fact, the greatest tragedians and poets have all deepened and broadened our awareness and understanding of human experience.

If man had never loved, or could never love, like Romeo and Juliet or like Antony and Cleopatra; if man had never been jealous, or could never be jealous like Othello; if man had never doubted and refrained from action like Hamlet, if Desdemona and Portia, if Miranda and Cordelia, if Lear, Hamlet and Othello were but completely figments of the imagination, unrelated and unrelatable to human experience, they would not be the tragic characters they are, but merely strange and pathetic puppets, manipulated by the hand of the invisible artist, not acting from understandable human motives.

It is to disregard completely our experience of
tragedy and of art in general, to hold, like Richards, that we need no beliefs in order to enjoy and appreciate *King Lear*. If such a case would be at all possible, we would have ceased to be men, craving "to satisfy in certain ways our love both of beauty and of truth, of truth to life and about it,"¹ and would have become 'ideal' observers, who watch, unmoved, the sport and follies of men.

But, as we saw before, Richards is not consistent in upholding the same position, and it is when he comes to refute the 'Poetry for poetry's sake' school of criticism, that he comes nearest to my own position. Thus he says that "We cannot for example, read Shelley adequately while believing that all his views are moonshine – read *Prometheus Unbound* while holding that 'the perfectibility of man is an undesirable ideal' and that 'hangmen are excellent things'."² That means that our beliefs as men are relevant to our understanding and correct appreciation of poetry and other arts, since these do not form "a world by itself, independent, complete, autonomous" i.e. a world where our normal demands for intelligibility, order and truth are irrelevant. And since Richards himself admits that "The world of poetry has in

no sense any different reality from the rest of the world and it has no special laws and no other-worldly peculiarities,"¹ it only enforces my argument that our demand for truth to human experience in art is not only generally made but perfectly justified.

We do not judge all the arts by the same standards, and even within each art there are different criteria for different kinds. Leaving aside the difficult case of music, we should hardly demand of architecture and abstract designs, of pots or carpets, to have meaning, to refer to something beyond themselves of which they are true or false. But of poetry and drama, of the novel and of representative painting and sculpture, we expect not only values of aesthetic surface and form but also meaning or content, i.e. those life-values which come "from the world of experience outside art," but are conveyed by the aesthetic surface and form. ²

If the work of art is a whole, if it is what is nowadays called "an organic unity", then our judgment of it should be of it as such. And if our judgment is of the total work, of its total meaning, then we cannot separate the 'thing said' from the 'way of saying it'. It is mostly those who uphold the separateness of art from 'life', those who dub any demand for moral and

truth-values from art as non-aesthetic, who are prone to make this artificial separation of the work into autonomous elements.

Richards is right in insisting as against such critics that "The separation of poetic experience from its place in life and its ulterior worths, involves a definite lop-sidedness, narrowness, and incompleteness in those who preach it sincerely."¹

Perhaps the demand that art be true to human experience must be exactly specified for otherwise the demand itself would be vacuous. We could say with Richards that just as there are various kinds of poetry, so there are various arts, "and that the different kinds are to be judged by different principles."² In some of them, the judgment of ulterior ends (truth and goodness for example) is integral to the aesthetic judgment; in others, the intrusion of the pursuit of ulterior ends may lower their value; and there are yet other kinds where ulterior ends can have no place at all.

But it is only those works of art where ulterior values are embodied, the 'great works of art', speaking to the whole of man about the most important things in the world and in human life, about the things that are

universally and permanently valuable, that heighten and enhance our consciousness of ourselves, of other human beings and of the world in which we live. And it is only works which are both beautiful and good and true to human experience that "may effect revolutions in sensibility such as are periodically needed: may help to break up the conventional modes of perception and valuation which are periodically forming, and make people see the world afresh, or some new part of it." They

"may make us from time to time a little more aware of the deeper, unnamed feelings which form the substratum of our being, to which we rarely penetrate; for our lives are mostly a constant evasion of ourselves, and an evasion of the visible and sensible world."1

And if art can teach us to look and to observe what we never knew was there, it can do this only when it neither falsifies the real nor pretends that its fictions have a reality of their own, unrelated and unrelatable to reality.

Chapter 7
I. A. Richards and E. Bullough: Similarity and Contrast

a) Psychical Distance

If, as we have found, one of the functions of Aesthetics is the demarcation of the aesthetic from the pseudo- or non-aesthetic judgments and the investigation of the character of aesthetic judgments proper, i.e. their logic, content and the criteria involved, this theoretical investigation is not to be regarded as an end in itself, or as the ultimate task of Aesthetics. There is a limit to the profitability of logical analysis of even a great number of different instances of aesthetic judgments, just as there is a limit to their classification according to the different aesthetic theories which they imply or state. There are many theoretical works on Aesthetics which expound metaphysical or psychological, subjective or objective theories of beauty. But they are worthless if they are divorced from practical art criticism. On the other hand we also find a great number of critical works on the appreciation of literature, poetry, music, painting, etc., which, although they may deepen our understanding of familiar works of art and help us to appreciate new ones, do not fulfil an important task: they do not offer any principle of choice which will enable us, the laymen, to discriminate correctly between
what is and what is not aesthetically valuable, and give valid reasons for our choices. In short, theoretical Aesthetics alone is barren, practical or applied aesthetics alone is capricious: only the two together can yield fruitful results — theoretical aesthetics by constant connection with practice, and applied aesthetics by having a theoretical grounding — generally applicable in at least some degree — as a safeguard against the caprices of personal or non-aesthetic likes and dislikes.

