

'NINETEEN HUNDRED AND NOW': HISTORICISING I. A. RICHARDS

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Introduction

IN THE 1920s I. A. Richards usually presents his psychological aesthetics as a contribution to science. As a result it is commonplace to think of Richards as a positivist who sees his task as 'translating' Romantic and Idealist aesthetics into scientific psychology and semiotics.' While this account of his early work is undoubtedly true, in this paper I wish to look at a little known essay by Richards, 'Nineteen Hundred and Now' (1927), which is one of the few places where Richards offers not only to locate his work in a definite historical context, but to present it as a response to the needs and interests of a particular social group in a particular historical situation.' 'Nineteen Hundred and Now' thus raises the issue of what in Richards' work may be considered as scientific, or at least as having truth value independent of its historical context, and what in his work is the function of a specific historico-social perspective or, to put it another way, what in his work is ideological.

If we think of 'Nineteen Hundred and Now' as Richards' self-historicisation, we can go on to consider the validity of Richards' own account of his work, and ask whether we can historicise Richards' work in a way that is fuller, more precise, more objective.

So, in the first part of this paper I will examine what Richards says of his own situation and the needs of the social group with which he identifies. And in the second part I will offer a different historicisation of Richards' work, one that draws upon the views of two eminent intellectual historians of Central European provenance, René Wellek and Georg Lukács. Wellek's commentary on Richards points us towards the intellectual context of the 'Philosophy of Life' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. And Lukács' dis-

cussion of this same philosophical trend enables us to extend our contextualisation to the social, economic and political.

I

'Nineteen Hundred and Now'

In 'Nineteen Hundred and Now', published in 1927, Richards makes the common historicist assumption that works of literature and art manifest the 'tendencies of the age'. And Richards wants to read off the tendencies of the present age from contemporary literature. The 'present' for this essay is the post-World War I period, as it has developed into the middle 1920s. Richards wants to define the 'present' by comparing it with the immediate past, that is, the decade or so from the turn of the century to World War I. Hence the title of the essay - 'Nineteen Hundred and Now'. The essay thus compares those whom Richards takes to be the representative writers of the pre-war period with those of the post-war period.

But all this is not merely a scholarly exercise in literary history. It is criticism that aims to serve a practical purpose. The tendencies of the age are to reveal the *needs* of the present, and to suggest what kind of literature is needed at present, that is, in the 1920s. The assumption here is that the function of literature and art is to serve a social need. But for Richards such a need is to be defined psychologically. The needs in question pertain directly to the psyche, and not to social institutions, or the economy, or politics. So Richards is interested in the psychological condition of people alive in the 1920s.

Richards asserts that the dominant trend in the collective mental life of the present is a 'reversal of the roles of intellect and feeling'. He associates this with the currency of philosophers such as Bergson and William James. These philosophers are not the cause of the reversal. Their currency is simply a sign that the reversal has occurred.'

Richards rejects Bergson's explanation for this shift toward feeling. Bergson finds the explanation in the inadequacy of rationalist philosophy and psychology. Richards prefers his usual account of the rise of natural science and the corresponding decline of religion. In this situation, according to Richards, man now feels alone, without God, in the universe. When we now feel secure, he says, our sense of security comes from feeling, not as the result of a process of thinking. 'Thus feeling, but not necessarily religious feeling, comes to be regarded as our chief guide and support.'

In view of the explanation in terms of the rise of science and the decline of religion, all this might seem to apply to the pre-war period as well as to the post-war period. But Richards now comes specifically to his account of the present.

Richards admits that in the post-war period there is still intellectualism, but for Richards this is shallow. Intellectual debates are merely rationalizations for conflicts which are really emotional.⁹ The representative intellectual of the present is Aldous Huxley:

Mr Huxley, indeed, excellently represents the most frequent predicament of the Anglo-American (or Anglo-New York?) intelligentsia: the feelings neither simple enough, strong enough, nor sufficiently rooted to win a stable poise, and the intelligence merely a clever subordinate, abetting – like the servant in an old comedy – all the rival machinations of the principal figures in rotation.¹⁰

By contrast, the representative intellectual of the pre-war period is H. G. Wells. Richards sees Wells as a serious-minded thinker, a true 'rationalist', with 'programmes, policies, and concrete prophecies'.¹¹ Wells 'retains the outlook of Thomas Huxley, the confidence that hard thinking is by itself a sufficient guide to life'.¹² But it is this very rationalism that is responsible for Wells' no longer being a popular thinker. 'That [i.e. Wells' rationalism] is why the younger generation no longer reads him with the same enthusiasm'.¹³

