Principles of Literary Criticism

I. A. Richards

Edited by
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Editorial Introduction

The roots of Principles of Literary Criticism

The first lecture courses that I. A. Richards delivered in Cambridge following his recruitment for the English Tripos by Mansfield Forbes in the summer of 1919 began in the Michaelmas term of that year and continued into the Lent and Easter terms of 1920. Richards had been asked to discuss 'Criticism', but when he wrote to Forbes in August or September 1919 to describe his courses he remarked that they 'ought to be called *Theory* of Criticism', and the outline he sent to Forbes is remarkably definite, raising such issues as 'What we refer to when we speak of *Othello*', 'Conditions of standard readings', 'how poems convey propositions', and 'What is meant by "Truth" as applied to poems'.[1] Given that Richards had published little and had never before addressed a university audience in this way it is surprising to find him so confidently attacking the foundations of the field. The major topics – the ontological status of the objects of criticism, correct reading and misreading, and the applicability of a 'truth' calculus to poetry – were to form the basis of much of Richards best work in the 1920s and 1930s, but one major area is conspicuously absent. Even as late as the summer of 1920 the theory of value does not appear to have been close to the forefront of Richards' mind. When he wrote to Forbes to say that he would be lecturing on Theory of Criticism for the whole of the academic year 1920–1921, he was conscious of some degree of improvement in his lectures, remarking that in his first courses his 'terminology was very troublesome and arbitrary' and that this time around he would be 'more traditional and complete',[2] but, remarkably, there is no mention of theory of value as a key element. It was about to be come an all-pervasive concern, and the cause of the most significant methodological error that Richards was to make in this phase of his thought. An understanding of his motivation and of the positions into which he was led are necessary preliminaries to any firm grasp of Richards' thinking between late 1919 and the publication of *Principles of Literary Criticism* in late 1924.

We have already seen that Richards believed his second course of lectures to be more 'traditional', but this seems to have been more in manner than in content. Basil Willey, who had just changed from reading History to English in 1920 attended these early courses and found them remarkable:

> I was one of the lucky hearers of his early lectures, those which went into the building of his book *Principles of Literary Criticism*, and I want to testify to their electrifying effect – on me and on many others, including many senior listeners. One was accustomed to finding that one's teachers

were men of learning, sensibility, critical perception and perhaps noble ideals; but here was a man lecturing on literary criticism who had actually done some fundamental *thinking*! Metaphysician and psychologist, Richards had meditated deeply upon the relationships between Thoughts, Words and Things; upon different kinds and levels of meaning; upon the different ways in which meaning can be communicated; and most excitingly for us, upon what goes on in the mind when we read a poem. In the course of the lectures in which his dry, toneless voice was amply compensated by his splendid cranium and the panoramic sweep of his intellect, he would turn continually to the blackboard and elaborate crosssections of the reader's mind, full of springs, pulleys, and arrows indicating emotions, images and incipient impulses to act. […] what a revelation all this was to our generation, brought up as we had been on the gossip of a Saintsbury or the elegant posturings of an Edmund Gosse![3]

This attempt to diagrammatize the readers mind, with its 'emotions, images and incipient impulses to act' is of course the keystone of the theory of value as we find it in *Principles of Literary Criticism*, and in fact Willey was lucky enough to hear Richards at a crucial juncture in his thought when this theory of value was taking shape. The transitions and their causes can be traced through his notebooks for these lectures and for the first time make clear the local origins of his thinking, and, perhaps even more importantly the degree to which *Principles* is continuous with *Foundations of Aesthetics*. We shall return to this latter point, but the presence of the work which was eventually published as *Foundations* should be borne in mind as a continual concern from the summer of 1920 onwards. For the time being it will be sufficient to note that the question of 'value' hitherto absent from Richards' lectures figures prominently in those for the Michaelmas term of 1920, though it is still only one component among many. Its place in this frame is worth examination, not least because Richards' position in these lectures is very much clearer and forthright than that to be found in the more qualified and extended discursive argument of his book.

Scientific Criticism

The first of the goals Richards describes in his lectures is the need for a scientific criticism, a goal which governs the larger body of the lectures and of *Principles*. Its character reminds us at the outset that Richards was not a late nineteenth century man of letters with psychological interests, but a philosophical psychologist determined to bring order to what he took to be a chaotic field. In his first lecture he presented his listeners with the option:

> You can *either* think of the literature of criticism as an assemblage of disconnected conflicting opinions to which if you write criticism yourself you can only add another such opinion. Or, you can think of it as a *science*, a body of coherent knowledge with many provinces […].[4]

On the facing page of the notebook, reserved by Richards for comments on the main text, he has written that science as well as being a matter of 'Maths', 'Microscopes and galvanometers' is also 'non-suasory', consists of 'observation', has a 'Connection with the rest of experience', and, finally, aims at 'Explanation'. Subsequent developments have tended to limit our conception of science to the 'mathematical' handling of data generated by instruments, but the more general sense accepted by Richards here remains valid, and is a commonplace in the views of writers such as Quine, who see science as a network of propositions stretching from mathematics on the one side to history on the other. It is this latter sense in which Richards hoped for a scientific criticism. As I shall argue later in this introduction, even within his own terms Richards' aims were flawed, largely because his naturalism was insufficiently purged of traditional literary critical assumptions. But the aims were nevertheless genuinely scientific. The accepted wisdom of post-war criticism, as very prominently expressed by F. R. Leavis,[5] that Richards' thought was 'pseudo-scientific' from the outset mistakenly evaluates Richards in terms of an inappropriate model of science (a common means of discrediting the first incursions of scientific thought into the territory of the humanities). Richards might certainly be said to be primitive scientifically, even within the generous Quinean scheme, and troubled by errors, but he is still by this reckoning a respectable proto-scientist. Perhaps the best way of bringing this point home is by referring to his attitude towards the likelihood of flaws in his theories. Summing up his Michaelmas term lectures he remarked that

> one of the chief points about the method I have been using as opposed to deductive or systematic methods such as that of Croce, is that the parts of this position are separable and one part can be accepted and another rejected without inconsistency.[6]

The possession of this essential qualifying feature is a little-appreciated fact of Richards' early writings, which have so often been refuted on the basis of a perceived flaw in the science on which they claim to be based, for example the obsolescence of the psychology underlying the theory of value. But Richards himself was aware that faulty *elements* would not be sufficient to bring down his project, and further that even when flawed they would have descriptive value. On one page of his account of the balance of impulses in these lectures he has written a comment on the facing verso: 'Even if my explanatory hypothesis of Balance is wrong the EXPERIENCE is there.'[7] The structure of his theory, he believes, is sufficiently strong for individual elements in it, even very large and apparently indispensable elements, to be discredited, without it losing its scientific value as observation. This is, I believe, one of the continuing reasons for examining these early writings of Richards. Their attempt to build explanatory models of poetic effect employing scientific psychology is unprecedented, and they have had very few successors, the bulk of subsequent work being

rendered suspect by its alliance with non-extensional systematic psychologies such as that of Freud. An exception might be begged here for linguistic and structuralist thought, but the psychology in those accounts is either minimal or commonplace, even when reaching peaks of linguistic sophistication, as it does in Jakobson for example. Until the advent of Pragmatics, itself in some part inspired by the work of Ogden and Richards, and particularly of Relevance Theory, there have been very few attempts to provide a model with equally developed linguistics and psychology.