Thus the logical analysis of the aesthetic judgment, and the classification of the relevant features of works in the different arts and of different 'genres' within the same art, are only the necessary means to practical criticism: the distinction, in particular cases, between what is and what is not a work of art, the correct assignment of merit to particular works of art, and the discrimination of justified from unjustified instances of appreciation.

Is there any theory of aesthetics which can fulfil this task? Is there a theory which does not violate the facts of our aesthetic experience, yet can account for the variety, the differences of degree and kind of individual appreciation, and the fluctuations of taste in different periods and peoples and cultures? If there is such a theory it would be well worth the
trouble to find it, bring it to light and see if and how it
works. I think that such a theory does in fact exist
but has unfortunately not received the attention it
deserves: I refer to the theory of Psychical Distance,
which Edward Bullough put forward nearly half a century
ago, in an article called "Psychical Distance" as a
Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle", in the
British Journal of Psychology for 1912. This precedes
Richards' work by many years, but offers many parallels
to the more promising aspects of his psychological
treatment of aesthetics.

Bullough justifies adopting a psychological
approach to aesthetics by considering the history of
aesthetic speculation up to the 20th century. In the
past, says Bullough, aesthetics was concerned with:

"The problem of a definition of Beauty.

The problem of a criterion of Beauty.

The problem of a cause of Beauty." 1

To the first group belong most metaphysical a
priori theories of beauty. Thus for Socrates Beauty is
utility, for Plato, Baumgarten and the 18th century
rationalists it is knowledge, for Plotinus and other
metaphysical aestheticians it is the deity, for some it

   (ed. by E. M. Wilkinson, Bowes and Bowes, 1957)
is perfection or the ethically good, for others it is the Infinite revealed in the Finite, for Hegel it is the Idea in a concrete Form.

In the second group the outstanding case is Burke and others who tried to find, not an a priori definition of Beauty, but some common quality in the object which, when present, would be an infallible sign that the given object is beautiful. Burke's criteria of beauty for example were smallness, smoothness, gracefulness, delicacy. Later writers rejected these criteria in favour of those concerning the manner of the combination of single qualities: regularity, evenness, symmetry, proportion, measure, harmony.

The theorists of the third group wanted to find some one and only cause of beauty, and suggested for example a representation of "unity in variety" (Hutcheson) or the use of "the golden section" (Zeising).

All three groups of theorists shared a belief in the objectivity of beauty and a belief that works of art are beautiful in virtue of partaking of some common quality which was, or caused, absolute Beauty. They thought that if we could only pinpoint the essence of intrinsic beauty, that very essence which seemed for ever to elude us, our task would be done.

Now, just as there are revolutions in science, there are revolutions in philosophy: the great turning
point for aesthetics came when thinkers realised that the pursuit of absolute Beauty was an idle dream, that Beauty is not to be found in a special type of object or a special type of feature of objects but in a special way of perceiving objects, and that the whole problem of Beauty had only seemed insoluble because approached from the wrong point of view. It was with Kant that the modern conception of Aesthetics began, the conception of Beauty as pertaining to, and a function of, the perceiving mind and not as a quality of the object. It was Kant who showed that the ground of the aesthetic judgment is the feeling of pleasure of a special kind evoked in the subject by his perception of the object - and this became the starting-point of modern, psychological aesthetics. From now on the pursuit of the absolute, metaphysical entity 'Beauty' was generally abandoned, and aestheticians began to look for and to find Beauty in the eye and heart of man. So the psychologists took over from the philosophers and began to probe deeper and deeper into the soul of man: first the (special) feeling of pleasure, then 'the' aesthetic emotion and experience, and now man's conscious and unconscious longings and neurological impulses have become the subject-matter of treatises in aesthetics.

The similarity between Bullough's account of earlier theories of aesthetics and Richards' classification
of the same in *The Foundations of Aesthetics* is very striking. It is probable that Richards heard Bullough's Lectures on Aesthetics at Cambridge, agreed with his psychological approach to aesthetics but not with the particular form it took (based largely on introspection and referring not at all to neurological impulses), and finding his classification of alternative approaches both simple and useful, adopted it (though he did not refer to its source). It is interesting to note that Richards alluded to Bullough but once in his writings, and his comment on the notion of Psychical Distance shows that he did not think highly of it. ("Such 'distancing' would, however, on any interpretation seem to be far from essential in the description of aesthetic experience." \(^1\))

Whatever their differences, it is clear that both Bullough and Richards belong to the fourth — and till now — the last group of aesthetic theories. Yet the difference between them is as great as their similarity, and we must elucidate it if we want to understand why a psychological approach enables Bullough to discover an important aesthetic principle but leads Richards into a blind alley from which he escapes only by altogether abandoning his theory in his practice.

Bullough, who saw in the subjective, psychological

approach to the problems of Beauty the only alternative
to the traditional and vain quest for the objective
quality of beauty, was yet fully aware of the limitations
of the psychological treatment of these problems. He
reiterated that "it is essential to preserve continual
contact with the forms of Art,"¹ because these are the
major source of our aesthetic experience. Favouring, as
he did, an aesthetics whose starting point was the individual
perceiver, his aesthetic experience and attitude, he yet
knew that psychological aesthetics was in as much danger
as metaphysical aesthetics of losing contact with its
true object of inquiry, the manifestation of beauty in
actual works of art and what we appreciate in them. He
therefore suggested that aestheticians take the middle
way, and, avoiding the extremes of metaphysical and
psychological aesthetics, should learn to see in their
true relation both the experiencing mind and the object
of the experience, the work of art and its psychological
effect. So we find him saying:

"Differentiations of effect must be considered in
relation to differentiations of the objective forms
which produce them,"

and he points out that subjective, psychological
aesthetics have often lost this vital contact, resulting
in "accounts of emotions, pleasure, perception, etc.,