It seems that this 'younger generation' are preoccupied with their own feelings, but bewildered by too much information or speculation about the psyche. They are experiencing a 'general disorientation', and are disturbed by the 'increasing mixture of cultures'. But most of all, they are disillusioned from the war.¹⁴ Their problems, in fact, are psychological, and 'quite different from the social and political problems with which Mr Wells is concerned'.¹⁵ At this point Richards identifies himself with this generation, and insists on their behalf that psychological therapy must precede social or political engagement: 'We feel a need for order in our own minds before we can set about ordering the affairs of men in general'.¹⁶

H. G. Wells has become unpopular as an intellectual because true intellectualism is no longer to the taste of the younger generation. But Wells can no longer satisfy this generation as a novelist either, since Wells's fiction seems 'thin', or lacking in emotional substance.¹⁶ G. B. Shaw is also 'vanishing over the horizon' for the same reason.¹⁷ Richards argues that the only writers who can *now* act as a 'guide to life' are those

who show a 'natural command of emotion'.¹⁶ In this respect Shaw is to be considered inferior to D. H. Lawrence. Shaw may *talk* about the Life Force, but he does not *feel* it. D. H. Lawrence feels it.¹⁷

For Richards the social question of the 1920s arises out of changed social conditions, and involves ideas indirectly, but is in itself a question about the psyche. The Industrial Revolution has not only changed the conditions in which people live. It has changed the people themselves. As a result traditional morality, hitherto supported by religion (now in decline), no longer 'fits'. In some places it is too tight, in others too loose.¹⁸ But if there is to be a new, more appropriate morality, it can only arise out of 'closer contact with life', and a 'fuller, less inhibited, and more natural response in feeling'.¹⁹ So the social question becomes a moral question, and the moral question becomes one of ordering the psyche.

The ordering of the psyche, which is essentially the organization of emotions, cannot be done by intellectuals such as Wells, who think about social and political reforms. This ordering can only be done by the artist.²⁰ Richards is insistent: 'If the signs of the times as revealed in literature point to anything it is this: that no doctrine today has any power to free us. Disordered feelings cannot be purified by preaching'.²¹

On the basis of this position Richards makes a survey of contemporary writers, judging them by the criterion of whether they can satisfy the emotional need that Richards has identified as the urgent question of the present. Some writers, like Bridges and Housman, are 'out of the stream of current tendencies', and so offer no help.²² Others, like de la Mare or Yeats, produce work that is a 'confession of defeat', a retreat into a child-like dream world, or into occultism.²³ Even writers who are more responsive to the demands of the present, like Huxley and Lawrence, are deficient. As we have seen, Huxley's feeling is shallow, and his intellectualism spurious. Lawrence is superior in the depth and strength of his feeling. But even Lawrence, while he rejects traditional doctrines that stifle or distort feeling, cannot resist substituting new doctrines of his own, and these are 'equally if not more disturbing in their interference' with feeling. At the same time, paradoxically, in Lawrence's work feeling is so powerful that reason becomes a 'mere slave' to it.²⁴

Doctrine cannot save us. 'A wider acceptance of life is, in fact, the only way out'.²⁵ T. S. Eliot and James Joyce are the only writers found to satisfy Richards' criterion. Richards' account of Eliot's poetry is,

of course, familiar. Eliot makes his work 'a means of gathering together [his] faculties to win a new order from the turmoil'.³⁸ Like Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, and Shelley ('at his best'), Eliot is 'not merely exploiting our ready-made feelings, but is weaving them into new patterns that have never existed before'.³⁹ Eliot reconciles emotional conflicts so that a condition of 'poise' or 'serenity' is produced, and this is equated with Arnold's 'capacity to see life steadily and see it whole'.⁴⁰ The same vision of acceptance of life is ascribed to Joyce's *Ulysses*.⁴¹ And so, for Richards, *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses* are the 'supremely representative works of this third decade', the 1920s.⁴² With their help the younger generation have more clear-sightedness, and 'better mental foundations', even if 'hopes are not so lofty, ideals less in evidence, and faith, if we distinguish this from knowledge, much declined'.⁴³

Rationalism and Ideology

Since Richards is anxious about this reversal of the roles of intellect and feeling, and about reason becoming a 'mere slave' of feeling, why does he not offer to shore up reason against feeling? Why, for example, does he not side with his former Cambridge colleague, Bertrand Russell, and opt for a secular humanism based upon a scientific world outlook? Richards is after all very definitely a positivist, who believes that all real knowledge belongs to science.⁴⁴ Russell had published several books on social and political reform during the war years, and in 1927, the year in which Richards published 'Nineteen Hundred and Now', Russell was still arguing that 'the good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge'.⁴⁵ Russell never abandoned this scientifically informed humanism or the social and political projects associated with it.