Richards' interest in a scientific criticism seems at this point to be largely motivated by the protection it afforded him against one of the principal errors of the systematic aesthetics of the previous century, the desire for a single omnicompetent approach to the phenomenon of 'beauty'. He refers frequently in these early lectures to the importance of avoiding the hypostatisation of 'beauty', and the related 'fatal quest' for an 'all embracing formula' such as 'beauty is expression'.[8] Noting that the competing formulae of this type share a concern with value, he proposes that we should approach them in a pluralistic spirit:

> Instead then of supposing *one* definition, *one quality*, which makes what we call poetry be poetry, I propose that what we call *poetry* consists of things called by that name for all kinds of reasons.

It will be as well to note here that whilst approaching admirably to a naturalistic understanding of the phenomenon under consideration, where poetry is whatever readers happen to call poetry, and the reasons for their designation are the subject matter of the science, there is even at this very early stage a dangerous flaw. Richards seems unable to push his naturalism to a further level of disengagement from human interests. The presumption of value is taken at face value, as more or less correct. Nevertheless, his formulae are interestingly uncertain, hesitating on the brink of a rigorous science of value attribution, and then retreating to a more comfortable and prejudiced position. At one point he writes that 'critical', as opposed to historical or purely psychological, remarks, all attempt to 'explain or account for the thing in question being valued', which is as neutral as any naturalist could wish. The judgment of value is to be accounted for, not endorsed or underwritten. But in the next paragraph he writes that critical remarks may be defined as the 'attempt to explain why a thing is worth knowing',[9] that they can all be put in the form 'Poetry is valuable because:–',[10] and in so writing he slips into an acceptance of these value attributions which rules off whole classes of explanation, namely those which might account for perceived value in terms of error.

In itself this is a very serious flaw, but it has further and unexpected consequences for his overall theory, particularly in relation to his handling of the standardization of readings necessary for an intersubjective criticism. With the assumption of value in hand his theory takes on an urgent suasory aim that elsewhere in his lectures

Richards had noted was incompatible with science. If the value attributions are in themselves unquestionable then it becomes important that they are distributed as widely as possible, and the point of criticism becomes to distinguish between the bad and the good with the goal of reducing the influence of one and increasing that of the other. Consequently it became a point of the first importance in these early lectures, and in *Principles of Literary Criticism*, to clarify and standardize the ontological status of the 'poem' in order to provide sufficient intersubjectivity for criticism to become a 'science' in the modest sense noted above. Lecture 3 takes this up in detail, beginning by noting that though 'we always talk as though we had each of us access to the *same thing* when speaking of a reading, this is literally speaking untrue.[11] As Richards goes on to point out this is not a problem which afflicts criticism only, and that even with more easily mensurated data we might mistrust the report of another subject if that measurer did not appear to be operating under the required conditions. Identifying the conditions which might produce divergent readings and allowing for them will assist in the production of agreed definitions of 'standard readings':

> We keep a bilious attack or the disturbance of a railway journey *out of the poem*. Much more difficult to keep a fine afternoon, or a tired eye muscle out.[12]

Still more difficult is to deal with the disturbances caused by temperamental differences between readers, but Richards remains optimistic that if we are sufficiently attentive to these sources of divergence 'we approximate to the notion of a *standard reading*.'[13] It should emphasized here that this standard reading is an analytic convenience intended to render discussion possible. Richards notes that it is a 'point of conscience' 'never to say anything about a poem unless one has reason to believe that one's reading is reasonably near a standard reading',[14] but he scrupulously avoids any suggestion that the divergences are misreadings, except in the technical sense that they inhibit intersubjective criticism. In a marginal note Richards observed that 'By aid of standard reader we get universality', not that by the aid of the standard reader we get at the veritable poem. It is curious that the pragmatism of his science in these early lectures is rather clearer than in the finished volume (see Chapter 26, 'Judgement and Divergent Readings' for example), and certainly much more marked than the position apparent in *Practical Criticism* (1929). Some shift in Richards' attitude may be suspected here, perhaps in response to the practical difficulties of making an explicit account of the conditions needed for standard readings. It also seems possible that he simply downplayed his instrumentalist approach to the definition of right reading in order to strengthen the force of his educational points. Whatever its causes the result is to be regretted, and we may feel that this sub-project, the standard reading determinable by each individual critic, would have been unnecessary if Richards had taken his own hint

that re-reading was often a safeguard against idiosyncratic reading.[15] A thoroughgoingly naturalistic treatment of the subject could have avoided touching on the need for individually corrected readings, and instead taken the general consensus of large numbers of readers over a broad span of time as providing a stable subject matter for a science. But this would have been a science of criticism, with critical acts merely appearing as the matter under consideration and calling for causal explanation. Richards himself knew exactly what was required:

> The extreme importance which has in the past been assigned to poetry is a fact which must be accounted for whether we conclude that it was rightly assigned or not, and whether we consider that poetry will continue to be held in such esteem or not.[16]

It is a puzzle why he did not follow this through, and also a matter for regret.

The Composition of Principles of Literary Criticism

Richards continued to lecture on criticism for the rest of 1921 and 1922, only beginning to put his thought into volume form at the end of January 1923.[17] He seems to have made rapid initial progress, writing much of Chapters 1 to 4 in the first fortnight of work,[18] and was expecting to manage a chapter a week and finish in time for a summers climbing.[19] In February it turned 'troublesome', and Richards complained that he was having difficulty in 'making it intelligible and keeping out academic nonsense', a remark that serves as a useful reminder of the popularizing intentions of the book.[20] Progress after this slowed down considerably, but by the end of June Richards had completed a section, 'Psychology and the Reading of Poetry' for publication in Ogden's journal *Psyche*.[21] After the vacation Richards could report 'excellent progress',[22] and his very full lecture classes – 'double as many people […] as ever before'[23] – were stimulating. Richards was in fact now using his lectures for the preparation of new material, noting in early November that an Ethics lecture went off very well this morning to the horror and pain of certain Catholics I could see!', and that the lecture was followed by 'Acclamations and a crowd to know whither they should refer their discussions'.[24] A few days later he had worked this material up as the *Psyche* article 'Desire and the Desirable',[25] which appears in *Principles of Literary Criticism* as Chapters 6, 7, and parts of 8. Curiously, and in spite of the fact that Richards had already contracted in November 1921 for a book entitled 'Principles of Criticism' he told Dorothy Pilley, later his wife, that he was 'still uncertain about title', and was thinking of 'The Use of Art'.[26] It seems correct to infer that during the course of the composition he had begun to conceive of the book as less a brief for criticism, than a defense of the arts:

> The whole upshot of my book is to put the arts, as the supreme mode of communication, in the forefront of all values.[27]

By the end of March he was 'in sight of the end',[28] and throughout the spring there is hardly a card or letter to Dorothy that does not mention the book's progress, which was, as he admitted, only 'steady and slow'.[29] As late as June he was still reporting the feeling that he was 'breaking new ground',[30] which may explain in part the tardy progress, though further anxieties about the technicality of the book appear to have been paramount. At the end of June, when the volume was almost complete, and only the concluding chapter remained to be written, he explained that his major difficulty had been to produce a book that would please two audiences:

> I'm afraid, though, it's another of those books which have to be read several times before it's clear. Because the reader has to do a lot of work himself. The whole thing I hope will have a residual effect which later on will make the detail comprehensible. The difficulty is that I have to write *both* for those who want only a general impression of the whole affair, and for those who will take separate sentences and discuss them in isolation.[31]

On the 10th of July Richards reported that the 80,000 word book was 'Done', and Richards and Dorothy took a complete MSS with them on a climbing trip to the Alps, where on rest days she 'read with vigor and great interest, comments meanwhile by the author'.[32] After final corrections, the script was submitted to the printer, and proofs arrived during September, and looking over his book again Richards was dissatisfied with his management of the compromise between academic and popular, concluding that it was 'not well written', and 'Dreadfully pedantic and lumbering in parts'.[33] The first bound copies reached Richards on the 25th of November, and the book was issued to reviewers very shortly afterwards.

