WILLIAM WILKINS’ BUILDINGS of Downing College, Cambridge, in his Attic style, are mainly of a warm Ketton stone, from Lincolnshire. Spare of ornament, and enclosing three sides of expansive lawn and broad gravelled pathways, they mark the whole design with “a mixture of vitality and asceticism.” This apt phrase comes from an obituary in The Times of 18th April 1978, characterizing not Downing itself but one of its most remarkable former fellows: the literary teacher and critic, F.R. Leavis (1895-1978). Leavis was in many ways the academic glory of Downing in the twentieth century, although the severance of relations between them in 1964 hardly suggests this. The college provided an appropriate setting for his “lived, serious and intransigent project.”

It was—like the university of which it forms part—the outward and visible presence of an ideal. This paper tries to indicate the Leavisian gravitational field—or the field of association in which I want to “situate” him. I shall argue that his thought was profound and penetrating and very far indeed from exhibiting any kind of pre-theoretical innocence. I also suggest—the argument is related—that his work resists classification and that to call him a “moral formalist” or even (without qualification) a “liberal humanist” is to misunderstand him. I am not suggesting that “by a devout study of [his] symbolism a key can be found that will open to us a supreme...wisdom” (his disparaging words of the Blake “industry”). But some essential clues seem to me not to have been widely taken up. Testimony bearing on this comes from a surprising source—Raymond Williams:

At the surface level there was a very strange mixture of the deliberate and the reckless, but below that again there was a condition I have only ever seen in one or two other men: a true sense of mystery, and of very painful exposure to mystery, which was even harder to understand because this was the man of so many confident and well-known beliefs and opinions.

A former pupil, William Walsh, offers a similar “take”:

One always had the feeling that one wasn’t simply discussing what was there on the page. This was taking place, of course, but the discussion was deeply rooted and far-reaching, dealing with all that one felt was really important in life.... Leavis’s teaching always seemed to engage both these facets: one’s personal life, and the life of the mind—the search for the significance of life itself.

I associate these two recollections and,
in doing so, think of Leavis’s own observation in *The Living Principle* about the nature of a language as taking “the individual being, the particularizing actuality of life, back to the dawn of human consciousness, and beyond.” The use of the word *beyond* is particularly striking here (“In the beginning was the Word”).

His long engagement with the work of T.S. Eliot was, I suggest, the main testing ground for the condition identified (rightly, I think) by Williams.

“Painful exposure to mystery”: the mystery immanent in the evolution of organic matter which can think and talk about itself, about its life and imminent death, but can do so, of its nature, only within insurmountable limitations. For, where ontology is concerned, the knowing consciousness is its own putative object (“the brain is alive”). Whether Leavis would have acknowledged this way of putting it, one cannot know. He ploughed a furrow of his own making, developing original thought out of long pondering on the nature of literary creation.

Was Leavis religious? The answer, I believe, has the closest bearing on the nature of his thought. His father—influential in his formative years—was a Victorian radical. “There was,” Leavis said, “a fierce, Protestant conscience there, but it was divorced from any religious outlet.” There is an evident sympathy in him for the English tradition of religious non-conformism—and non-conformism more generally. It is easy to see why Eric Warnington made the mistake of thinking he was a Quaker (not so wide of the mark as Pound’s thinking him a Jew). But he remained firmly and radically agnostic. It was a necessary part of his effort to transcend (or get beneath) doctrinal and ideological constraints.

Early pointers appear in the original introduction to *Towards Standards of Criticism* (1933):

Literary criticism provides the test for life and concreteness; where it degenerates the instruments of thought degenerate too, and thinking, released from the testing and energizing contact with the full living consciousness, is debilitated, and betrayed to the academic, the abstract and the verbal. It is of little use to discuss values if the sense for value—the experience and perception of value—is absent. (Emphases added.)

