

POETRY AND BELIEF: SOME CASES IN POINT

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IT will have been noticed that the title of my paper is a timid one; even, it may be thought, excessively so. There are two reasons for this; and the first, which would alone, in my opinion, be a sufficient one, is that the questions raised by the phrase 'Poetry and Belief' are difficult ones, intimately involved in all discussion of the nature and function of poetry, and ones which have become especially problematic in our century. It is, I think, true enough to say that in the form in which they particularly concern us as Catholics, these questions begin to emerge fully with Matthew Arnold: they at any rate reach explicitness and are given very serious attention in the work of Dr I. A. Richards and Mr T. S. Eliot; without clear agreement being arrived at by those two critics—the most influential and, by and large, the most arresting and convincing critical theorists of our time.

If further reason for my timidity be thought necessary I shall only add that it is warranted by the way in which this paper has come about—and this I offer too as a declaration that what follows makes claim neither to scholarly exhaustiveness nor to formal completeness¹. I shall, in fact, be putting before you some questions rather than presenting you with any answers.

I have brought together five poems or passages from poems: and these you now have before you. They certainly raise the question of the place, the effect, of Belief (as we must understand it here²), and show a significant variety, possibly a sufficient variety, of ways in which it may be raised. I would not claim that they are the best examples that could be found³, but I think that

¹ In its present form this paper (which was originally given at a 'Literary Weekend' at Spode House, Hawkesyard Priory) has been enlarged by footnotes incorporating additional points or clarifications originally held in reserve for the subsequent discussion. They are now added whether they did or did not arise in the discussion.

² Catholic belief, of course, but in so far as it is Belief and not something else consequent on Belief (say, a familiarity with a certain ritual or a range of symbolism); not in so far as it is Catholic.

³ Certainly worth examining would be Swinburne's 'Before a Crucifix', Clough's 'Easter Day—Naples, 1849', Baudelaire's 'Le Reniement de Saint Pierre', part of

they are sound ones and that they will serve at least the purpose of inciting you to think of other and better ones. I have deliberately excluded passages from the Drama—though degrees of the dramatic are to be found among my pieces; I have also avoided Dante (in the interests of reasonable proportional representation) despite his very obvious place, ultimately, in the discussion of my topic—yet I think it is not ridiculous to suggest that the various ways in which Belief enters the *Divine Comedy* are, in their essentials, demonstrated in one place and another in my specimens.

Why, first, do I consider that this matter remains a problem—at least, so to speak *in public*? The answer may best be given by a confrontation of certain passages from the writings of Dr Richards and Mr Eliot. After this we can have a shot at seeing how things look to *us* in particular cases, and how much warrant there is for the suggestions I shall then make for assessing the degree of difference of opinion between Richards and Eliot, recognizing its implications, and, perhaps, detecting any error they may have fallen into. One warning: I shall be confining my attention to the poem-reader relationship, and ignoring the poem-poet one.

I

In the chapter 'Doctrine in Poetry' (*Practical Criticism*, 1929) Dr Richards speaks of the Donne sonnet which we shall ourselves consider later, and says:⁴ 'it becomes very difficult not to think that *actual belief* in the doctrine that appears in the poem is required for its full and perfect imaginative realization. The mere assumption of Donne's theology, as a poetic fiction, may seem insufficient. . . . Yet if we suppose that, beyond this mere "poetic" assumption, a definite state of belief in this particular doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body is required for a full reading of the poem . . . [we] shall have to suppose that readers who hold different beliefs incompatible with this particular doctrine must either not be able to read the poem, or must temporarily while reading it abandon their own beliefs and adopt Donne's. Both suppositions *seem* contrary to the facts. . . . In the first place the very word "assumption" is unsuitable here. . . . But there are clearly two ways in which we may entertain an assumption: intellectually

⁴ 'In Memoriam'; and in connection with effects of detail merely consequent on Belief (v. previous footnote), much imagery in Francis Thompson's 'Orient Ode' and Hopkins's 'Wreck of the Deutschland'.