Richards' Theory of Value

Writing in his review of *Coleridge on Imagination* in 1935 F. R. Leavis remarked that

> Dr Richards will hardly contend at this date that the theory of values expounded in *Principles of Literary Criticism* is of any use for any respectable purpose whatever, or that it does anything but discredit the ambition to make criticism a science.[34]

Since there is no alternative theory proposed, and the obsolescence of that of Richards is asserted rather than demonstrated, it is not clear from Leavis' article quite why he felt so confident in this rejection. It would be understandable, perhaps, if a new candidate, well-known to all informed readers, had recently swept the board; but in fact this was

not the case, and Leavis' discontent, shared by very large numbers of subsequent readers, must be accounted for some other way. Doubtless, part of the problem is that the expectations brought to Richards' impulse theory are inappropriate. As has been noted above, Richards' 'science' is science in the broader definition which makes history a science, or ethnography. Anyone turning to the impulse theory of *Principles* expecting to find well-defined objects, the impulses, and some procedure by which the quality of their interrelationships may be calculated to facilitate comparative value judgements, will be disappointed, necessarily so. It was not intended to be practical science of this type, and Richards can never have expected that it would be so. It is even doubtful whether he could realistically have entertained the hope that his terms might one day be usefully translatable into more precise neurological terms. At least with terms as general as 'impulse' the resulting translation would exhibit such a massive disproportion in quantity between the bulk of the original phrasings and the resulting materially specific account that to call it a translation would appear to stretch the term to breaking point. Rather, his speculation was intended to be a disciplined, generalized interface between the sort of questions routinely framed by students of literature, on the one hand, and the emerging fields of psychology on the other. Thinkers such as those cited by Richards as important influences, William James, James Ward, and G. F. Stout, had for some time been performing this function, in great detail, for the interface between philosophy and psychology. Indeed, Ward's chair at Cambridge was in Mental Philosophy, and his very widely read *Encyclopedia Britannica* article,[35] cited by Richards as a source of many of his basic psychological concepts,[36] is almost entirely composed of a painstaking arrangement of definitions and terms, and hardly at all with laboratory experiments. Richards remarked, this was a 'rather old-fashioned psychology', adding that it was 'pre-behavioristic',[37] but this remark, though true, is misleading. Ward's work may be regarded as an attempt to clarify the field which empirical researchers were about to move into, and to frame hypotheses that experimental work would refine. It is the bootstrap needed before the experimentalists were able to produce their own questions, and were self-sufficient in concepts. In this sense it was ageing, and experimental research, in Germany and the United States for example, was already sufficiently well-advanced to make Ward seem somewhat perversely free from empirical data, but its continued relevance in the early 1920s cannot be doubted. That the behaviorists should have made little use of the rich source of remarks in Ward and others like him is doubtless one reason why Richards' own reliance upon them came to seem irrelevant, but with cognitive psychology, whose links with the philosophical tradition are evident and fruitful, now making its presence felt everywhere we have very much less excuse for this historical error. The pathfinding speculation of writers such as James, Ward, and Stout does, of course, become obsolete as empirical research moves into an area and supersedes its

verbal maps with quantitative data and a new and refined set of hypotheses; but when, as is the case with nearly the whole field covered by Richards' early writings on literature, empirical science has not yet made inroads, it remains an important attempt to guide investigation. In a subsequent section I shall attempt to outline precisely where I believe Richards' attempts are most useful, and where internal errors, already touched upon above, are potentially misleading. Before this we must turn to the details of the theory of value itself.

A precise date can be set upon the theory of value as we find it in *Principles* and subsequent writings. A first version was offered in the Michaelmas term lectures of 1920, and it reached its final form in the Lent term lectures of 1921. The stimulus in both cases was the writing of the text first published as 'The Sense of Beauty' (1921), and then as *The Foundations of Aesthetics* (1922). This work had begun in the Summer of 1920, when Richards returned to Cambridge unexpectedly early from a climbing expedition in the Alps. He met James Wood, already a close friend, and Wood began talking 'art talk' to him.[38] Richards found the language interesting, but in need of analysis, and they decided almost immediately to work with Ogden on a study. The article offers discussions of sixteen widely accepted theories of beauty, the bulk of them being criticized as unsatisfactory in their narrowness or because of internal flaws, while that offered by Ogden, Richards and Wood as acceptable, the theory of Synaesthesis, is very broadly that found in *Principles*. My contention is that before writing with Ogden and Wood for this article Richards had not yet focussed on the question of value as central to his literary concerns, or developed any psychological theory of it. Further, I believe that comparison of the versions of theory put forward in the Michaelmas lectures and that in the Lent lectures will show that it was not until very late in the composition of the article that Richards developed the distinction between the *harmony* and the *equilibrium* of impulses, and while these terms appear in the quotation from Confucian doctrine taken up in 'The Sense of Beauty' it seems unlikely that Confucianism was the source of the concepts, which were more likely the result of exposure to other works discussed in the article, notably work by Schiller, Ethel D. Puffer, and Wilbur M. Urban.

Let us begin with the first presentation of the theory in the Michaelmas lectures. In Lecture 1, given in October 1920, Richards lists eight main critical doctrines of 'value'. These include the doctrine of personality (poetry 'brings us into contact with other personalities'), the doctrine of utilty (poetry 'causes valuable social effects'), the doctrine of revelation (poetry 'reveals the *Real*, *True*, or *Ideal* or *Universal*'), the doctrine of Balance (poetry 'puts our impulses into equilibrium'), the ecstatic (poetry 'causes emotions of a peculiar kind'), and the doctrine of pleasure (poetry 'causes pleasure'), the doctrine of expression (poetry 'is expressive'), and the doctrine of Beauty (poetry 'is beautiful'). The relative crudity of this list, when compared with the sixteen Senses of Beauty described in the article

‘The Sense of Beauty’ suggests that the lecture predates this phase of the article’s composition. It should be noted, therefore, that Richards was already in possession of the terms ‘impulse’ and ‘equilibrium’. The lecture notes cite Matthew Arnold, Coleridge, and Kant as prior supporters of this view, and tragic art as its most representative form. Curiously, although Richards mentions this list again in several lectures, and in Lecture 4 admits that his sympathies are with doctrines of revelation and doctrines of balance, he does not dwell on any of the items until his final lecture,[39] which expands slightly on each of the doctrines, and remarks of ‘balance’ that

> to be put in a state of *perfect self possession*, of *balance* or *equilibrium*, so that we are for the time being complete, free and spontaneous individuals, is valuable […][40]