Russell is, of course, a Victorian like Wells, and so falls with Wells as an obsolete rationalist. But this merely begs the question. Why is Richards opposed to rationalism at all?

It is remarkable that Richards offers no arguments whatever for rejecting rationalism. He has *motives* for doing so, but no *reasons*. He merely says that 'his generation' is disillusioned and disoriented, and needs the emotional ordering that only art can supply. But he offers no argument to show that a rationalist approach to the problems of the age cannot influence the emotional life of people, nor that a rationalist approach to questions of society and politics can have no relevance to the provision of conditions for a healthy and harmo-

nious emotional life. For Richards problems of the psyche have simply been dissociated from the kinds of social and political issues with which pre-war intellectuals like Wells, Shaw, and Russell were concerned. What we have here is an emotional recoil from the public world, a dogmatic refusal to consider it or, as we would say now, an instance of denial.

We may suppose that this is not just Richards' own psychological condition. It seems reasonable to assume that it must have been shared to some extent by people of his generation. But, of course, it is not the only reaction in the 1920s to the public world. The feminist movement continues, while communism and fascism are beginning to gather their forces. And as Richards himself notices, even writers like Huxley, and Lawrence are promulgating doctrines that bear on the life of society. Richards' abstentionism comes to seem the exception rather than the rule, and his picture of 'his generation' as one-sided and partial. We must conclude that it is the very polarisation of class politics, and the continuing activity of gender politics that leads to a fraction of the middle class intelligentsia opting for what looks like a revived aestheticism. To this extent we can take Richards' diagnosis of the 1920s, and the psychological aesthetics that he constructs for it, as an expression of the crisis of post-war liberalism. And his positivism fits in neatly, since it justifies the subjectivism of Richards' aesthetics. If all real knowledge belongs to science, then literature and art have no cognitive dimension, and their only role is to organize the psyches of their consumers.¹⁶

In this context Richards' talk of 'acceptance of life' is, as he himself might say, 'systematically ambiguous'.¹⁷ On the one hand, it means a willingness to contemplate ugliness and horror in an uninhibited, honest and courageous way. This kind of emotional freedom and strength is what is needed to read *Ulysses*, and *Ulysses* itself promotes these qualities. 'Only those who are unprepared for nothing, however painful, repellent, or abhorrent, that life can offer will escape shock, perhaps severe shock, from its titanlike convulsions ... But upon those who are ripe its robust acceptance of everything has an enheartening, calming effect that comes like a culmination of all the tendencies of the century'.¹⁸ But, on the other hand, the recoil from politics and issues of social change suggests a meaning of 'acceptance' as a conservative leaving of social arrangements as they are. This is after all what Richards is proposing. What is remarkable about this essay is that the proposal is for once *explicit*: 'We feel a need for order in our own minds

before we can set about ordering the affairs of men in general'.³³ In this double meaning of 'acceptance' we can see both what is best and what is worst in the liberalism of the interwar years. Analysing this ambiguity becomes the discrimination between what is true in Richards' psychological aesthetics, its grasp of the real power of works of literature and art to reorder the psyche in a beneficial way, and what is merely the ideological expression of the needs of a particular social group, needs that are to be satisfied by illusion, by a false consciousness about the social world.

Richards' Version of Historicism

H. G. Wells and G. B. Shaw were both socialists (as was Russell at this time). Richards never mentions socialism in his essay, but, if I may be permitted the expected Marxist expression, this can hardly be a coincidence. The idea of socialism, as a looming off-stage presence, is suggested by Richards' remarks on the historicising of the present age in relation to the past. Richards rejects the analogy of history as an 'army' with 'guides, vanguard, main body, and laggards, advancing like a procession or writhing by like a snake'.³⁴ In Richards' consciousness this is probably only an allusion to the 'avant garde' of the 1920s in art. But the avant garde itself modelled its self-image on Lenin's conception of the vanguard party, and of history as a military advance.³⁵

Richards is an idealist in his conception of history, since he sees it as the development of the 'spirit of man' or as the growth of the mind.³⁶ His preferred analogy for this process is then, inevitably, organic. He wants to see history as the growth of a tree, since a tree grows in many places and in many directions at once.³⁷ And this kind of growth allows for diversity, and even for some opposition. 'A subtle and incessant rivalry between different trends is necessary for this growth. Forking and ramification are not a calamity, but a condition of health. Our question here is simply: Where is the sap most vigorously flowing?'³⁸

The difference between the two analogies is less than might appear at first sight. The very idea of history as a process of development necessarily means a division between what is in the forefront, and what is still coming along behind. Richards has his laggards, such as de la Mare and the early Yeats, who cling to the old forms and interests of the nineteenth century, and he has his vanguard poets, such as Eliot, who represent a genuine response to the needs of the present, and who lead where others perforce must follow.