4 In this and in subsequent quotations an asterisk signifies my italics.

. . . and emotionally . . . Behind the intellectual assumption stands the desire for logical consistency and order in the *receptive side* of the *mind**. But behind the emotional assumption stands the desire or need for order of the whole outgoing *emotional side* of the *personality**, the side that is turned towards *action**. Corresponding to this distinction there are two forms of belief and similarly two forms of disbelief. Whether an intellectual belief is justified is entirely a matter of its logical place in the largest, most completely ordered, system of values we can attain to. . . . But [such] intellectual disbelief does not imply that emotional belief in the same idea is either impossible or even difficult—much less that it is undesirable. For an emotional belief is not justified through any logical relations between its idea and other ideas. Its only justification is its success in meeting our needs. . . . It is a matter . . . of the *prudence* (in view of *all* the needs of our being) of the kind of emotional activities the belief subserves. The desirability or undesirability of an emotional belief has *nothing to do with its intellectual status**, provided it is *kept from interfering with the intellectual system**. And poetry is an extraordinarily successful device for preventing these interferences from arising.⁵ . . . The absence of intellectual belief need not cripple emotional belief, though evidently enough in some persons it may. But the habit of attaching emotional belief only to intellectually certified ideas is strong in some people; it is encouraged by some forms of education; it is perhaps becoming, through the increased prestige of science, more common. For those whom it conquers it means “Goodbye to poetry!”

There we have the gist of Richards’s theory. Here is what Eliot says: (1) ‘Poetry is not a substitute for philosophy or theology or religion; it has its own function. But as this function is not intellectual but emotional, it cannot be defined adequately in intellectual terms’ (‘Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca’, 1927). (2) ‘My point is that you cannot afford to *ignore* Dante’s philosophical and theological beliefs, or to skip the passages which express them most clearly; but that on the other hand you are not called upon to believe them yourself. . . . there is a difference between philosophical *belief* and poetic *assent*. . . . You are not called upon to *believe** what Dante believed, for your belief will

⁵ Its statements being what Richards calls ‘pseudo-statements’ as opposed to scientific verifiable ones. See later.

not give you a groat's worth more of *understanding** and *appreciation**; but you are called upon more and more to *understand** it. . . You will "believe" in Dante's theology exactly as you believe in the physical reality of his journey; that is, you suspend both belief and disbelief. I will not deny that it may be in practice easier for a Catholic to grasp the meaning, in many places, than for the ordinary agnostic; but that is not because the Catholic believes, but because *he has been instructed** (Dante', 1929) (3) 'My theory of poetic belief and understanding here employed . . . is *similar** to that maintained by Mr I. A. Richards [in *Practical Criticism*] . . . my own *general* theory is still embryonic, and Mr Richards's also is capable of much further development. . . . If you deny the theory that full poetic appreciation is possible without belief in what the poet believed, you deny the existence of "poetry" as well as "criticism"; and if you push the denial to its conclusion, you will be forced to admit that there is very little poetry that you can appreciate. If, on the other hand, I push *my* theory to the extreme, I find myself in as great a difficulty. . . . It is possible, and sometimes necessary, to argue that full understanding must identify itself with full belief. . . .' [He then, however, states that he hesitates to accept Richards's 'theory of pseudo-statements' and refers to Keats's 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty', cited by Richards as a 'pseudo-statement'; himself finding the statement 'a blemish': either he fails to understand it, or it is untrue, he says.] (Author's note to 'Dante' essay.)

Though Richards has strikingly changed some of his views since *Practical Criticism*, he has not again taken up explicitly this question in this form; nor has Eliot developed his own theory in any detail. The writings I have quoted from are in this matter still, I should say, the influential ones on what exists that may be called general public opinion⁶. In them the points for me to stress are (1) Eliot's cautious tone and his word 'similar', (2) his emphasis on 'understanding', (3) his doubts about 'pseudo-statements'—in contrast with Richards's emphasis on 'the emotional side of the personality, the side that is turned towards action'. Let us turn now to our specimens:

II

(a) Two passages from Dryden's *The Hind and the Panther*:

6 In the world of literary criticism, that is.

'Can I believe eternal God could lie
 Disguis'd in mortal mold and infancy?
 That the great Maker of the world could die:
 And after that, trust my imperfect sense
 Which calls in question his omnipotence?
 Can I my reason to my faith compel,
 And shall my sight, and touch, and taste rebel:
 Superior faculties are set aside;
 Shall their subservient organs be my guide?
 Then let the moon usurp the rule of day,
 And winking tapers shew the sun his way;
 For what my senses can themselves perceive,
 I need no revelation to believe.
 Can they who say the Host should be descried
 By sense, define a body glorified?'

'Behold what marks of majesty she brings;
 Richer than ancient heirs of Eastern kings:
 Her right hand holds the sceptre and the keys,
 To shew whom she commands, and who obeys;
 With these to bind, or set the sinner free,
 With that t'assert spiritual royalty.
 One in herself, not rent by schism, but sound,
 Entire, one solid shining diamond;
 Not sparkles shatter'd into sects like you:
 One is the Church, and must be to be true. . . .'