The phrasing is reminiscent of many passages in ‘The Sense of Beauty’, for example the remark that ‘as we realise beauty we become more fully ourselves the more our impulses are engaged’, and because our interest is not canalised in any direction we become ‘less “mixed into” other things’.[41] It seems, therefore, that Richards was engaged on the composition of the later pages of the article at around this time, and that it was deeply suggestive to him. Certainly, when he resumed his lecture course the following term, with Lecture 9, it was the balance of impulses that occupied almost the entire lecture. Asking himself why any particular poem may be worth reading Richards remarks that different poems may require very different answers, and suggests consideration of two pieces by Sir Walter Scott: ‘Proud Maisie’ and the ‘Coronach’.[42] Despite superficial similarities, Richards observes, the ‘reasons for the excellence of the Coronach are different those which explain the greatness of “Proud Maisie”’, and that this difference is ‘not […] of degree but one of kind’:

> With Coronach it’s a question of the awakening of a certain group of emotions, and of the consistent sequence of these emotions, so that they mutually support one another.
>
> It’s a question of maintaining an emotional level, and keeping it full and *rounded as it were*, and *just strong enough*. […]
>
> With ‘Proud Maisie’ it’s a different matter altogether.
>
> It is a question of a balance of Impulses.[43]

Richards then attempts to be more specific about the interaction of impulses in a poem, something he does nowhere else in his writing. The attempt is not successful as criticism, perhaps explaining why he did not develop this form of analysis as a standard feature of his writing, but it is extremely informative with regard to Richards’ conception of the descriptive application of impulses:

> With the first verse we have a group of impulses brought into play, large group, very active.

Then with the second verse the first two lines add another group, quite sharply distinguishable, and then at once with the last two lines in comes an opposing group of impulses, almost antagonistic.

Some impulses even here of these two groups overlap, ‘six braw gentlemen’

But the two groups are mainly antagonistic and would, I think, without the setting merely sharpen themselves.

They do this in the next verse with almost a deadlock until the ‘*duly*’ upon which the whole emotional tone of the poem changes. The impulses seem to spread and widen. The whole of the personality of the reader comes into play. The word gives the hint, so to speak, for the sense of *inevitability, of repose* which then begins. It is this sudden repose *inside* the stress of rival impulses which I call here *balance* or equilibrium.

The whole disturbance of the poem becomes stabilised or balanced, though free to swing.

The final line, in fact, swings it again ‘Welcom proud lady’, but the oscillation is now secure.[44]

The clarification of the impulse theory is not, however, Richards’ main point in this lecture, and he then returns to the ‘Coronach’ in order to show that while balance is a very desirable quality, and a superior one, it is not the only virtue. The merit of the ‘Coronach’ is ‘emotional consistency’ ‘which in this case definitely bars out the possibility of balance’.[45]

Lecture 10, one of the most fluently written of all the lectures, extends the comparison between the poetry of equilibrium and that which is only emotionally consistent, refining the presentation so that the account of this emotional consistency is given in terms of impulses. The shift is not a very marked one, but it shows us Richards gaining in confidence in the use of his general terms.

It may appear curious that he feels no need to offer a detailed account of the ‘impulse’ and I suppose most modern readers feel this to be a lack. For Richards, though, the term was established by common use in psychology and aesthetics, and would no more deserve a detailed and defensive definition than a contemporary behavioural scientist would think of offering an account of the term ‘gene’. Richards has this in common with many of the psychologists whose works he relied upon. Impulse does not, for example, appear as a major topic in James, Ward, or Stout, or even in R. S. Woodworth’s *Dynamic Psychology*, which Richards seems likely to have read shortly before writing his lectures and his book, though it often appears in passing and is handled, particularly in the latter, as if it were quite unproblematic.[46] However, it may be possible to identify, if not a specific source, at least two usages likely to have been very influential for Richards. The text of *Principles* itself mentions no precedent for the term ‘impulse’, but we find the concept mentioned twice in ‘The Sense of Beauty’ as used by two previous writers, Ethel D. Puffer and W. M. Urban. Puffer is quoted from her *Psychology of Beauty* (1905) as remarking that

> The psychological organism is in a state of unity either when it is in a state of virtual congealment or emptiness, as in a trance or ecstasy; or when it is in a state of repose, without tendency to change… The only aesthetic repose is that in which stimulation resulting in impulse or movement is checked by its antagonistic impulse, combined with heightening of tone. But this is *tension*, *equilibrium*, or *balance of forces*, which is thus seen to be a general condition of all aesthetic experience.

Putting aside for the moment the similarity of this equilibrium theory to Richards' own views, we can see the very general sense of impulse used here – the response of an organism to stimulation – is sufficient also to maintain Richards' general presentation. Later misunderstandings of the term, and disappointment at its vagueness, arise from asking too much of it.[47] One should admit that Richards' self-confidence in manner is partly to blame. D. W. Harding, himself a distinguished psychologist, observed late in life that while *Principles* was an important start in the psychologizing of literary studies 'it was only a start and would perhaps have been a more fruitful start if it had not so much had the air of completing the job once and for all'.[48] This is particularly true of Richards' handling of the term 'impulse', where more openness as to its general use by psychologists would have prevented unreasonable expectations, and perhaps made clearer the lines of research which might have improved upon it.

Quotation from W. M. Urban would have done still more to clarify the issue, and it seems likely that his brief discussion in the then widely-read book *Valuation: Its Nature and Laws* (1909) is the principle source of the suggestion that an equilibrium of impulses best accounts for the most striking and valuable aesthetic experiences. In fact, Urban quotes Puffer in the course of his remarks, and though Ogden, Richards, and Wood had obviously gone to the original, they do not stray far from Urban's selection, perhaps suggesting that it was from Urban that they learned of her handling of this matter. Certainly, it is Urban's version of the equilibrium theory that they find worth praise, and they quote extensively from it:

> the concept of the widened ground of diffused stimulation, the *balance* of impulses, so that no one shall constitute an illusion-disturbing moment and lead to readjustment in a new value movement; the consequent *repose* of conation in the object and the *expansion* of feeling which goes with it. The ordering, rearrangement of content characteristic of the aesthetic experience is, therefore, in the service of the deepening, or enhancement of that fundamental mode of worth experience which is appreciatively described as the immanental reference […]

One crucial point should be noted here. In both 'The Sense of Beauty' and *Foundations of Aesthetics* this quotation mistakenly reads '*repose* of emotion in the object', which while broadly intelligible rather obscures one of Urban's main points, which is that impulses are understood by him as being principally a matter of the volitions. The error is understandable in that Richards regards impulses as conations

underlying emotions. As he remarks in his tenth lecture:

> According to the impulses active and the way in which their interplay proceeds the various emotions and feelings arise.[49]

And indeed it is this material which constitutes the most original feature of the impulse theory proposed by Ogden, Richards and Wood, though this is not how it might seem from their own remarks. Distinguishing themselves from Urban's version they rather weakly suggest that their distinction is in the purity of their approach, as contrasted to Urban's tendency to include material incompatible with impulse theory. Urban's account is certainly diffuse and so overloaded that its outlines are blurred, but the fundamentals of the theory are in the last analysis very similar indeed.