The choice of analogy then is determined by emotive considerations, or at most considerations of emphasis. Richards wants to emphasise the diversity and livingness of poetic creativity as against the reduction to identity and mechanical routine of soldiers marching in an army. But this is beside the point, since what his rejection of vanguard, stragglers and so on is really rejecting is the whole notion of history as a process of development. Richards is caught in the contradiction that as a Cambridge positivist, who shares in the revolt against Hegelian Idealism⁴³, he wants to reject the notion of history as a 'procession',⁴⁴ while at the same time he is bound to smuggle the notion back into his discourse in order to be able to distinguish between those artists who represent new growth and those who do not.

By his analogy of the tree Richards locates himself within Romanticism. And we can see that by this Romantic analogy he is attempting to resist a view of history either Hegelian or Marxist. But since Richards' historicising discourse is marked by these contradictions and denials, we may try what an historical materialist analysis of Richards' historical context can provide. This brings me to the second part of this paper and, however unlikely it may seem, to Georg Lukács.

II

Lukács and the Crisis of the 'Philosophy of Life'

In *The Destruction of Reason* Lukács traces the rise of Romantic Irrationalism as the predominant trend in German intellectual life, from the end of the French Revolutionary period to the rise of fascism and the Hitler regime.⁴⁵ The major philosophical figures affected, to a greater or lesser extent, by this trend are Schelling, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Dilthey, and in the twentieth century, Heidegger and Jaspers.⁴⁶ Romantic Irrationalism rejects not only the rationalism of the eighteenth century but also the latter's radical tendency towards materialism. As a consequence, Romantic Irrationalism embraces intuitionism, and tends towards mysticism.⁴⁷ Lukács locates this whole intellectual development in the context of the socio-economic development of Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and of the class conflicts and political crises that accompanied that development.

One particular aspect of Lukács' thesis is relevant to this essay. Lukács finds what he calls the 'Philosophy of Life' [*die Lebensphilosophie*] to be the dominant trend in German philosophy during the

Imperialist period, that is, the period from, say, the late 1880s through to World War II.⁴⁰ In Lukács' view the Philosophy of Life, with its key categories of 'Life' [*das Leben*] and 'lived experience' [*das Erlebnis*], served the contradictory needs of the German bourgeois class for both a subjective idealist philosophy with which to oppose materialism (more specifically the dialectical materialism of the rising social democratic labour movement), and for a *Weltanschauung*, a world-view, in which to find meaning and value, in a world made increasingly meaningless and insecure by the development of monopoly capitalism during the Imperialist period.⁴¹

For Lukács World War I is a turning-point in this development. Before the war the crisis in German society is merely felt to be impending, and so is registered only as a concern for theoretical reflection, or as a concern about the state of culture.⁴² But, after the war, the crisis has become real; it has happened, and the German middle class is faced with an insecurity that is both social and material.⁴³ As a result, the predominant mood of society changes from one of a still tenable faith in the power of Life (against everything moribund or mechanical), to one of despair and nihilism.⁴⁴

Lukács sees this change of mood, plausibly enough, as responsible for the shift from the positive kind of Life Philosophy represented by Dilthey and Nietzsche to the negative kind represented by the existentialism of Heidegger and Jaspers.⁴⁵ For Dilthey and Nietzsche 'Life' is still compatible with, indeed encourages, social and political engagement (whether the liberal statesmanship endorsed by Dilthey, or the grotesque fantasies of Nietzsche to breed a new ruling caste for Europe).⁴⁶ But for Heidegger and Jaspers 'Life' is no longer the central category of philosophy. Human life is now threatened with becoming inessential, meaningless, a mere nothingness. In this situation 'Existence' becomes the key category.⁴⁷ For Heidegger what is positive in human life is stripped back to the pure will, the unmotivated choice by which we decide for an authentic or inauthentic life.⁴⁸ We can either decide for ourselves, with resolution, how to live.⁴⁹ Or, we can follow the crowd, 'the one' [*das Man*], and abandon our own power of choice. For this philosophy the social world is reduced to the sphere of mass conformism, the sphere of the inauthentic.⁵⁰ And for both philosophers the cultivation of individual authenticity tends to displace political (especially long-term political) engagement.⁵¹ A concern for spiritual self-perfection is accompanied by political abstentionism.