This passage is notable for its precision and lucidity. Here already are the themes, overt or implicit, that would occupy him in his later years: the concrete and uniquely specific character of human experience, the necessarily incorporated nature of life, which has no abstractable form, the relationship (for which “relationship” is a necessary but misleading term) between life and language (“or let us rather say a language...for there is no such thing as language in general”). To these he would add (from Polanyi) the idea of “tacit knowing” and (via Marjorie Grene) the crucial insight that all conceptual knowledge, however abstract, exists only “within the fundamental evaluation” of human society.

Ten years later, with corresponding clarity of thought, he enunciated his conception of literary education in *Education and the University*:

…it is the preoccupation with cultural values as human and separable from any particular religious frame or basis...that prompts the description “humanist.” Literary criticism, in this sense, must always be humanist...in so far as it is literary criticism and not something else. It seems to me obvious that the approach needed in education must be in the same way humanist.... The point is that, whatever else may be necessary, there must in any case be...a liberal education that doesn’t start with a doctrinal frame and is not directed at inculcating one.

The style of writing in this chapter (“The Idea of a University”) is quintessentially characteristic in a much more
important sense than the term “style” would normally suggest: very precise and intensive, and continually referring back to its own assumptions woven into a complex nexus. The key terms include “civilization” and “culture,” the latter appearing, with “tradition,” in various permutations: “humane culture,” “cultural tradition,” “living tradition,” “humane tradition,” “maintaining continuity,” and “cultural sensibility in which tradition has its effective continuance.” It may be argued that Leavis is defining his key terms or first principles by reference to themselves in numerous variant forms. And this is in fact the case. But this is entirely consistent with his perception of the “relationship” between meaning and language. It explains his rejection of theoretical approaches in the sense of first seeking to define one’s underlying principles in general or abstract terms and then superimposing the resultant “diagram” on to the experience of reading a given work.

Roger Poole has given us an absorbing account of a meeting with Leavis in the summer of 1971 at which the issues at stake were discussed:

He mentioned Michael Polanyi as being significant. He said that he had not yet absorbed his “big book” (Personal Knowledge) but had been given access to the main ideas through reading Marjorie Grene’s The Knower and the Known. He reacted with surprise and even a little displeasure to the question that I had brought along. …It seemed to me that there was…some form of ethical norm to which his work insistently pointed, some ethical constant…implied but never stated? No, he said, there is no such ethical reality; it is Life itself; one’s work is a stance; one’s stance is known, and people interpret it as they can.17

Here is Leavis, in a pivotal passage, exemplifying this stance:

No one would question that when Blake testified to his consciousness that life in him was dependent on something other than himself—that in acting on his ahnung of what that something required of him he assumed a responsibility that must rest on him—the apprehension and belief he spoke out of and acted on were religious. But Collingwood and Polanyi are philosophers, and philosophers on whose outlook and approach modern science has had a decisive influence. “Religious” is not the word that would inevitably present itself first to anyone faced with describing either’s unmistakable sense of human responsibility. Yet I don’t think that Polanyi—I confine myself now to him, because he is still alive, and has still, it seems to me, to get due recognition as the great potential liberating and impelling force he is—would disapprove of the application of the word “religious” to his own basic apprehension. And unless it has a religious quality the sense of human responsibility can’t be adequate to the plight of the world that so desperately needs it.… The comparison between Eliot and Blake much facilitates the making of this point; in what other way, indeed, could one evoke the force of “religious” as it needs to be evoked for my purpose? The purpose in question can be served only by a literary critic and only by a critic who is adequately aware that a major creative writer is concerned with heuristic thought. The critic as I conceive him—this follows—addresses a non-specialist educated public, and, if it is weak, can’t separate his critical preoccupations from the problem of strengthening it and making it capable of decisive influence. That is, writing—as a critic must who aspires to matter—out of the civilization I live in, I judge those preoccupations to be inseparable from a concern for the university as society’s essential organ for the regenerating and maintaining of an educated public.18

It is an extraordinary piece of writing, without likeness elsewhere in English literary criticism. The prose itself enacts (a Leavisian term) the kind of knitting together of linguistically-religious ideas which is intrinsic to their understanding. We move from Blake’s sense of a God-given responsibility for the life which is “in” him, and in which he participates, to an affirmation about the university in the
modern world as the essential organ for regenerating an educated public. The steps in this process transcend what would ordinarily be called logic; they are not readily separable as “steps” but constitute collectively a process of conceptual binding together analogous to the formation of a complex genetic structure.