However, judging from the prominence given to the handling of the distinction between the 'Proud Maisie' effect and that of the 'Coronach' Richards was aware that this was an addition to the impulse theory as he had taken it over from Puffer and Urban. As we have seen, early lectures treat this equilibrium under the single title 'Balance', and 'Proud Maisie' is cited as an example of it. In Lecture 10 he took up and applied the distinctions which had been very recently outlined in 'The Sense of Beauty' between *equilibrium* and *harmony*:

> In equilibrium, there is no tendency to action, and any concert-goer must have realized the impropriety of the view that action is the proper outcome of aesthetic appreciation. When impulses are 'harmonized' on the other hand they work together, and such disciplined co-ordination in action is much to be desired in other places. When works of art produce such action, or conditions which lead to action they have either not completely fulfilled their function or would in the view of equilibrium here being considered be called not 'beautiful' but 'stimulative'.[50]

This point is extended in Lecture 10 to account for impulse organizing effects of differing degrees of value:

> The major *emotions* such *as joy*, *fear*, *horror*, *melancholy*, *anger*, *regret*, *mirth*, and the things which are hardly emotions although emotional such as *love*, *veneration*, *sentimentality* seem to correspond to fairly definite and special systems or groups of impulses.
>
> Now there is a definite kind of poetry, a special kind of literature whose aim is the development of these definite emotions through these definite groups of impulses.[51]

As examples of this literature, which he calls 'emotional art', Scott's 'Coronach', and Tennyson's 'Break, break, break' are cited. Richards goes on to note that while it deserves its popularity it is a limited form, and poems of this kind 'exercise a part only of the personality', indeed harmony is a 'kind of capture of the personality' by a subset of the impulses, and involves the subjugation of some.[52] Richards traces the

links between various inferior grades of harmony, including ‘commonplace’, where the impulse set is so simple that it offers no challenge to the mind, and the rather more complex case of ‘persuasive art’, where the arousal of sufficiently harmonious groups of impulses may lead to action, but of course it is not with these that he is principally concerned. The real value of the impulse account, and particularly this distinction between harmony and equilibrium, is that it offers an explanatory account of a common readerly intuition:

> with the poetry of balance of equilibrium […] the most striking thing is often the extraordinary diversity and incongruity of the elements. There is present the *strangeness* which has so often been remarked in the most excellent beauty.[53]

Breaking this experience down Richards lists three areas of peculiarity:

1. Impersonality, disinterestedness, detachment or aloofness, or distance, unconcernedness.
2. Self possession, calm, collectedness, serenity, freedom, catharsis
3. Completeness, *finality*, self-sufficiency[54]

It is this last which interests him most, the sense that we have ‘an experience which is *entire*’, that it ‘seems not to need any other to enhance it, but to *contain* all that could enhance it’. The roots of this ‘Godlike’ experience Richards finds ‘*the* most interesting critical question there is’, and it is this which he believes his modified impulse theory accounts for. I will quote only one of these extended accounts here, because for all their internal interest it is their status as models that deserves attention, not their intrinsic merit. Here he explains ‘completeness’:

> I think [it] depends upon *the number and range* of impulses active.
>
> If only a certain group are aroused then, I said, we have an emotion liable to be disturbed. We have an *incomplete development of our personality*. By such work we are riveted in an attitude, like an effigy, not like a living man free to move as we please.
>
> But if instead of one group we have *very many* widely differing impulses active and active so that they balance one another, then we get a state of *poise*, then we get this sense of completeness, of *wholeness*, of *entirety*, *self-sufficingness*.
>
> Not a matter of a conflict. Two impulses pulling different ways that give a sense of frustration, bafflement.
>
> The difference may be put this way: in a mere deadlock all we have is a definite set of impulses tugging different ways. In equilibrium fresh impulses are continually coming in. The whole state of mind is continually swaying away from the centre of balance and back again and across it.
>
> It is by means of these fresh impulses brought in that the whole

> personality is engaged. And this gives the completeness to the experience.[55]

The merits here, and generally in Richards' use of psychology, are that his terminology is always devoted to a causal account of an explicitly stated and well-observed readerly experience. The weakness is, as one of his best critics, D. W. Harding noted a 'tendency […] to short-circuit psychological methods by dogmatizing about the essentials of the conclusions they must reach'.[56] I believe that this a just indication of the character of the most substantial and damaging flaw in Richards' science, a flaw which we have to face and account for. The reason is not far to seek. In giving his account of point two listed above, the intuitions of self-possession and freedom, Richards quoted Schiller, taking his text from 'The Sense of Beauty', in fact pasting a piece of the proof for the article into his notebook.

> The experience of Beauty, he continues (Letter 21), gives us no particular sort of knowledge and has no direct utility, but renders it possible for a man 'to make out of himself what he will, and restores to him the freedom to be what he ought to be'.[57]

This touches on some of Richards' most deeply held personal convictions. For example, that personal freedom, rightly understood in this very technical sense, was the highest of all human values, and that the arts were the principal, though not the sole, means of achieving it. As we have already seen, when writing *Principles* he remarked that 'The whole upshot of my book is to put the arts as the supreme mode of communication in the forefront of all values',[58] which was honest, but to allow the arts such a protected status was hardly good science.

However, before turning to the question of naturalism in Richards, and making an attempt to tease out those aspects of his methods which were sound, those of his observations which may be recovered, and to sketch by contrast a more rigorously naturalistic account of the kind which he had ruled out, it will be as well here to note that there is a significant shift in Richards' attitudes to revelation doctrines, a shift in the direction of science. In the Michaelmas lectures Richards still held some form of revelation doctrine, believing that poetic utterance, in a way hard to explain, gave insight. On the fourth page of his final Lecture, for example, he describes Revelation alongside Equilibrium theory, as if it were an alternative. Very shortly afterwards, on p. 6, he wrote that he was 'inclined to identify' the accounts, and he went back to his first account on page four and in pencil wrote as a marginal annotation alongside the account of revelation that it is 'merely other words' for 'equilibrium'. It seems then that Richards began by conceiving these two accounts as separate, and in explicating them came to believe, as he very clearly does in the Lent term lectures, that Equilibrium theory can account for the feelings of knowledge, of revelation, described in Revelation theory. Simply put, he lost confidence in the revelation theory, which owing to the mystery and

obscurity in the account was never strong, and instead settled for Equilibrium alone. It is likely that this decision is related to the development of the dual language hypothesis, with its distinction between Referential and Evocative uses of language, then reaching more complete form in the composition of *The Meaning of Meaning*.[59]

The Naturalism of Principles

The sense in which Richards employs the term 'naturalism' in *Principles* is that used to describe the philosophical process by which ethical principles are explained without any supernatural assumptions. While limited in its scope this was a widely-accepted employment of the word made notorious by G. E. Moore's hostile treatment in *Principia Ethica*. Richards rejects Moore's dismissal, fashionable then as now, and suggests that the invocation of an ultimate or unanalysable good was to introduce an 'arbitrary full stop'[60] into the discussion. The courage of this may not be immediately apparent, since to prefer a 'less cryptic account of good […] which is in accordance with verifiable facts'[61] seems bland and unexceptionable, but it was to risk association with Herbert Spencer and Ernst Haeckel, both cited, for example, as significant naturalists in James Ward's article 'Naturalism' for the *Encylopedia Britannica*,[62] and both Spencer and Haeckel held views that Richards would have been reluctant to accept. This may account for his caution in using 'naturalism' more widely within the book to explain his methods, but there is every reason for supposing that it is applicable. For one thing, the question of value is everywhere relevant in *Principles*, and a naturalistic definition of it may be taken to seep out into the rest of Richards' book. Further, the entire psychological project of the book is an attempt to forward the construction of explanatory accounts of aesthetic response which were 'in accordance with verifiable facts', and in which only natural causes are invoked in the explanation of any phenomenon:

> What is wanted is a natural account of this significance which would avoid the mysticism, and I think that something of the kind can perhaps be got from Balance.[63]

The attempt is exemplary. Realizing that the naturalization of a research project, such as his own in literary aesthetics, requires integration with the nearest relevant neighbour, he attempts to articulate descriptions of value in terms of what he judges to be the soundest psychology of his time, and being by training grounded in this field he has far more reason than many subsequent literary researchers to write with confidence on this matter. But from the very first Richards came to grief on a single error, a mis-relation of naturalistic, scientific, explanation on the one hand and criticism on the other. Briefly, he attempted to produce a *scientific criticism*, a criticism underwritten, legitimized, and whose disputes could be resolved by science, rather than a *science of criticism*, in other words a

science which describes and explains an activity which does not in itself require any scientific foundation.