¹ E. Bullough, op. cit., p. 61.
in general, instead of research into aesthetic perception, aesthetic pleasure, aesthetic emotions."¹

He praises experimental aesthetics (and actively contributed to its development in his experiments on types of colour-appreciation)² just because it tries to correlate the objective features of the aesthetic object with the effects on the subject. Indeed Bullough sums up the task of modern Aesthetics as "the study of the objective features of Art, not as objective characteristics of Beauty, as in older theories, but always in relation to their aesthetic effect."³ In this way the whole world of Art, as a collection of objective phenomena, and "Art-history as the tale of its evolution, finds its place within Aesthetics."⁴

With such a liberal definition of the task and function of Aesthetics few would want to quarrel. And it is, I believe, mainly due to his constant vigilance against taking a one-sided view, that Bullough's conception of "Psychical Distance" as an aesthetic principle and aesthetic criterion represents an improvement on the general notion of "disinterested satisfaction" or "detached contemplation" which has long been recognised as an element in aesthetic experience.

1, 3, 4. op.cit., p.62.
The primary function of Bullough's principle is to demark the aesthetic domain. 'Distancing', as Bullough explains it, is specifically an attempt to distinguish the attitude peculiarly appropriate to works of art, but this attitude can be, and sometimes is, adopted towards any objects whatever and in certain moments towards events in our life.

The conception of 'Distance' is a difficult one and we could probably discover certain ambiguities and inconsistencies in Bullough's own account of it. He is at all events quite clear in his negative description of 'Distance':

1. 'Distance' is not "actual spatial distance, i.e. the distance of a work of Art from the spectator."¹

2. 'Distance' is not temporal distance, i.e. the remoteness of the work of Art from us in point of time.

Spatial and temporal distance are kinds of distance, but Bullough is trying to describe Distance in its general connotation, which includes these special kinds, yet transcends them. He therefore puts forward the notion of 'Psychical Distance' as the genus from which both spatial and temporal distance derive "whatever aesthetic qualities they may possess."² In short, the

1, 2. op.cit., p.93. (Author's italics).
dimension of this Distance is neither spatial nor temporal but psychological. Whereas both spatial and temporal distance can be regarded as independent of our volition, as part and parcel of our normal perception of objects in space and time, as given, 'Psychical Distance' is not given, but depends on us, on our conscious (or sometimes unconscious) adoption of a certain point of view, outlook or attitude to experience.

Bullough distinguishes four modes of consciousness and their correlative attitudes to experience: the practical, the scientific, the ethical and the aesthetic.¹ We can regard an object, an event or a human action from any or all of these different points of view, though probably the practical attitude is primary and the one most generally held. We can however consciously change our normal, practical attitude to an aesthetic one by the insertion of 'Psychical Distance'. In analysing this change of attitude we can distinguish several stages, of which the first and most important "is obtained by separating the object and its appeal from one's self, by putting it out of gear with practical needs and ends."² Although this is a conscious change of attitude, once adopted, we no longer attribute it to ourselves and may come to think that Distance really pertains to the objects which

¹. op.cit., p.69.
appear to us distanced from our personal affections, emotions and ideas.

Bullough's description of the aesthetic attitude is strongly reminiscent of Kant's disinterested response to beauty. But whereas Kant probably regarded only works of art and natural beauty as the proper objects of aesthetic judgment, Bullough's 'distanced' response is far more comprehensive. It covers art and nature and life and man.

The predominantly aesthetic-contemplative attitude towards art and life is rare because it completely disregards our normal everyday interests in what we are currently perceiving and acting upon. In the practical attitude with which we usually meet life, the practical attitude of pursuing our personal interests and ends, we need to regard objects and events as instances of general classes of objects and events of a sort that will serve our purposes, subsumable under general laws rendering their operation predictable. The aesthetic attitude, by contrast, isolates the object of attention, and regards it not just as one of a kind of objects fit for a certain purpose, but regards it in and for itself. It is an attitude difficult to maintain for long, and it is nearly impossible to give a detailed but generally applicable description of those sometimes supreme moments of heightened consciousness.
Even Bullough uses illustration rather than description in general terms in his attempt to describe it. The example he gives as an illustration of 'Psychical Distance' - a fog at sea, in which we disregard our personal danger and look only at the objective features of the phenomenon - is a good one because we can recall similar experiences of our own. There are moments in life when "we watch the consummation of some impending catastrophe with the marvelling unconcern of a mere spectator."¹ At those moments the object of our contemplation appears more real than ourselves; the distance between us and the object seems now to be in us, a distance between ourselves as perceivers and ourselves as agents and sufferers. We do not fret, we simply wait and see: practically passive, yet mentally alert, contemplative yet curious, disinterested yet involved. I recall a scene from a film in which this complex state of mind was beautifully shown. It was a film about the resistance of French railway workers against the Nazi occupation. Having successfully sabotaged a train carrying German arms and supplies, a number of French railwaymen are caught and taken before the execution squad. The face of one man is engraved in my memory: he stands facing a bleak brick wall; German voices snap out commands; he smiles and looks at the wall; a fly is...

¹ op.cit., p.94.
crawling across it, tracing its curved path, apparently intent on this alone. On the point of being executed, the man's full, calm gaze is concentrated on the fly, and, like it, is intent yet unconcerned: emotionally unconcerned for himself but mentally supremely active in a last effort to extract from the appearance of this insignificant object, all there is. Then he is shot.

Perhaps this is a rather extreme instance of the operation of 'Psychical Distance', but this scene is for me a concrete, visual illustration of a difficult, complex and important concept in Aesthetics.