The conceptual life of the passage is necessarily grounded in language but subtends a dimension in which lexical definition has little purchase. What is an “adequate” sense of human responsibility? It is one that has a “religious quality”; but adequate to what? Adequate to “the plight of the world that so desperately needs it.” What is the force of “religious” in “religious quality”? It is a force that cannot be defined but only evoked, as it needs to be evoked for the purpose involved. The evoking can be done only through a comparison (such as has been offered) between Eliot and Blake in regard to their respective attitudes towards responsibility (or similar kinds of comparisons that will conduce to such evoking). What is the purpose involved to which a sense of the term “religious” (as evoked) is essential? It is a purpose of a kind which only a literary critic can serve and a literary critic “who is adequately aware that a major creative writer is concerned with heuristic thought” (such as the passage itself essays). A religious quality will be intrinsic to such a critic’s inseparably combined preoccupations with the heuristic nature of the kinds of thought characterizing major literary writing and with the essential university function of sustaining at least a vestigial “non-specialist educated public”—the meaning of “educated” here being “defined” by the whole foregoing account.

The comparison between Eliot and Blake returns me to my suggestion that Eliot’s work provides a testing ground for Leavis: a means “to determine and verify [his] own ultimate beliefs.”19 Eliot’s affirmation in “The Dry Salvages” (resumed in “Little Gidding”) is wilful; that is, it associates with a failure of responsibility. So passionate is Leavis’s intensity about this—“fiercely rebutting”20—by the time of the analytical commentary in The Living Principle (a book which Paul Dean has described, rightly, I think, as Leavis’s Summa 21) that D.W. Harding’s interpretation of the humanist ghost in “Little Gidding”—part of an approach to Eliot that Leavis had once found “intensely interesting”22—has become a “falsifying paraphrase”;23 not falsifying of Eliot’s intention but falsifying in its endorsement of the poet’s wrongness.

Michael Tanner wrote “intensely interestingly” on this subject in exchanges with Leavis in the mid-seventies.24 Regrettably, Leavis did not live long enough to extend the debate himself. I see him as going beyond the argument which Tanner ascribes to him when he (Tanner) says: “The trouble with ‘Little Gidding’ is that when belief finally comes, it is too easy, and the nature of achieved belief bears too little relationship to the processes that have led up to it.” Yes, Leavis is saying this, but it seems to me he is saying also that Eliot’s religious position is unacceptable and essentially untenable (even though Eliot does in a sense actually hold this position), because the poet, in discrediting creativity, commits a spiritual affront, involving himself in self-refutation and contradiction; a diagnosis which occasions in Leavis the utmost forensic rigour:

Harding’s account of the long narrative passage in unrimed terza rima is in fact, in a fundamentally disastrous way, a misreading, and his use of the term “humanist” an indefensible misdirection. “Section II”, he writes… “can be regarded as the logical starting point of the whole poem.” Well, insofar as it stresses the fear of death…as the essential impulsion that determines the nature of Eliot’s religious poetry, one can endorse this critical observation. But we are pulled up…when Harding goes on: “It deals with the desolation of death and the futility...
of life for those who have had no conviction of spiritual values in their life’s work.” For we don’t suspect him of having any thought of a meaning that might be imputed to this ambiguous sentence—the meaning represented by the question: “What conviction of spiritual values as intrinsically in his life’s work had Eliot himself?”