However, the context in which this error occurs is admirable. Richards recognized that a study of literature conducted within a university should be a science in the simpler and characteristically late nineteenth century sense typified by the psychology in which he was trained as a undergraduate. He was not aiming for a mathematization of criticism, much less for its transformation into a laboratory subject; he was attempting to standardize the topic under consideration and to stabilize the use of critical terms, and thus to render critical discussion more reliably intersubjective than it had hitherto been. In this aim he was to some small degree successful, particularly with relation to the stabilization of terms, and it is very largely due to his work that the critical study of literature became rooted in the universities. But, of course, it is well known that the project has not produced a discipline sufficiently intersubjective to bear comparison even with other troubled subjects such as history. On the contrary, literary critical academic research has in fact generated an ever widening range of disparate methodologies, views, and conclusions incompatible with each other and with the rest of human knowledge. So notorious has this become that most university courses have resorted to ‘teaching the conflicts’, a solution which might be acceptable if students were also offered clear criteria for preferring one critical program over another. However, and equally notoriously, there are no such criteria. Strangely, those critics who note Richards’ failure also succeed in evading the obvious conclusion, and instead assume that the collapse of his project confirms their assumption that science in the sense he accepted is not an obligation to which critics are subject, and that traditional humanist approaches, or the more elaborate systematic philosophies, stand unchallenged. Alternatively, we might conclude that if this scientific criticism fails and no alternative route to intersubjectivity has been found then the critical project, regardless of whether it is traditional or radical in its politics, has no place in the university.

The reasons for the failure of a scientific criticism may not be immediately apparent, but will become so if we consider Richards’ own understanding of the constitution of criticism. Writing in the opening pages of *Principles* Richards remarks that

> Criticism, as I understand it, is the endeavour to discriminate between experiences and to evaluate them.[64]

A science which intended to discriminate between experiences might face substantial practical difficulties in obtaining evidence facilitating comparison, but these would be technical obstacles only. With evaluation, however, difficulties in principle begin to appear. His lecture notes for the courses of Michaelmas 1920 and Lent 1921 record the belief that with sufficient care an account of the poem might be so standardized that it might be evaluated in a way which was

acceptable to all parties. Indeed, he thought this a necessary preliminary to criticism without which all subsequent effort would be wasted. The difficulty with Richards' recommendation here, and as it is stated and implied in *Principles*, has proved to be not so much that an agreed core understanding is unattainable, for the overlap of readings is very large indeed, but rather that this standard reading of the poem is not the part of the experience which critics find valuable, or, and this is crucial, wish to discuss. That which readers find of the highest value in their reading is routinely the most personal, and criticism thrives on this idiosyncrasy, and indeed seeks it. Even two readers who can agree that they both approve a particular piece will discover in the course of discussion that they seem to find it worthwhile for different reasons, though, interestingly, even for the individuals concerned these reasons often prove to be elusive of description. Furthermore, when critics do find some area of common ground it is usually a fairly gross quality of the piece – ideology for example – and ensuing critical debate becomes ideological debate articulated through the literary texts in question. To all these readers Richards' attempts to standardize, to find a common object for a scientific literary criticism, are unsatisfactory. To some, he seems merely to miss the point of poetry, and indeed in his own later writings, particularly after *Mencius on the Mind* (1932) he attempted, unsuccessfully, to remedy this defect by producing an elaborate account of multiple definition which might permit some degree of standardization to take place while still doing justice to the perceived richness and variety of interpretations characteristically associated with literature of the highest standing. To others he appears to be attempting an ideological coup under cover of science. Both these reactions are to a degree justified, but in saying this we are hardly convicting Richards of impropriety, merely of having attempted a task which proved impossible.

The solution is take naturalism still more seriously, and most importantly to enter upon the investigation without any determination to preserve a cherished dogma. Richards' own sense of the values of poetry was intense (that some, such as Leavis, were later to convict him of only a shallow devotion is largely the result of the fact that, true to his principles, Richards' published criticism attempts to stay very close to shared standard readings, and this often gives his remarks a flat and commonplace appearance). He began his science with the assumption of the value of poetry, and set out to account for it. The thorough naturalist by contrast would start with the fact of the intuition of value, his own perhaps and those of others, and set out to explain this intuition without any regard to whether the intuition is intersubjectively maintainable, communicable, or even solipsistically valid. Rather than ask himself why poetry was so valuable Richards should have asked 'Why do people think poetry is so valuable?'. On this view the main fault with Richards' attempt to account for the value of poetry in terms of an equilibrium of impulses is not so much that psychological research has failed to deepen our understanding of

what physically constitutes an impulse, but rather that Richards had set up an explanandum which may not be a feature of the world, the value of poetry, and ignored an undoubted fact in the world, one crying out for explanation, the attributions of value made by readers. The theory of the equilibrium of impulses is not so much wrong as otiose. It is designed to explain something of which the existence has not been established.

Bearing the abstract features of this point in mind would be perhaps the most significant step towards a respectable science of cultural matters, and its neglect vitiates a very great deal, if not quite every aspect, of the quantitative work so far carried out on literary texts, which is as a rule devoted to the service of projects framed by critical and evaluative principles. One of the main uses of Richards' very early scientific attempts is to reveal that this subordination to critical imperatives will necessarily limit the value of the work. But as anyone familiar with the sciences will be aware there is a great deal more to instituting a successful naturalistic program than declaring in its favour. A whole apparatus of theory must be erected in order to assist with the stabilization of the subject matter, and to police the framing of questions. Though only now in its beginnings some theory and empirical work is beginning to appear beneath its aegis, some of it my own, and it seems fair to note its existence, if only to ward off the charge that in this introduction I have impugned Richards by standards to which I have made no attempt to attain.