In her Introduction to Bullough's Lectures on Aesthetics, E.M.Wilkinson says that "Bullough's principle" (of 'Psychical Distance') "has remained an almost isolated phenomenon in modern aesthetics." Formulated as it was fifty years ago, it seems nowadays to have been silently adopted by writers on aesthetics, though it has not been widely discussed or applied.

'Psychical Distance' is a wide enough notion to allow its being applied to different arts inducing different sorts of distanced responses. It is, I think, a useful working hypothesis based on observation and generalisation from experience, whose value must be found in its fruitful application to many long-standing aesthetic

1. op.cit., p.xxxviii.
Thus Bullough regarded it:

1. As a factor in artistic creation and the distinguishing feature of the 'artistic temperament.' ("... artistic production is the indirect formulation of a distanced mental content.")

2. As an aesthetic principle in art-appreciation, a criterion of the specific "aesthetic values as distinct from practical (utilitarian), scientific, or social (ethical) values."

3. As the defining characteristic of the aesthetic attitude or 'aesthetic consciousness', "... of that mentality or outlook upon experience and life," which leads to Art.

4. As a criterion for distinguishing the beautiful from the agreeable: "the agreeable is a non-distanced pleasure," whereas the beautiful describes a distanced pleasure.

5. As describing a personal relation between the perceiver and the object of his perception, but a personal relation of a specific, aesthetic kind.

6. As an explanation of some of the differences of response to different art-objects and art-forms, and

1. op.cit., p.126 3. op.cit., p.130
2. op.cit., p.129 4. op.cit., p.118
5. op.cit.cf.p.96.
7. As a solution of many apparent antitheses in our demands upon art, e.g. between 'naturalistic' and 'idealistic' views of art, 'sensual' and 'spiritual' values in it, demands for the 'individualistic' and the 'typical'. These antitheses it solves by means of making intelligible

8. The antinomy and variability of Distance.

The last point is the most important, and Bullough's explanation of it is: "Distance" (i.e. 'Psychical Distance') "may be said to be variable both according to the distancing-power of the individual, and according to the character of the object."²

This careful, non-dogmatic formulation of the principle of variability of Psychical Distance shows that Bullough is fully aware that he is dealing with two complex factors - the individual perceiver and the specific character of the object of his perception - and that both factors have variable distancing-powers. He therefore does not try to fix the correct distance for any one object or individual, but only suggests the maximum and minimum distance-limits beyond which aesthetic experience merges into experience of a different kind.

1. op. cit., pp.106-117.
2. op. cit., p. 100.
Let us now try to illustrate the antinomy and variability of 'Psychical Distance' in relation to a given individual perceiver S, when appreciating a given object O.

Let S be a man, who believes he has cause to be jealous of his wife; let O be a given performance of Othello; then, in so far as he feels the situation, conduct and character of Othello to be like his own, his 'appreciation' will become identification with the

1. op.cit., p.99. The example is taken from Bullough.
tragic character, which will render him more conscious of his own situation and less conscious of the play as a play; instead of seeing Othello apparently betrayed by Desdemona, he will see himself betrayed by his own wife; i.e. by his complete loss of distance, S will not be appreciating O aesthetically, but merely reacting in a practical way to a quasi-real situation. In such a case, both the distancing-power of the individual is nil, and the object of his appreciation has not enough distancing-power in itself to induce in him the appropriate attitude. (Bullough indeed classifies the drama with those arts where loss of distance is due to their character and form of presentation.)

At another time, at another place, the same individual S, may be able to adopt a better distance, if for example, he succeeds in putting out of mind practical questions arising from his concerns as agent and sufferer, and leaves himself able to respond as 'mere' spectator. (This Bullough calls putting the play "out of gear with our practical, actual self."\(^1\)) Then he may perhaps be able to regard Othello as the dramatisation of one individual's - Othello's - situation, and, although he may be the better able to comprehend Othello's feelings and experiences through his own, he will no longer project

1. op.cit., p.95.
his own feelings on to Othello. We may say that S has at least succeeded in adopting an attitude ultimately conducive to correct distancing for O.

At yet another time when watching Othello, S may perfectly be able to appreciate the situation, conduct, character, feelings and experience of Othello, because his own past experience has prepared him for this particular kind of appeal. Yet, by adopting the aesthetic attitude of 'psychical distance', his own feelings appear unreal, filtered or distanced, and he now is "able to distance the subject-matter sufficiently to rise above its practical problematic import and to regard it simply as a dramatically and humanly interesting situation."¹ This attitude corresponds to Bullough's account of the ideal, aesthetic attitude:

"Utmost decrease of Distance without its disappearance"²

So far we have examined only one of the variable factors in the aesthetic situation, viz. the individual perceiver and his varying capacity to adopt and maintain a greater or lesser degree of distance. We saw that loss of distance or under-distancing is a (common enough)

1. op. cit., p.102.
2. op. cit., p.100 (author's italics).
failing of the subject, and we shall see in the sequel that over-distancing is induced by certain art-forms and art-objects. Let us now examine the second variable factor in the aesthetic situation, the work of art, which, like the individual subject "may impose a greater or smaller degree of Distance."¹

The theatre, dancing and sculpture generally, e.g. tend to induce loss of Distance because of the manner of presenting their subject-matter. Painting and literature tend to induce a normal Distance-limit, which varies according to the kind of painting and literature ('idealistic', 'realistic', 'naturalistic'). Music and architecture again induce variable Distances: thus 'pure', 'classical' or 'heavy' music usually induces an over-distanced response, whereas light music (not to speak of jazz and rock-and-roll) induces a very low Distance, if any at all.²

b). **Psychical Distance and catharsis**

The notion of Distance is, of course, not a wholly new one in Aesthetics. Bullough himself refers to Aristotle as having mentioned the beneficial effects of spatial distance in the Poetics, i.e. the distance of a work of art from the spectator.