A clear case of poetry in which belief is not merely present but presented and argued—and the presentation of the belief is the purpose, the point, of the pieces. Something more there, of course—the rendering of a force of feeling about the belief: but can they be read without an acceptance or rejection of the belief—a verdict essential to the effect?

What is it that we believe or not? Assertions, surely. These pieces are essentially assertions, inviting question 'True or false?'—assertions made with considerable, admirable rhetorical skill, of course. This rhetorical skill can be detachedly admired: but the assertions, the beliefs, are of primary importance.

Try to assume the attitude of a non-believer: is it not then plain that for such a reader full responsiveness is likely to involve an *imposed* emotionalism? To the believer a genuine but none the

less largely emotionalist self-identification with the assertion is offered.⁷

Put it another way: to these pieces one *may* (a Catholic probably *will*) exclaim, 'I think so, too!' The *assertion* of a belief is primary, that is. What Richards calls 'intellectual belief' is essential.

(I cannot agree to call these pieces 'verse' not 'poetry'; though to do so would not destroy my argument.)

(b) One of Donne's *Holy Sonnets*:

'At the round earth's imagin'd corners, blow
Your trumpets, Angells, and arise, arise
From death, you numberlesse infinities
Of soules, and to your scattred bodies goe,
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,
All whom warre, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despaire, law, chance, hath slaine, and you whose eyes,
Shall behold God, and never tast death's woe.
But let them sleepe, Lord, and mee mourne a space,
For, if above all these, my sinnes abound,
'Tis late to aske abundance of thy grace,
When wee are there; here on this lowly ground,
Teach mee how to repent; for that's as good
As if thou hadst seal'd my pardon, with thy blood.'

Entirely different from (a), yet clearly precise Christian belief is integrally involved: *Can* one say, 'I think so too!'—or 'I don't think so at all!' One could say 'I feel like that myself': but that is different.

Remember Richards's remarks on this poem. 'Intellectual belief' or 'emotional belief'? First: to *what*, in *what*? Surely not to or in the Belief, the Christian Belief, in it. To or in the mood presented, perhaps: but that is different.

The Belief is not *asserted*, as was that of (a): it is simply among the conditions in which the poem has grown.

Note: This poem is in a degree 'dramatic'.

(c) From Crashaw's *Hymn of the Nativity*:

Tityrus. I saw the curl'd drops, soft and slow,
Come hovering o're the place's head;

⁷ This is not the *non sequitur* it may seem. It is in the absence of concreteness, objectification, realization, that emotionalism readily flows in. Here the essential concreteness is in the theological or partisan assertion: for the unconvinced it is ineffectual, for the convinced it is already formed, or 'stock' (to use Richards's word).

Offering their whitest sheets of snow
 To furnish the fair INFANT's bed:
 Forbear, said I; be not too bold.
 Your fleece is white, but 'tis too cold.

Thyrsis. I saw the obsequious SERAPHINS
 Their rosy fleece of fire bestow,
 For well they now can spare their wings,
 Since HEAV'N itself lyes here below.
 Well done, said I: but are you sure
 Your down so warm, will passe for pure?

Tityrus. No no, your KING's not yet to seeke
 Where to repose his Royall HEAD,
 See see, how soon his new-bloom'd CHEEK
 Twixt's mother's breasts is gone to bed.
 Sweet choise, said we! no way but so
 Not to ly cold, yet sleep in snow.

Both. We saw thee in thy baulmy nest,
 Bright dawn of our aeternall Day!
 We saw thine eyes break from thir EAST
 And chase the trembling shades away.
 We saw thee: and we blest the sight.
 We saw thee, by thine own sweet light.

Full Chorus. Wellcome, all WONDERS in one sight!
 Aeternity shutt in a span.
 Sommer in Winter. Day in Night.
 Heaven in earth, and GOD in MAN.
 Great little one! whose all-embracing birth
 Lifts earth to heaven, stoopes heav'n to earth.'

Different in—*mode*, shall we call it: This poem is more directly a dramatization than the last; yet there is a lyric within the drama. Very precise Belief is obviously involved—but again not *asserted*, not argued. Needs, as did (b), to be *understood*, of course. There are points (Stanza 3) at which '*I think so too*' could be said, but behind the distancing, refracting glass of Drama—and NOT to an assertion of Belief.