Recent developments in anthropology and linguistics, both associated with the name of Dan Sperber, have begun to frame a naturalistic research paradigm which promises well for those willing to undertake the work. Sperber's program, outlined in his *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach*,[65] offers a powerful negative critique of the ontological presuppositions common to much cultural research, his fundamental point being that a soundly naturalized study of culture should be concerned only with objects that are undoubtedly of this world, or with abstract properties that such objects might have in common. The field thus demarcated contains both cultural objects internal to a nervous system, mental representations as he calls them, and external, public representations. The questions to be asked of such objects and their properties are distributional in character, or, as he terms it 'epidemiological'. We are to ask why it is that objects with these features are distributed as they are. Clearly this is a large field for potential endeavour, and some areas are likely to be more tractable than others. My own feeling is that at this early stage research on relatively easily observed and men-surated external cultural objects is likely to be more successful, but more able researchers might feel this is mere timidity. An example of a possible line of research is called for here, and it gives me the opportunity to round off a discussion of Richards' *Principles* with a tribute to its continued interest, and also to show by positive example, I hope, how helpful Richards can be.[66] As I have suggested above, Richards' scientific criticism is misconceived,

and his naturalism imperfect, but none of these criticisms deny the fact that his proposed explanations, the equilibrium of impulses for example, has very considerable suggestive and descriptive potential; it tells us a good deal about Richards' experience of attributing value to poetry, and this is no small achievement for a psychologist; as he himself wrote in a passage quoted earlier, "Even if my explanatory hypothesis of Balance is wrong the EXPERIENCE is there.'[67]

It will be recalled that Richards' lecture refers to the 'strangeness' of the most important poetic experiences and outlines three aspects of this oddity: 1. Impersonality 2. Self possession, and 3. Completeness.[68] These are by common consent features of poetic effect, both as felt and as attributed to the poem, though Richards' merit is to have gathered them together in one description, enriched it with the equilibrium theory, and presented it in an abstract form. It is not difficult to gather further accounts under the headings suggested by Richards. Take for example a quotation from A. C. Bradley, a critic much admired by Richards for the quality of his engagement with fundamental problems in criticism:

> About the best poetry, and not only the best, there floats an atmosphere of infinite suggestion. The poet speaks to us of one thing, but in this one thing there seems to lurk the secret of all. He said what he meant, but his meaning seems to beckon away beyond itself, or rather to expand into something boundless which is only focused in it.[69]

Here we see the impersonality and the completeness, though little of the self-possession, and the entire passage testifies to the strangeness of the experience. A further point may be invoked here from Richards' lectures. In listing the eight doctrines Richards declares that his sympathies are with the doctrines of 'revelation' ('the true, the real, the ideal, the universal'), and with, of course, 'balance' (impulse equilibrium),[70] and in further discussions in Lecture 9 he links them together in a very revealing way. He begins with the observation that the intuition of significance can be taken as describing a sensation that the poem makes us 'know something very well', or that the poem is 'representing or condensing a great deal of experience',[71] and then goes on to note that this "'seeing everything at once" feeling'[72] results from the integration of a very large field of experience. The link, he remarks, with Balance should be obvious:

> It might be that whenever we feel this general significance, wherever we seem to know or understand the *Essence* of Existence or whatever, we are in this state of balance, and the significance is simply the result of being *balanced*.[73]

By the time this was rewritten for incorporation into *Principles*, in Chapter Thirty-five, Richards was still more forthright about the evanescent nature of this revelation.

> We can now take this feeling of a revealed significance, this attitude of readiness, acceptance, and understanding, which has led to so many Revelation Doctrines, not as actually implying knowledge, but for what it is – the conscious accompaniment of our successful adjustment to life. But it is, we must admit, no certain sign by itself that our adjustment is adequate or admirable. Even the most firm adherents to Revelation Doctrines admit that there are bogus revelations, and on our account it is equally important to distinguish between 'feelings of significance' which indicate that all is well, and those which do not. In a sense all indicate that *something* is going well, otherwise there would be no acceptance, no belief but rejection. The real question is 'What is it?' Thus after the queer reshuffling of inhibitions and releases which follows the taking of a dose of alcohol, for example, the sense of revelation is apt to occur with unusual authority. Doubtless this feeling of significance is a sign that as the organism is for the moment, its affairs are for the moment thriving. But when the momentary special condition of the system has given place to the more usual, more stable and more generally advantageous adjustment, the authority of the vision falls away from it; we find that what we were doing is by no means so wonderful or so desirable as we thought and that our belief was nonsensical. So it is less noticeably with many moments in which the world seems to be showing its real face to us.[74]

This is a typically rich and informative example of the psychological reporting which makes early Richards so useful a source, but it is of course too confused to take on unsimplified for a naturalised research project. Some degree of focus is necessary, and there are many possible reductions of scope. That which I myself have chosen is to concentrate on the link between these experiences and regular metrical structures in the texts which bring them about. Richards himself notes this link, writing that 'Metre for the most difficult and most delicate utterances is the all but inevitable means',[75] and in *The Meaning of Meaning* and *Principles of Literary Criticism* attempting a vague and unsatisfactory hypothesis, unsubstantiated by research, in terms of hypnosis.[76] A suitable epidemiological question to pose would be 'Why is metrical utterance strongly but not invariably a feature of texts of which readers, such as Richards and Bradley, report these strange interpretational experiences?' Richards, it is evident from *Principles*, believes the substance of these experiences to be communicated, though as the remarks quoted above show, he is unwilling to give them high cognitive status, however important he believes the experience to be. I have shown in a series of papers that metrical utterance is so restrictive that no hypothesis of powers of communication superior to those of prose is tenable.[77] For example, in the course of producing a mathematical distinction between isometrically lineated text (verse) and prose it becomes evident that such lineation necessarily distorts syntax and encourages, though it does not necessitate, the use of shorter words (containing fewer syllables). With regard to the latter point, empirical investigation of matched pairs of samples of prose and verse shows that the verse in all cases has a lower mean word length.

Empirical data can dispose, then, of one broad field of hypotheses, including those of Richards, and any replacement hypotheses must be compatible with these data, as well as offering a satisfactory answer to the question posed. Building on these findings I have suggested that verse form can be regarded as an algorithmic technique for increasing the probability of producing text which simultaneously exhibits intact grammar and ahierarchical implications, and that this can explain the fact that verse is strongly associated with the very peculiar effects reported by readers but is neither necessary nor sufficient for their appearance.[78]

The hypothesis, which has been developed at much greater length elsewhere,[79] takes up work currently being developed in Pragmatics, the Relevance Theory proposed by Sperber and Wilson.[80] Communication, these authors propose, is not principally a matter of decoding an utterance, but results from a two-stage process of decoding followed by inference construction, the inferences being drawn in accordance with our assumption that a speaker or writer will not require more processing effort of a reader or listener than is merited by the communication. A crucial part of this process occurs when an individual selects certain of the implications of an utterance, of which there are very large, even infinite, numbers, and decides that these were manifestly intended by the composer to be retrieved by a receiver (to distinguish them from other implications these are referred to as implicatures). The means by which the composer manipulates these retrievals are what we know as style.[81] That is to say, syntactical and dictional choices will tend to structure the implications in certain ways, thus leading the receiver to draw certain conclusions as to which are to be assigned to the category of implicature. Slightly different syntactical and dictional choices will lead to very different conclusions on the part of the reader. Sometimes, often in fact, composers will deliberately arrange for a reader's uncertainty about the strength of an implicature to produce delicate and flexible communicative effects.