Richards and Dilthey: Poetics and the Philosophy of Life

René Wellek has compared Richards' psychological poetics with the poetics of Dilthey.²² In both thinkers the poem is seen as the embodiment of an *experience*, which is to be communicated from the poet's mind to the reader's. The reader has the task of recreating in his own mind the experience within the poem.²³ Richards does not use or refer to Dilthey's term *nacherleben* or 'reliving', but what Richards calls 'interpretation' is the same process. The poet forms an experience into words, and the reader uses the words as signs by means of which to re-form the experience in his own mind.²⁴ This similarity between Richards and Dilthey as to the communication of poetic experience is founded in a parallel between Richards' psychology and emotivism, and Dilthey's psychology and Philosophy of Life. For both Richards and Dilthey the function of poetry (and art in general) is to organize and develop the psyche, and to enhance its vitality. For Dilthey: 'The function of poetry is thus, at its root, one of preserving, strengthening, and awakening this sense of life in us. Poetry continually leads us back to this intensity of the feeling of life, which fills us in our finest moments ... the poet can bring us a more healthful appreciation of life ... [He] can teach us to feel and enjoy the whole world as lived experience – always as full, whole, healthy human beings'.²⁵ As we have seen, what Richards wants from literature is 'closer contact with life', 'a fuller, less inhibited, and more natural response in feeling', an ordering of the feelings, and a wider and more robust 'acceptance of life'.²⁶ In Dilthey there is more emphasis on enjoyment of experience, while in Richards the emphasis now seems to fall on an almost Stoical contemplation of experience that may be painful and repellent. But this contrast is very pertinent to Lukács' focus on World War I as a turning point. I shall return to this.

Wellek thinks, no doubt correctly, that Richards probably did not read Dilthey. The Diltheyan conception of poetics, according to Wellek, was probably transmitted to Richards by the mediation of others.²⁷ But it seems reasonable to follow Wellek in seeing the parallel between Richards and Dilthey in poetics, and thence to consider Richards' work in relation to the philosophical trend of the Philosophy of Life, out of which Dilthey's poetics arose.

Intellectual Trends in Britain and Germany

The British intellectual context during the Imperialist period differs significantly from the German, with which Lukács was concerned. In

Germany positivism and idealism give way to the Philosophy of Life; or, if any other philosophical tendencies survive, they become informed by the outlook of the Philosophy of Life.⁶⁶ By contrast, in Britain the Philosophy of Life never becomes the dominant trend in *philosophy*. In philosophy the conflict is maintained between a Neo-Hegelian Idealism (Green, Bradley, Bosanquet et al), and a revived positivism (Russell, Wittgenstein).⁶⁷ But in the world of literature and the arts, in Britain, there are parallels to German Romantic Irrationalism and the Philosophy of Life. 'Life' as the supreme Romantic value, asserted against both the dead and the mechanical, pervades late nineteenth and early twentieth century literature, culminating in D. H. Lawrence's apotheosis of Life in his 'dark gods', and in Leavis's espousal of Lawrence's concern with Life. Richards himself points to examples of Romantic Irrationalism in Yeats and Lawrence. And the influence of Romanticism in the sphere of theory is suggested by Richards' felt need to polemicise against the views of J. Middleton Murry and Herbert Read.⁶⁸

We can therefore see Richards' work as an attempt to restate the kind of Romantic poetics and Philosophy of Life to be found in Dilthey in the terms of positivism. But, because Richards is a strict positivist, and wants to preserve all real knowledge for science, his poetics (as Wellek notes) becomes one-sidedly subjectivist. Whereas Dilthey recognizes the objective aspect of artistic representation in a doctrine of typicality, Richards has no counterpart to this.⁶⁹ Richards only resembles Dilthey in relation to the subjective side of aesthetic experience, in the notions of reliving or reproducing the experience put into the poem by the poet, and of the purpose for which this is done, to order the psyche, to organize the emotions, and to enhance the vitality of the reader's mind. Wellek aptly calls this 'emotionalism divorced from an object'.⁷⁰ But Richards' refusal to recognize any objectivity in art is in turn due to his positivistic desire that art should have no capacity to challenge science on the terrain of doctrine. Richards wants to enjoy the benefits of Lawrence's intuitive understanding of emotional life, without having to subscribe to Lawrence's metaphysical doctrine of Life, or Lawrence's objections to solar physics.⁷¹

Historicising I. A. Richards

We can sum up the German situation, as described by Lukács, in this way. Before World War I a positive Philosophy of Life supports both the idea of individual life-enhancement through literature and

the arts, and the idea of social and political engagement. But after World War I the positive Philosophy of Life is displaced by a negative one, in the form of existentialism, which abandons the category of 'Life' for pure 'Existence', and for the motiveless choice of authenticity. This negative Philosophy of Life substitutes personal spiritual cultivation for social and political engagement.