Last Chorus—a hymn; but still within the dramatic frame, and rooted in the preceding imaginatively created action: which hinders direct emotionalistic self-identification—though, *separated*,

the chorus could become fully hymnal, something to accept as a form of words for one's own immediate expression of sentiment. But not simply rhetorical (unlike (a))—therefore distanced; this by its imaginative force, deriving from a seventeenth-century 'wit' of idea, unerringness of language, 'rightness' of expressive verse-movement.

At all events the Belief does not challenge ('Friend or Foe?') the reader—though intellectual assent or otherwise will determine the acceptability of the final Chorus as a hymn.

(d) *St John of the Cross*—a recent translation by Mr F. T. Prince.⁸

'Darkness covered all,
But for my heart with flames enwound,
When I went free from thrall—
O happy chance!—and fled unfound,
For all the house and household slumbered sound.

Darkness covered all,
But I the secret ladder found,
In safety, by the wall—
O happy chance!—and reached the ground,
And still the house and household slumbered sound.

So, in the dead of night
I won my way, by none discerned,
Nor by myself, for light
Nor guide could show the way I learned—
Unless the light that in my bosom burned.

Led on by that alone,
As if by noonday's bright degree,
I came where one unknown,
Whom yet I knew, awaited me,
And there none saw, for there were none to see.

O night that was my guide,
More lovely than the dawn of day!
Whose darkness brought the Bride
To her Belovèd, showed the way,
And changed one to the other, where they lay!

⁸ Reproduced by kind permission of the author from *Soldiers Bathing*, by F. T. Prince (The Fortune Press, 1954).

For there upon my breast,
 Whose flowers for him alone I kept,
 He laid his head in rest;
 And with my arms about him, slept,
 Lulled by the airs that from the cedar crept.

From the dark tower the air
 Came softly down, and blew aside
 The soft locks of his hair:
 And then, when he had touched my side,
 I felt a wound so sweet, it seemed I died.

Forgetting and forgot,
 My face I buried in his breast:
 Abandoned to my lot,
 I cast off all that I possessed,
 And lay, and with the lilies took my rest.'

Note that this is narrative, not (in any technical sense) dramatic: take it with previous ones, and the mixed form of the *Divine Comedy* is covered, isn't it?

But what of Belief? Is one asserted? No. How is one involved?—well, extremely subtly. Grant a loss from the Spanish; grant, in some ways, less loss in detail in Roy Campbell's translation: but I choose this as to me the most effective poem of the three recent verse-translations known to me—because, I think, of its verse-movement (which I know means more than it says). Take it, anyway, as a poem of itself.

First: I do not hold with an artificial code of rules for reading poems, one prescribing total self-sufficiency—as for a puzzle: poems, in their way or ways, are real things, and we know that this is by St John and is a Song of the Soul rejoicing at . . . etc. (A title at least is surely legitimate—indeed, part of 'a poem'). In any case, it is divivable that it is not simply a matter of human carnal love. A flavour of the *Song of Solomon* present even in the English; something unearthly at any rate.

Certainly no *assertion* of a Belief: does the need for 'intellectual belief' enter, notwithstanding?

I think only a need of the requisites for *understanding*. A difficult case, but remember its title: it is *not* a narration of autobiographical plain fact; it is a 'Song of the Soul'.

Our only symbolic, allegorical specimen. Are things different with such poetry?

To my mind, here is a sense of mystical experience rendered concretely: so, emotionalist self-identification not possible⁹—its past tense (unlike the Donne poem) relevant here. It is *not* a proposition of mystical theology presented argumentatively.

Therefore, once more, need to hold same Belief as that held by the poet does not arise.

- (e) I leave this a good deal to my audience: except to say that it seemed useful to pick one about which preconceptions were not likely to exist.¹⁰ In other words, it is the newest appropriate poem I could find; only recently published, known to me only for a few days.

'Given this (nobody knows why)
seventy-years-wide breathing-space,
man wishful fills the Empty with a Face
and out of earshot flings up his far cry.

The cry reverberates, and he
(beside himself with kneeling) hears
the far-fetched music of the spheres
utter responses reassuringly.

We guess whom we address
(three guesses make a Trinity)
and whom we name
to calm our crying shame
we choose at random, cannot hope
(unless beyond all hope) to know
where unless nowhere our faint murmurs go
(three murmurs haunt infinity).

Man is a far cry from nowhere we know,
and I say here is where we tell
beads on our forehead, making love to spell—
bind us to life, not gainsay or forgo.