¹. op.cit., p.100.
². cf. op.cit., pp.104-106.
as a factor in our appreciation. But I should go further and say that the whole notion of 'Psychical Distance' and the theory of psychological detachment as the distinguishing feature of aesthetic experience, was already adumbrated, to a certain extent, in Aristotle's theory of tragedy.

Before proceeding to compare the notions of 'Psychical Distance' and catharsis, we must first point out their difference, namely, that whereas Bullough is trying to account for the peculiar effect of the aesthetic attitude towards any object in general, Aristotle is trying to account only for the peculiar effect of tragedy. However, it is clear that Aristotle was aware of the specifically aesthetic character of our experience and appreciation of tragedy, and his statement in Chapter 25 of the Poetics, viz. "that the standard of correctness is not the same in poetry and politics, any more than in poetry and any other art,"¹ can be regarded as the first declaration of independence of Aesthetics.

The connection between catharsis and 'Psychical Distance' is apparent at two points:

1. In Aristotle's account of the tragic emotions of pity and fear.

2. In Aristotle's account of the ideal tragic hero.

In his account of the emotions of pity and fear and the catharsis of these emotions which it is the proper function of tragedy to effect, Aristotle describes them as peculiarly and specially the tragic emotions. By assuming that the real emotions of pity and fear can be aroused by imaginary happenings, Aristotle assumes the possibility of distanced responses, and postulates them as proper to tragedy. In Book II of the *Rhetoric* Aristotle defines fear as "a kind of pain or disturbance due to a mental picture of some destructive or painful evil in the future." Similarly, pity for others is aroused in circumstances in which we should fear for ourselves. But in passing through the artistic medium, the emotions are themselves transformed; they are become divested of the immediacy, strength and painfulness which they have in real life. They are transmuted from the personal to the impersonal plane, and because of this transformation and clarification they are capable of affording us aesthetic satisfaction. Aristotle thus regarded both 'pity' and 'fear' to be in themselves distanced emotions (since to feel pity we have to apply others' situation to ourselves in imagination), and to be distancing emotions as applied to drama. As he says, they are the characteristic, necessary, tragic emotions.

In Bullough's terminology, we could interpret Aristotle as implying that the artistic medium induces

the spectator to adopt a 'distanced' attitude. Only by
the interpolation of 'Psychical Distance' between ourselves
and the tragic action and the tragic heroes can the proper
tragic effect occur, i.e. the aesthetic satisfaction of
apprehending human life and suffering as a whole, ordered,
intelligible, process.

Aristotle's view of the ideal tragic hero follows
from his view of the function of tragedy.

Thus he says, if tragedy should imitate actions
which excite pity and fear,

"It follows plainly, in the first place, that the
change of fortune presented must not be the spectacle
of a virtuous man brought from prosperity to adversity:
for this moves neither pity nor fear; it merely shocks
us. Nor, again, that of a bad man passing from adversity
to prosperity: for nothing can be more alien to the
spirit of Tragedy; it possesses no single tragic
quality; it neither satisfies the moral sense nor
calls forth pity or fear. Nor, again, should the
downfall of the utter villain be exhibited. A plot
of this kind would, doubtless, satisfy the moral sense,
but it would inspire neither pity nor fear; for pity
is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the
misfortune of a man like ourselves."

If we transpose Aristotle's account into the
modern terminology of Bullough, and more specifically
apply to it the notion of 'Psychical Distance' as induced
in the spectator because of the varying distancing-powers
(or qualities) inherent in the aesthetic objects, we could
interpret the above passage as follows:

1. Aristotle's Poetics, ed.by Butcher, Ch.XIII, p.45.
The proper tragedy should not present "a virtuous man brought from prosperity to adversity", because by its very nature it cannot induce a properly distanced attitude; on the contrary our moral judgment is so strongly developed that this gives us a real shock and leaves us unable to appreciate the play aesthetically.

If tragedy is to fulfil its proper function — i.e. if it is to induce in us the properly distanced attitude, then the tragic character must be of a certain type: "a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty" (hamartia). (In Bywater's translation, "by some error of judgment".)

Aristotle's ideal tragic hero is 'ideal' because his character is such as to induce an "ideally distanced attitude", i.e. a response involving the utmost decrease of Distance without its disappearance. The demand that he be 'like ourselves' justifies Bullough's assumption that 'Psychical Distance' describes a personal reaction. But we saw that if the reaction is too personal, if the self-identification with the hero is so strong that it finds relief in real sympathy and real tears then we can no longer appreciate tragedy, we only find it "sad, dismal, harrowing, depressing."

1. Aristotle's Poetics, p.45.
Aristotle's 'middling man', neither too remote from us (and thus inducing an attitude of indifference), nor yet too close to us (and thus inducing an attitude of personal involvement) is the ideal tragic hero, because he alone can induce in us emotions which are properly distanced.

We see therefore that not only is there a similarity between Aristotle's account of tragedy and Bullough's account of 'Psychical Distance', but also that the latter enables us to understand the aesthetic validity of the former. Moreover, just as Bullough always emphasises the peculiarly aesthetic character of 'Psychical Distance', so Aristotle is careful to emphasise the peculiarly aesthetic character of the pleasure of tragedy: "for we must not demand of Tragedy any and every kind of pleasure, but only that which is proper to it." 1

Like Bullough, Aristotle never falls into mere psychological description, because he always tries to show the necessary relation between a certain type of tragedy and a certain kind of effect produced, i.e., he recognizes the objective features of the work of art as the grounds for the aesthetic-contemplative emotional effect on the spectator. Catharsis is a necessary condition

1. Aristotle's Poetics, ed. by Butcher, Ch.XIV, p.49.
for the tragic experience, 'Psychical Distance' is a necessary condition for aesthetic experience in general. And just as only a good tragedy can produce the proper catharsis, only a good aesthetic object can induce an effect with the proper psychical distance.