As compared with this development, Richards' position exhibits both similarity and difference. Although a post-war intellectual, Richards preserves the outlook of the positive Philosophy of Life, in that he continues to believe in the power of Life, and in the strengthening and ordering of the emotions, as forces that can 'save us'.⁷² In this respect Richards goes against the German trend. But, Richards also shares in the German tendency to substitute spiritual self-perfection for social and political engagement. And Richards clearly displays an Irrationalist recoil from questions of society and politics. In these respects Richards' views run parallel to the German trend. It remains to explain this combination of similarity and difference.

We can explain the relationship between the British and the German situations in terms of the historical development of the two countries during the Imperialist period. In Germany the social and political crisis is extreme – military defeat, the collapse of the German Empire, the fragility of the Weimar regime, the hyperinflation of the 1920s, and the polarisation of politics between communism and fascism. In this situation it is hardly surprising that the Life Philosophy of Dilthey should give way to the cult of Kierkegaard, and to the angst, the living in the prospect of death, and the choice of authenticity, of Heidegger and Jaspers.⁷³

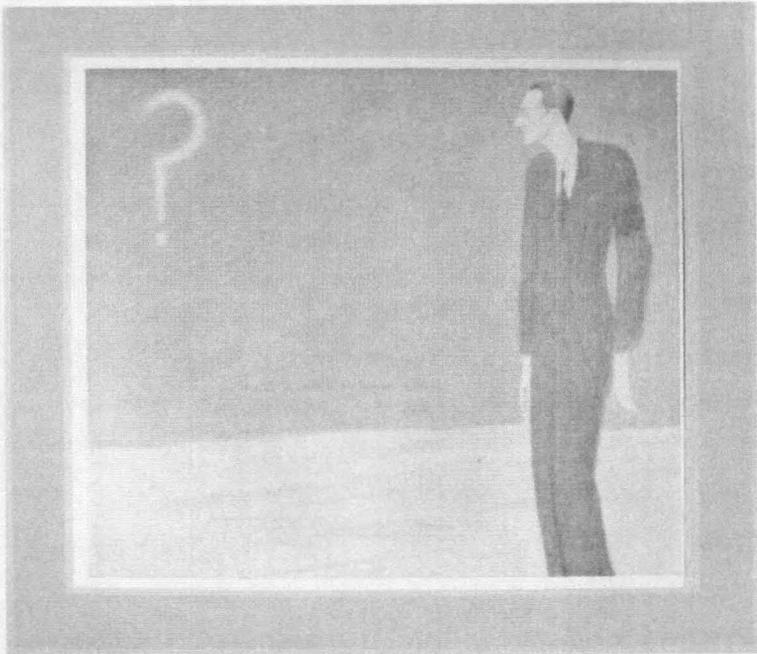
By contrast, the crisis in Britain, although real, is less extreme. The Empire is preserved, and British capitalism remains stable. But the British state has been unable to win the war against Germany without American help. The loss of life during the war has been felt as an abomination. British armies have tried unsuccessfully to overthrow the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. And rebellion in Ireland has led to partition. All this has thrown liberalism into crisis. In these circumstances the optimistic social idealism of the Neo-Hegelians cannot revive, but positivism with its belief in the power of science and technology has the opportunity to increase its dominance. The traditional British conflict between the supporters of Coleridge and those of Bentham takes a new turn, with an ascendant positivism offering to 'save' Romanticism by transforming it into science.

Richards is thus located within these trends as a positivist intellectual who can still believe in the healing power of feeling, within a well ordered psyche – provided this Romantic faith is translated into the terms of the dominant positivism. The Philosophy of Life can be preserved, despite the war, precisely because the crisis consequent on the war is nothing like so extreme as that in Germany. What can be observed, as I noted before, is that the colouring of Life Philosophy has changed, has darkened. Where Dilthey stressed enjoyment, and delight in what life has to offer to experience, Richards emphasises the conquest of emotional disorder within, and the need for endurance and strength in the contemplation of a reality that may be ugly and horrific. But, this said, Richards does preserve the positive outlook of the Philosophy of Life.

On the other side, Richards, as a liberal, cannot but be affected by the crisis of liberalism, and to this extent he shares in the recoil from the optimistic, and rationalist programmes of pre-war social reform. Dissociating himself from his rationalist predecessors such as Wells and Shaw, he separates off the needs of the psyche from all social and political issues, and so shares in the German post-war tendency to substitute spiritual self-perfection for political engagement. Richards thus presents the paradoxical spectacle of a positivist who privileges science, who nonetheless manifests the power of positivism's enemy, Romantic Irrationalism.