May we no longer into merely space
shout Love to nobody knows whom,

⁹ See Note 7 and Section III.

¹⁰ And in connection with which the interest attached to our knowing that such-and-such a great man, of known personality and character, etc., thought and felt it, cannot exist. This poem is used with the permission of Mr J. S. Cunningham, its author.

nor hanker after life beyond the doom
which seventy years of days fling in our face.'

I do not claim greatness for it (too soon, anyway): merely that it seems to have enough about it for me decently to put it to you as one to work out from scratch.

I think it *asserts*: therefore, 'intellectual belief' much to the point. Though less direct than (a), fundamentally like it, none the less.

More concretely rendered?—the argument, that is: A matter for criticism, this.

By and large, for my comment on it, I refer you back to (a)—but, of course, *from the opposite side*. And this seemed useful: it is not easy to cast off one's doctrinal sympathies to get a clear analytic view. But surely those who respond sympathetically to this *must* reject (a) and vice-versa (I speak of *whole* responses).

One point: 'murmurs' in the last line of Stanza 3. I do not think I can ever respond wholly to it, find it effective, vivid, what you will, as word or image here while I reject the 'theological' argument which it embodies. Compare 'moon' in (a): quite different—its power independent of the theological argument; which, unfortunately, means also that it has nothing to do with the argument.

To sum up: these examples seem to me to show (1) that where the purpose of poetry is plainly to assert a Belief, the reader's judgment of that Belief is crucial in his acceptance of what is offered to him; (2) that in most poetry this is not at all the case; and, where it is not, the need to share, agree with, assent to, the Belief present simply does not arise in the process of accepting the communication of the poem: it could only be supposed to do so if reading poetry entailed a temporary but total self-identification with the 'I' of the poem.¹¹

III

I suggest that a poem, though an emotional matter, speaks to the understanding. Paradoxically, only in an 'emotionalizing' theory of poetry does the question of Belief¹² enter (in non-

¹¹ *Performance* is different again: and the actor has his technique interposed between himself and his performance.

¹² Though not the question of morality. (And see also Note 2.)

assertive poetry, that is); only if one thinks that a poem marshalls the emotions along the very road of its course of feeling; only if the reader is supposed to adopt the emotional guise of the poem—better, of the poet in the poem. And I believe that Richards's view is, basically, such an 'emotionalizing' one. Eliot I believe to be essentially right; though he doesn't himself develop his view in detail, and leaves an important contradiction in it.¹³ The necessary key is to be found in his celebrated essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919): '. . . we must believe that "emotion recollected in tranquillity" is an inexact formula. For it is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor, without distortion of meaning, tranquillity. . . . Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion. . . .' There, as mostly, he is speaking as a practitioner to other practitioners: translate into terms appropriate to readers and surely we then have a precise confirmation of the view I have myself put forward, of (fundamentally) the views I have quoted from him already. The reader, that is, in reading a poem is not *having* the emotion presented, but being enabled to *understand*—better, to *realize*, such an emotion in such a circumstance on the part of such a mind and personality informed by such belief. And this is important, for it keeps 'pseudo-statements' out of this matter, and 'truth' in; it denies virtue to emotionalism, to simulated emotion, to emotion to what is not real: and emotion, after all, is an upset, an overmastering force, not at all the feeling created by great literature, which none the less, to half-quote Wordsworth, carries truth 'alive' into the heart, makes it 'felt', in fact.

Where is Richards wrong? In muddling two things, I suggest: (1) the response to the emotional event put forward as 'fact' by the poem, and (2) the response to the Belief present *in the grain of* the mind of the poet undergoing this experience. Wrong, too, in not seeing that 'emotional belief', *vis-à-vis* (2), might better be called 'part-belief' or 'inclination to belief', and that it has to do with the *appeal* of a poem, not with its initial validity;¹⁴ while *vis-à-vis* (1) 'imaginative belief' is a truer description. The

¹³ In 'you will believe in Dante's theology exactly as you believe in the physical reality of his journey'—which lets in 'pseudo-statements' for the beliefs incorporated as for the 'fiction' of the journey and thereby contradicts his dislike of the 'pseudo-statement' theory. The crucial confusion lies behind the merely verbal identity of 'believe in' (Dante's theology) with 'believe in' (the reality of the journey).