And Bullough would agree with Aristotle that the ideal man is the man who is healthy, morally, mentally and emotionally balanced, i.e. he who can feel both pleasure and pain, but "... feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way..."¹

c) Psychical Distance and Synaesthesia

We have found certain similarities between the concept of psychical distance and catharsis. Let us now examine its similarities — if any — with, and differences from, synaesthesia.

Richards had defined aesthetic experience by reference to synaesthesia and had at the same time made this the criterion of value. But Bullough, after demarking the aesthetic domain, does not try to provide a criterion of worth within that domain, unless we take him to advocate a doctrine of 'optimum distance' irrespective of the perceivers, (which he does not). As

against synaesthesia, which is simply a particular psychological state which may or may not occur, Psychical Distance is a universal condition of aesthetic experience and its distinctive characteristic. Suppose now that this initial condition is fulfilled, that a 'distanced' attitude towards an object is adopted by us, does it follow that this object is worthy of it, i.e. that it possesses qualities in such a configuration that it ought to elicit from us a favourable judgment on its aesthetic merit?

No, it does not follow, because Psychical Distance is not, like synaesthesia, a value-term; it is neutral with regard to the origin and significance of our aesthetic experience and its possible consequences; it is only the condition essential in aesthetic contemplation and is applicable towards all objects impartially. If, therefore, we want to find out anything at all about the value of the object, if we want to know whether it justifies the distanced attitude in us, and if so, what properties pertaining to the object correspond to what emotions, attitudes, ideas evoked by it, we reach the second stage of our aesthetic journey - the aesthetic judgment.

Richards regarded synaesthesia as the psychological state which gave value to the work of art evoking it, and by implication would have to accept the purely personal validity of aesthetic judgments. But the concept of
Psychical Distance, being a condition and not a consequence of aesthetic experience, does not free us from the necessity of further inquiry. It is this characteristic aesthetic inquiry into the features of the object which appears senseless in Richards' case. Once synaesthesia has occurred, what more can we desire? But psychical distance does not occur — it is an attitude adopted, and just as in the case of our other attitudes we can and should ask ourselves: "Is my attitude reasonable, justified, appropriate? And if so, why?"

Thus, whereas psychical distance marks only the beginning of our inquiry, synaesthesia purports to mark its end. I would concede this much to Richards, that if in our aesthetic inquiry we have found justification i.e. reasonable grounds for our initial aesthetic attitude, synaesthesia might very well be one of its psychological effects, and a justified one. But although, given an aesthetically valuable object, synaesthesia may well occur, in itself it cannot be that which gives value to the object.

Morris Weitz in his essay "The role of theory in Aesthetics", says, that the theory of synaesthesia stems from a confusion of "the conditions under which we say something evaluatively with the meaning of what we say."¹

Richards, at all events in his theoretical work, was simply describing the emotional state which accompanied some of his own and others' more valued aesthetic experiences. In his practical criticism he justified his aesthetic judgments not by reference to the occurrence of synaesthesia, but, rightly, by reference to the objective properties of the art-objects concerned.

Where Richards emphasises the response of an individual to an object, the emotional impact of an art-object regarded merely as a stimulus inducing synaesthesia, where Marxist critics equate aesthetic value with a special social content, regardless of the impact this has upon the spectator, Bullough emphasises neither the one nor the other. For him the relation between the two fundamental factors in the aesthetic situation: the individual and the art-object, the emotional response and the objective features which evoke it is essential. By taking his standpoint on a principle which takes account of both of two apparently irreconcilable points of view – the subjective and the objective, Bullough clearly points the way to their solution: they are both to be seen as part of the truth but have each been taken to be the whole.

Aesthetics must be able to accommodate all these complementary viewpoints as true but partial views of a complex situation. And if we are to understand the aesthetic
attitude and consciousness and exhaust its many facets and possibilities, we must see it as composed of two sets of variables, where each in turn modifies the other. We may start at either side - the work of art or the individual experience - provided we do not stop there but go on to its opposite but complementary side.

If, aided by the principle of Psychical Distance we could rewrite the history of Aesthetics, not as a series of theories and counter-theories, art-traditions and reactions against them, but as a struggle to reach a comprehensive view by partial stages which must be superseded in order to be incorporated, we might find that all aesthetic theories have some contribution to make: those who sought for an objective property of beauty and those who sought for the subjective response to it, the formalists who looked for significant form and did not know what it should be significant of, and those who preached expression of emotion or communication through art without saying what was worthy of being communicated, the intuitionists who regarded art as a higher kind of knowledge, and the Marxists who regard it as part of an intellectual superstructure, which either reflects or distorts the actual economic structure of society, and therefore plays a part in the class-struggle.

To say that all these views are true, though
only partial statements of the truth, looks like a complacent kind of eclecticism. But it seems to me the only alternative to narrow dogmatism which results inevitably whenever one of these views alone is proclaimed the true one.

The very fact that Richards' theory of aesthetics with its one-sided dogmatic, psychological approach, has not found any adepts but only a host of critics from psychologists like Harding, aestheticians like H. Osborne, Susanne Langer and B.C. Heyl, Marxists like C. Caudwell, critics like Allen Tate and D.J. James, and philosophers like Morris Weitz and Max Black, is a sure sign that the study of Aesthetics has reached maturity. Today any view of aesthetics which excludes the study of aesthetic values in relation to our experience of them as embodied in works of art is regarded as inadequate.