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In 'Nineteen Hundred and Now' Richards tells us about a reproduction of a caricature by Max Beerbohm (reproduced overleaf), that was hanging in the room where Richards was writing his essay. The caricature depicts the 'Twentieth Century' allegorically as a 'slender, hesitant, nerve-racked young man', amidst darkness, staring at an illuminated question mark.⁷⁶ This caricature, published in 1921, seems to be an apt image of the 1920s generation that Richards is about to describe, since by Richards' own testimony this generation is emotionally disordered, disoriented, and bewildered. It is surprising then that Richards tells us that the caricature irritated him, and he flung it on the fire, as belonging to the nineteenth century rather than to the twentieth.⁷⁷ It seems to me that the only way to interpret this act by Richards is to see it as another instance of denial. The image of the



Max Beerbohm, 'The Future as beheld by the Twentieth Century'.
Reproduced Courtesy of Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

nerve-racked youth really does correspond to Richards' own account of his generation. What Richards really objects to, presumably, is the tone and style of the caricature, the attitude that it adopts to its subject. Beerbohm (born 1872) is a Victorian intellectual who, like Wells, Shaw, and Russell, has lived on into the post-war period, and who has preserved the sardonic detachment of pre-war satire. It is this that really irritates Richards, one suspects. Beerbohm is not 'one of us', not one of Richards' 'self-conscious and self-critical [!]'²⁰ generation. Richards' destruction of the caricature suggests the hostility that post-war irrationalism feels towards the pre-war rationalism that would criticize it.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950*, 8 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955-1992), vol. 5, *English Criticism: 1900-1950* (1986), ch. 7 [hereafter HOMC and EC]. Richards himself uses the word 'translation' to describe how he would treat Roger Fry's discourse. See 'Art and Science', ch. 1 of I. A. Richards, *Complementarities Uncollected Essays*, ed. John Paul Russo (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1977), p. 6 [hereafter COMP]. 'Art and Science' was first published in *The Athenaeum*, June 27, 1919, pp. 534-535.
- 2 'Nineteen Hundred and Now' was first published in *The Atlantic* 140 (1927), pp. 311-317. It is reprinted as ch. 17 of COMP.
- 3 COMP, p. 168.
- 4 COMP, p. 169.
- 5 COMP, p. 169.
- 6 COMP, pp. 169-170.
- 7 COMP, p. 170.
- 8 COMP, p. 170.
- 9 COMP, p. 170.
- 10 COMP, p. 171.
- 11 COMP, p. 171.
- 12 COMP, p. 171.
- 13 COMP, p. 171.
- 14 COMP, pp. 171-172.
- 15 COMP, p. 172.
- 16 COMP, p. 171.
- 17 COMP, p. 172.
- 18 COMP, p. 172.
- 19 COMP, p. 172.
- 20 COMP, p. 173.
- 21 COMP, pp. 172-173.

- 22 COMP, pp. 171-172.
- 23 COMP, p. 176.
- 24 COMP, p. 174.
- 25 COMP, p. 174
- 26 COMP, pp. 173-174.
- 27 COMP, p. 176
- 28 COMP, pp. 174-175.
- 29 COMP, pp. 175-176.
- 30 COMP, p. 176
- 31 COMP, p. 176.
- 32 COMP, p. 176.
- 33 COMP, p. 177.
- 34 Positivism pervades Richards' work of the 1920s and early 1930s. It is the presupposition of his distinction between referential and emotive language. See *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 'completely reset edition', 1967; first publ., 1924), ch. 34 'The Two Uses of Language' [hereafter PRINC].
- 35 The books on social and political reform are: *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1916); *Political Ideals* (New York: Century, 1917); *Roads To Freedom* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1918). The quotation about love and knowledge comes from *An Outline of Philosophy* (London: Unwin Books, 1970; first publ., 1927), p. 243.
- 36 PRINC, chs 34 and 35.
- 37 To the best of my knowledge Richards first refers to the 'systematic' nature of ambiguity in *Practical Criticism A Study of Literary Judgment* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1929) [hereafter PRAC]. See pp. 10, 344.
- 38 COMP, p. 176.
- 39 COMP, p. 172.
- 40 COMP, pp 168-169.
- 41 See Peter Wollen, *Raiding the Icebox. Reflections on Twentieth-Century Culture* (London and New York, Verso, 1993), pp. 131-132.
- 42 COMP, pp. 168, 169.
- 43 COMP, p. 169.
- 44 COMP, p. 169.
- 45 See, for example: C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 10th edn, 1949; first publ., 1923), p. 29; I. A. Richards, *Coleridge On Imagination* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 3rd edn, 1962; first publ., 1934), p. 166.
- 46 COMP, p. 168.
- 47 Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, tr. Peter Palmer (London: The Merlin Press, 1980, first publ. in German by Hermann Luchterhand Verlag GmbH, Neuwied und Berlin, 1962) [hereafter DR].