The bearing of this on the description of verse given above is straightforward. Verse form forces choice on a number of axes and causes the hierarchy of implications to be to some degree ordered randomly with regard to communicative intent. It will thus, sometimes, be peculiarly difficult to decide which implications are to be assigned to the category of implicature. Such uncertainties do occur in day-to-day circumstances, as for example when we mishear something or misread a word, but, and this is crucial, such cases usually result in extreme incoherence and in grammatical flaws which stimulate the reader either to recover the error or to reject the utterance as irretrievably damaged and undeserving of further interpretative effort. However, the disruptions which occur in verse forms of high status are of a slighter, subtler kind, and are not usually accompanied by grammatical damage, though as has been noted above lineation alone is sufficient to place it under some strain. Readers are thus unable to construct a satisfactory or coherent implicature, but do not

abandon the text, and believing in accordance with the second principle of relevance (according to which every 'act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance'[82]) that the author would not put them to unnecessary labour, will conclude that they have not yet expended sufficient effort to produce a clear interpretation. Consequently they will dig deeper into the hierarchy of implications in search of a still richer resolution. The process is endless, and with every unsuccessful attempt the reader will, instead of abandoning the project, assume still greater but as yet undiscovered rewards. I have suggested that my account of lineation, which is not, of course, the only restrictive axis in English, goes some way to explaining the character of the disruption underlying these effects. By encouraging the author to sequence grammatical items in a random way, and to use shorter words than they would otherwise have used, lineation weakens the hierarchy of implications, and leads to text which appears to offer a plausible but ever-unfulfilled promise of interpretative rewards.

This is of course a very different sort of account to that offered by Richards, and it sees poetry not as the vital need which Richards believed it to be, but as something to which the cognitive system is susceptible, or more properly speaking the name we give to that susceptibility. In other respects I believe it is very much in the spirit of *Principles*: it is explanatory and naturalistic, it aims to be integrated with the nearest neighbouring disciplines, and, most importantly in my view, because it is open to investigation and falsification it promises to achieve levels of intersubjectivity which render this branch of literary research a science in the modest sense described by Richards in his opening lecture in 1920.

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1 IAR to M. D. Forbes, Aug./Sep. 1919, in John Constable, ed., *Selected Letters of I. A. Richards* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 14–15. Notebook 24, Richards Collection, Magdalene College, Cambridge (hereafter RCM), records early notes towards these courses.

2 IAR to M. D. Forbes, Summer 1920, in John Constable, ed., *Selected Letters of I. A. Richards* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 20.

3 Basil Willey, *Cambridge and Other Memories 1929–1953* (W. W. Norton: New York, 1968), 21–2.

4 Lecture I, page 1, Notebook 4, RCM.

5 F. R. Leavis, *English Literature in Our Time and the University* (Cambridge U.P.: Cambridge, 1969), 17.

6 Lecture [6, called 'Final Lecture'], p. 1, Notebook 4, RCM.

7 Lecture X, p. 12, facing verso, Notebook 5, RCM.

8 Lecture 1, p. 3, Notebook 4, RCM. See also Lecture 2, p. 1, where he writes of the 'futile and fatal hunt after general definition'.

9 Lecture 1, p. 5, Notebook 4, RCM.

10 Lecture 1, p. 5, Notebook 4, RCM.

11 Lecture 3, p. 4, Notebook 4, RCM.

12 Lecture 3, p. 5, Notebook 4, RCM.

13 Lecture 3, p. 5, Notebook 4, RCM.
14 Lecture 3, p. 6, Notebook 4, RCM.
15 Lecture 3., p. 5, Notebook 4, RCM.
16 *Science and Poetry* (1926), 8.
17 IAR to D. E. Pilley (later Mrs Richards), 21 Jan. 1923, RCM.
18 IAR to D. E. Pilley, 9 Feb. 1923, RCM.
19 IAR to D. E. Pilley, 21 Jan. 1923, RCM.
20 IAR to D. E. Pilley, 20 Feb. 1923, RCM.
21 *Psyche*, 4/1 (July 1923), 6–23.
22 IAR to D. E. Pilley, 24 Oct. 1923, RCM.
23 IAR to D. E. Pilley, 24 Oct. 1923, RCM.
24 IAR to D. E. Pilley, 7 Nov. 1923, RCM.
25 *Psyche*, 4/3 (Jan. 1924), 213–26, RCM.
26 IAR to D. E. Pilley, 30 Jan. 1924, RCM.
27 IAR to D. E. Pilley, 19 Nov. 1923, RCM. Quoted in *Selected Letters of I. A. Richards*, 27.
28 IAR to D. E. Pilley, 20 Mar. 1924, RCM. A draft of the penultimate chapter, 34, dated 17 February 1924 is amongst the Richards papers (RCM. Box 10/MS4).
29 IAR to D. E. Pilley, 17 May 1924, RCM.
30 IAR to D. E. Pilley, 20 June 1924, RCM.
31 IAR to D. E. Pilley, 22 June 1924. Quoted in *Selected Letters of I. A. Richards*, 27.
32 D. E. Pilley's diary, 15 July 1924, RCM
33 IAR to D. E. Pilley, 2 Oct. 1924, RCM.
34 F. R. Leavis, 'Dr Richards, Bentham and Coleridge', *Scrutiny*, 3/4 (Mar. 1935), [382–402], 397. Reprinted in Volume Ten.
35 First published in mid 1880s, but almost certainly read by Richards in the revised version published of the Eleventh Edition (Cambridge U.P.: Cambridge, 1910–11). Richards may also have consulted it in its definitive book form: James Ward, *Psychological Principles* (Cambridge U.P. Cambridge, 1918).
36 'Beginnings and Transitions: I. A. Richards Interviewed by Reuben Brower', in Reuben Brower, et al., eds, *I. A. Richards: Essays in his Honor* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1973), [17–41], 28.
37 'Beginnings and Transitions', 28
38 'Beginnings and Transitions', 24.
39 This lecture is given no number, but is number six in the sequence. However, since the series resumes the following term with Lecture 9 it appears that two lectures, written up in another notebook perhaps, have been lost.
40 Final Lecture, p. 4, Notebook 4, RCM.
41 'The Sense of Beauty', *Cambridge Magazine*, 10/2 (Jan.–Mar. 1921), [73–93], 89.
42 'Proud Maisie' appears in *Heart of Midlothian*, and is collected in J. Logie Robertson, ed., *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott* (Oxford U.P.: London, 1916), p. 774–5. By 'Coronach' Richards refers to *The Lady of the Lake*, Canto III, xvi, quoted in *Foundations of Aesthetics*, 47–8.
43 Lecture 9, p. 4, Notebook 4, RCM.
44 Lecture 9, pp 4–5, Notebook 4, RCM.
45 Lecture 9, p. 7, Notebook, 4, RCM.
46 Robert Sessions Woodworth, *Dynamic Psychology* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1918).
47 W. H. N. Hotopf's useful discussion, which is generally compatible with my conclusions here, should also be consulted: W. H. N. Hotopf, *Language*,

Thought and Comprehension: A Case Study of the Writings of I. A. Richards (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1965), 43–5.

48 D. W. Harding, unpublished mss, in D. W. Harding Archive, Library of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Box 15 (Folder labelled by Harding 'II and III and some material for IV').

49 Lecture 10, p. 3, Notebook 5, RCM.

50 'The Sense of Beauty', 89.

51 Lecture 10, pp. 3–4, Notebook 5, RCM.

52 Lecture 10, p. 7, Notebook 5, RCM.

53 Lecture 10, p. 5, Notebook 5, RCM.

54 Lecture 10, p. 8, Notebook 5, RCM.

55 Lecture 10, pp. 9–10, Notebook 5, RCM.

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