Seen in its historical perspective, Richards' theory is important not for what it is in itself but for what it signified in the history of modern thought. Thus positively, it signified the rejection of metaphysical speculation and its replacement by linguistic investigations, involving both excursions into psychology and a preoccupation with the meaningfulness of words and the functions

of language. But in its negative aspect his theory involved the abandonment of rational explanation of aesthetic judgments in favour of a psychological causal account of them in pseudo-scientific terms; the uncritical acceptance of behaviourism, the reduction of values in art to the fluctuating states of mind of each individual spectator; an inappropriate emulation of descriptive science and an attempt to reduce both ethics and aesthetics to branches of such a science.

His obvious failure to establish his position has played a large part in provoking a more careful analysis and explication of aesthetic judgments, in tune with recent developments in philosophy generally.

The emergence after the last war of a new approach to problems of philosophy, ethics and aesthetics, free alike from irrational scepticism and metaphysical dogmatism, involving a strict delimitation of the problems to be solved, the clear definition of terms and the recognition that the function of the inquiry should determine the methods to be adopted in pursuing it, marks perhaps the beginning of a new epoch in Western thought.
APPENDIX A on Defining a poem

Richards' definition of a poem as "a class of experiences which do not differ in any character more than a certain amount, varying for each character, from a standard experience"...\cite{1}, strange as it may seem, reminds us of Collingwood's negative definition of a work of art proper which "is not something seen or heard but imagined.\cite{2}

Richards the positivist and behaviourist and Collingwood the Crocean and idealist philosopher find themselves in agreement when rejecting 'the poem', the objective, public poem, as the work of art proper. Although for the one the poem is "a collection of impulses" and for the other an "imagined experience of total activity", both commit the initial fallacy of trying to define what is indefinable. We can neither define a work of art in general, nor a poem in general, though we can give, in a definite context, an adequate description of the work of art, or the poem in that specific context. In that case we can as far as possible avoid misunderstandings, failure of communication and talking at cross-purposes. If we come to recognize that 'A Poem' in general is indefinable (that we should be trying to force language to do something

\begin{enumerate}
\item P.L.C., pp.226-7.
\item G.R.Collingwood: The Principles of Art, Ch.7. p.142.
\end{enumerate}
it is incapable of doing, i.e., to define and describe in an informative way the specific relation deemed to relate an unspecified subject to an unspecified poem), then we shall not condemn Richards' or Collingwood's definitions for their respective shortcomings, but for their purporting to be definitions as such. With this in mind, let us nevertheless see whether anything useful and general can be said in answer to the question "What is a poem?" and whether Richards' definition helps us to say it.

The problem of giving a clear, unequivocal answer to the question "What is a poem?" is then a complex one, corresponding to the hidden complexity of the question. As Stevenson in a recent article has shown, the question, "What is a poem?" may be any one of at least the following three distinct questions (and there are doubtless many more):

1. What are the differentiae or characteristic properties which distinguish a poem from other literary kinds?
2. What are the sources of poetic value?
3. What is the proper way of interpreting the words of the poem?

If we recall in this connection Richards' remark that no general prescription, especially in great poetry

is possible, and that "Poetry may be almost devoid even of mere sense, let alone thought, or almost without sensory (or formal) structure, and yet reach the point than which no poem goes further,"¹ we realize that Richards is not trying to answer the first question at all. He simply takes as obvious what a poem is in this sense. His definition of a poem as a class of experiences which do not differ much from a standard experience which is the relevant experience of the poet when contemplating the completed composition² is clearly a persuasive definition of 'a poem', in answer to question 3), namely, what he considers to be the proper way of interpreting its meaning. We must inquire whether such a definition is plausible at all. We immediately come upon the following objections:

1. A poem is not to be defined as a class of experiences of any sort. If Richards had defined a statue as "a class of experiences", the absurdity would have been immediately apparent, except on some special sense-datum theory of perception. But 'the poem' stands in the same relationship to people's experiences of it as does the statue to its viewers' view of it, though a poem is admittedly a less straightforward type of object than a statue. Though different people may admire different aspects of a poem and take them to be the "essence" of

¹. P.L.C., p.130. (Author's italics).
the poem, they can no more be the poem than someone's admired aspect of a statue is the statue. However it is true that the statue is the marble thing, whereas the poem is not identical with any particular set of written marks or voiced sounds. Then it must be some more exotic type of thing - why not one of the claimed 'essences' or the class of experiences similar to this essential experience?

2. Because a poem is at least a certain structure of language and meaning, which is what it is, timelessly and independent of what anyone actually experiences on reading it. Just as language itself has an enduring structure in spite of the fact that it grows and changes with time, so a 'poem' written 100 years ago is still the same poem, although it may give rise to quite new individual experiences, readings and interpretations. If I read The Song of Songs in Hebrew and you read it in English our visual or auditory experiences would be different but we have still read the same poem, viz. The Song of Songs. Now Richards might say that to the extent that you and I both understand the poem in these versions, our understanding of it must be members of the same class of experiences. We find therefore that the notion of "an experience" here is not less complex than the notion of "a poem". But 'the' experience of understanding the poem can only be identified by reference to the poem, i.e. the
use of the words, as parts of a given language, or of their equivalent expressions in other languages, in the poem.

But to define a poem by reference to experience as so distinguished is clearly not helpful.