- 48 Lukács, of course, does not mean that the thought of these philosophers is nothing but Romantic Irrationalism, only that they contributed to its formation, and so helped to put it into circulation in German intellectual life.
- 49 DR, pp. 95-128, 129-155. Lukács also does not mean that all the characteristics of Romantic Irrationalism will be found in each thinker that he discusses. We may think of Romantic Irrationalism as an emergent phenomenon.
- 50 DR, ch. 4, esp. pp. 403-417. I have discussed Richards' early work more broadly, in relation to Lukács' view of German intellectual development, in 'I. A. Richards and the Crisis of Imperialism' (forthcoming).
- 51 DR, pp. 406-417.
- 52 DR, pp. 406-407.
- 53 DR, p. 448.
- 54 DR, pp. 448, 490.
- 55 DR, pp. 490-491.
- 56 DR, pp. 416, 434 (Dilthey); 324-340, 347-352 (Nietzsche).
- 57 DR, pp. 491-492.
- 58 DR, pp. 492-493.
- 59 DR, pp. 506-508.
- 60 DR, pp. 498-500, 503.
- 61 DR, pp. 503 (Heidegger); 519-20 (Jaspers). Lukács points out how, in the 1930s, Heidegger's 'quietism' could tilt over into counter-revolutionary support for Hitler. See DR, pp. 503-4, 516. Lukács notes that while Jaspers countenanced 'sudden interventions', he played down the importance of long-term political projects. See DR, pp. 519-20.
- 62 EC, pp. 222-223, HOMC, vol. 4, *The Later Nineteenth Century* (1965), p. 331 [hereafter LNC] Welck notes that this resemblance between Richards and Dilthey was seen earlier by H. A. Hodges. See LNC, p. 595, n. 76. See also H. A. Hodges, *The Philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), p. 107 [hereafter PWD].
- 63 LNC, pp. 322, 325, 330-332; EC, pp. 222-223, 233. See also PWD, pp. 107-115, 116-124; PRINC, chs 16 and 21.
- 64 PRAC, pp. 3-18.
- 65 Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Works*, ed. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi, 6 vols (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985-), vol. 5, *Poetry and Experience* (1985), p. 60 [hereafter PE].
- 66 COMP, pp. 172-173, 176.
- 67 The others are Hugo Munsterberg and Ethel Puffer. See EC, p. 223. Richards refers to both Munsterberg and Puffer in *The Foundations of Aesthetics*, which he co-wrote with C. K. Ogden and James Wood (New York: International Publishers, 2nd edn, 1925; first publ., 1922). See pp. 67, 78, 86-87.
- 68 DR, pp. 403, 412-413, 449-451. Lukács sees the 'third road' of Mach and Avenarius, designed to transcend the opposition between idealism and materialism, as in fact a revival of subjective idealism. See DR, pp. 412-413.

- 69 See Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, Image Books, 1985), Book III, Vol. 8, Part II, chs 6-10 [Idealism]; Part V, chs 17-21 [revolt against Idealism; Russell]; Epilogue [Wittgenstein]. Lukács discusses Wittgenstein's affinities with Machism and pragmatism. See DR, pp. 779-784. G. E. Moore was the other British leader in the revolt against Idealism, but one would not call him a positivist.
- 70 I. A. Richards, 'Between Truth and Truth' (1931), reprinted as COMP, ch. 6 [on Murry]; 'Herbert Read's *English Prose Style*' (1928), reprinted as COMP, ch. 18. Richards testifies in 'Nineteen Hundred and Now' to the popularity of Bergson and William James amongst the British intelligentsia. Lukács sees Bergson, James, and Croce (also popular in Britain at this time) as parallels to the Romantic Irrationalism of Germany. See DR, pp. 17-28.
- 71 See LNC, pp. 325-326, 333; EC, pp. 226-227; PWD, pp. 112-113; PE, pp. 115-118; PRINC, ch. 34.
- 72 LNC, p. 333.
- 73 I. A. Richards, *Science and Poetry* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1926), pp. 87-91 [hereafter SP], PRINC, p. 210.
- 74 SP, p. 95 ('poetry' is capable of saving us).
- 75 For Lukács on the cult of Kierkegaard, see DR, pp. 490-491, 493, 496-498, 513-521, and *passim*.
- 76 COMP, pp. 167-168. Beerbohm's caricature is called 'The Future as beheld by the Twentieth Century'. See Max Beerbohm, *A Survey* (London: William Heinemann, 1921), no. 5.
- 77 COMP, p. 168.
- 78 COMP, p. 171.