¹⁴ Specimens (a) and (e) show that where the belief is what the poem is *fashioned to real* 'intellectual belief' is challenged.

confusion comes from an unwitting, and part unwilling, submission to Scientific Truth as conqueror. At the back is his persistent Scientific/Emotive language division—though more recently he has changed his views in this latter matter. ‘A statement may be used for the sake of the *reference*, true or false, which it causes. This is the *scientific* view of language. But it may also be used for the sake of the effects in emotion and attitude produced by the reference it occasions. This is the *emotive* view of language’; ‘Poetry—the supreme form of *emotive* language’ (*Principles of Literary Criticism*, 1924). On this distinction he builds his theory of what happens in poetry: he denies that it can be knowledge that Poetry conveys, and says: ‘it is in terms of attitudes, the resolution, inter-animation and balancing of impulses . . . that all the most valuable effects of poetry must be described’. ‘Attitudes’ he otherwise describes as ‘imaginal action’ and ‘incipient action’. This, I have claimed, is finally an ‘emotionalizing’ theory of poetry. We can see how far it leads and what it implies (or implied) for him in passages from *Science and Poetry* (1926): ‘It will be admitted—by those who distinguish between scientific statement, where truth is ultimately a matter of verification as this is understood in the laboratory, and emotive utterance, where “truth” is primarily acceptability *by* some attitude, and more remotely is the acceptability *of* this attitude itself—that it is not the poet’s business to make scientific statements’. The statement of Poetry is ‘pseudo-statement’. ‘Countless pseudo-statements—about God, the universe, . . . the soul, . . . which are pivotal points in the organization of the mind, vital to its well-being, have suddenly become, for sincere, honest and informed minds, impossible to believe . . . and the knowledge which has displaced them is not of a kind upon which an equally fine organization of the mind can be based. . . . The remedy . . . is to cut our pseudo-statements free from that kind of belief which is appropriate to verified statements.’ Or, take the footnote to passages I have already quoted from *Practical Criticism*: ‘There is reason to think that poetry has often arisen through fusion (or confusion) between the two forms of belief, the boundary between what is intellectually certified and what is not being much less sharply defined in former centuries and *defined in another manner*. The standard of *verification* used in science today is comparatively a new thing. As the scientific view of the world (including our own nature) develops, we

shall probably be forced into making a division between fact and fiction¹⁵ that, unless we can meet it with a twofold theory of belief on the lines suggested above, would be fatal not only to poetry but to all our finer, more spiritual, responses.' One can only admire the good intentions and the sincerity of Dr Richards as he struggles in a dilemma largely of his own making.

IV

It seems to me that precisely the same principles are involved in the Drama and the Novel, though in ways more difficult to examine; and that they have a particular importance for Catholics, if we are to avoid the blind-alley of sectarianism ('Catholic hen lays Catholic egg!'). To know precisely what kind and degree of relevance a particular doctrinal orientation has in a work of literature is of extreme importance.¹⁶ I have not been claiming that it has *none*: merely that as in most poetry it does not demand belief or disbelief there is no need to frame a theory of accommodation which would effectually eliminate the necessity of taking it, in its allotropic form, *seriously*.

Let me quote in conclusion from Mr Eliot's essay *Religion and Literature* (1935): 'Literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint. . . . The "greatness" of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards.'¹⁷

15 There is, of course, a distinction necessary between fact and fiction, but entailing neither what Dr Richards fears nor what he proposes.

16 This has two bearings: (a) If 'non-Catholic' poetry is not *ipso facto* unacceptable, 'Catholic' poetry is not *ipso facto* acceptable; (b) If (as I think my specimens demonstrate), even though the material of a poem is *intellectual* material, the experience is peculiarly an *emotional* one, then the nature of the emotional activity must be the primary object of scrutiny; and this, of course, leaves our criticism rooted in morals after all, but morals more delicately, subtly, obliquely operative than in the familiar more or less unadapted application of the Creed and a few Commandments. Such scrutiny, however, will at all points be a matter for the *whole* of our sensibility and judgment, will at all points be responsible to our whole nature.

17 The view here expressed is derived from my own impressions of my own reading experience; but it will be evident that the view involves a theory of poetry and of language in no way novel: see, for instance, R. G. Collingwood's *Philosophy of Art*, with the principles of which it is in considerable agreement, I believe. See, too, M. Maritain's *Art and Scholasticism* (1930) and *Creative Art and Intuition* (1953). For a critique of Richards as a Positivist, and of influential trends in Semiotics, see Mr Allen Tate's 'Literature as Knowledge' (1941) in his *The Man of Letters in the Modern World* (1955).