At this point I should like to emphasize once again the step which appears to unite Richards' theoretical and practical value-concepts namely that theoretically an experience is valuable according as its homogeneous motor-impulses are more numerous and more complexly ordered; practically the test is that understanding a word-structure involves producing a more or less varied and ordered complexity of ideas (true of life and human nature) together with the large scale or ordinary-language 'impulses' appropriate to these ideas; where understanding entails just appreciation because the lack of just appreciation entails a failure to catch an idea actually embodied in ... the work!

Thus the basic fact is the work and its contents and structure. Proper appreciation = understanding = having the required experience, distinguishable only as that involved in understanding the work. The real (unsupported) value-judgment here (not a psychological fact!) is that we ought to value experiences according as they consist of understanding and properly responding to varied groups of complex but ordered, true ideas.
We are interested in "the poem" and not in the experiences it gives rise to, except in so far as these constitute "understanding the poem"—whether in the poet, in "the right kind of reader" or the right kind of critic. A fortiori it seems quite unplausible to want to reduce the difference between Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" and Scott's "Coronach" to a difference of structure in respect of the 'impulses' contained in two different experiences. For us they are first of all two different word-structures of the kind we call a poem. And as a basis of evaluation of the poems, from the fact that A prefers poem 1 to poem 2 and B prefers poem 2 to poem 1, we are entitled to infer that A's experience of poem 1 seemed to him more valuable than his experience of poem 2, but there is no basis of comparison, so far, between A's experiences and B's; and even in so far as for Richards these constitute 'the poems', (providing they do not stray too far from Keats' (problematical) and Scott's (equally problematical) standard experiences) there is no basis of comparison between the poems.

3. In evaluating the poems we cannot compare the values of our experiences but we can estimate the degree of complexity and coherence it, the poem, manifests. We might succeed in convincing one another that there are

good reasons for judging the one better than the other because, for example, of its greater complexity, depth, coherence, or some other characteristics we usually find of value in works of art: profundity, restraint, subtlety, vividness of imagery, unity, economy of expression, etc. Perhaps these are criteria of value we usually associate with 'great' art; and in evaluating a poem as a good poem we might value its simplicity of means and its striking effect. But both the simplicity and the complexity of structure is predicated of the poem and not of our experience.

One may, of course, defend Richards by pointing out that he was not trying to give a definition of a poem except in terms of the bit of language constituting it, i.e. he was making more precise (or trying to) in what way the language was to be taken as constituting the poem.

Now it is true that it is the use of the marks or sounds making the words of the poem which is important, not the physical objects themselves. But it would be simply a type-mistake to replace 'use' here with 'class of experiences', since 'use' is a function whereas 'experience' is a mental event. To this Richards might reply that the 'use' in question is to give people the proper experiences in reading the words (the experience
of understanding them), and it is this experience of understanding the words which one comments on and evaluates in commenting on and evaluating a poem. But if this is what Richards means, then it is only a more complicated roundabout but not very illuminating way of saying that we comment and evaluate the poem itself.

What can be positively said on this point of definition?

The word (or concept) 'poem' is being constantly used and continually adapted for novel conditions and cases. We find therefore that however detailed our specification of the properties of a poem (words, images, rhythm, etc.), there may always arise cases where some of these properties and new ones are there and nevertheless the question of applying the concept 'poem' awaits our new decision: Do we extend our 'definition' to cover this thing or do we coin a new concept for it? On what considerations should we agree or refuse to apply the word? And if we enlarge our conditions for being a poem to include it, does it follow that other poems not fulfilling these conditions will be excluded?

(It is interesting to recall in this connection a case from another art, viz. sculpture. The kind of modern art-products we have agreed to call 'mobiles', though to some extent similar to many pieces of modern sculpture are yet different enough to be called by a
different name.)

Waismann's 'open texture', Morris Weitz's 'open concept', Gallie's 'essentially contested concepts' are important in showing the futility of pinning down to a static formula something that is continually changing and hence either in need of constant redefinition or simply incapable of being forced into the straight-jacket of precise definition at all.

Having found that we cannot define 'a poem', we are yet able to refer to it, to discuss it, communicate about it and evaluate it. We can then try to classify the various statements that can be made about 'a poem'; for example:

a) A poem is a sequence of words, spoken or written.
b) A poem is a sequence of words, in measured rhythms, perhaps with rhymes, etc.
c) A poem is a sequence of meanings arising out of the two foregoing.
d) A poem is a sequence of experiences to which these can give rise in
   1. the poet when reading the words
   2. any other person reading these.

e) A poem is a structure of linguistic symbols expressive of feelings, ideas, experiences.

If we agree that these statements can be logically derived from the concept 'a poem', i.e. are implicit in our usage of the term, then we can proceed to our analysis of any one of these strata, bearing in mind that it is only one among many others. This will prevent us from transforming literary analysis and criticism into either individual psychology (e.g. if we take the poem to be merely the expression of the experience or intention of the poet), or general psychology (if we take it to be merely the expression of what is common to different experiences of all individuals or of some of them — "the average reader"), or into a study of words and meaningful expressions and types of ambiguity occurring in this use (the criticism of texts) or into the conscious desires and unconscious complexes resulting in the expressions (psychoanalysis), or into a social, religious or political commentary.

After disentangling the various strata of a poem — linguistic, psychological, conceptual — we usually feel we know or understand it better and are hence more able to evaluate it properly. Usually the slighter its value, the easier will the work of analysis within its different strata be.

To say that a good poem is so complex, integrated and coherent that it defies analysis, is simply to recognize
that although we can create works of art, either we have not yet developed a sufficiently fine method of analysis to enable us to account for the elements and the success of artistic creation, or such a project is prohibited by our concept of a work of art, as something of which all the characteristics in precisely that individual form and combination presented by this work, are essentially contributive to its worth, which therefore defies analysis.