It is impossible to suppose that Harding is offering so radical a criticism of Eliot, whose assumption regarding spiritual reality and its utter otherness in relation to “human kind” the poetry conveys persistently and unambiguously. I have not disguised my own conviction that the assumption in a religious poet...entails a fundamental contradiction, making him incapable of cogent or coherent thought. So little does Harding agree with me that he continues: “The tone having been set by these stanzas, there opens a passage describing the dreary bit-terness in which a life of literary culture can end if it has brought no sense of spiritual values.” How can any life that it is not deplorably and reprehensibly a misdirection to call a life of literary culture not, one exclaims, bring a sense—bring, by what it essentially is and must be—a cultivated and heightened sense—of spiritual values? Harding’s use of “literary” seems to give the word the meaning, or no-meaning, it has when a pornographic work is defended...by virtue of its “literary value.”

Harding had written:

What the humanist’s ghost sees in his life are futility, isolation and guilt on account of his self-assertive prowess—“which once you took for exercise of virtue.”

Leavis asks:

Was Blake a humanist? He certainly had “no sense of spiritual values” as Eliot conceived them. Yet I should have said that he pre-eminently stood for the spirit.

No work of criticism is unassailable: Leavis, more than anyone, knew this (“Yes, but”); the commentary should be considered in the context of the whole body of his work on Eliot, which has something of the character of a quest. But he is brought to an unusual explicativeness: “there is no acceptable religious position that is not a reinforcement of human responsibility.” It is conceivable that someone might contest this, or its application to the poetry. Some may feel that Leavis’s target is at bottom “those doctrines, theological and religious, in which human nullity has been made a basic postulate” (or even the underlying nature of Christian doctrine itself). But the critique is searching. Even if a persuasive argument could be brought to bear against its general diagnostic approach, it is hard to see how its central idea could be refuted: “How could ‘spiritual reality,’ for the apprehending of which Eliot (thus involuntarily conceding the point) uses the word ‘conscious,’ be a reality for us...unless apprehended out of life...?” But it was for Leavis the central paradox of Eliot that he remained in *Four Quartets* a poet—and a poet of the first importance. Leavis’s commentary constitutes one of the most cogent and illuminating philosophical enquiries of the twentieth century.

From the 1960s onwards, with striking originality and preemptive effect, Leavis ploughed up the field of contemporary theory without, apparently, being aware of the existence of its principal expositors. This originality stemmed from his literary-critical practice—that is to say, the reports of a sensitive responsiveness to poetic use of language, the reciprocal application of thought and directly experienced apprehension, noumenal and concrete, not systemic. It affirms *the idea of reality* (but with un- or anti-Eliotic intention) as “there...but we cannot say where.” “What and where,” he asks, “are the life and reality of English literature?” Such elusive questions—*Where is English literature?*—he answered by reference to the reader’s re-creative response to the notation on the page: a response which though personal (you cannot di-rectly experience another person’s response) is unavoidably extra-personal...
too, dependent on the continuous collaboration of the language community.

...words “mean” because individual human beings have meant the meaning, [but] there is no meaning unless individual beings can meet in it. Individual human beings can meet in a meaning because language—or let us rather say a language...(for there is no such thing as language in general)—is for them in any present a living actuality that is organically one with the “human world” they, in growing up into it, have naturally taken for granted. There is in the language a central core in which for generations individual speakers have met, so that the meeting takes place as something inevitable and immediate in relation to which it would seem gratuitous to think of “meeting” as being involved. At the other extreme there is the specialist intellectual’s successful attempt...to attach a definite and limiting force to a term for its use in the given field. But both this simple kind of convention-fixing and the achieved linguistic originalities entailed in the thinking of profound philosophers depend on the central core...

In the preceding paragraph, he had observed: “The protest, ‘...that isn’t what I mean by the word’, might very well have issued as, ‘...that isn’t what I meant the word to mean’, or ‘What I meant to mean was...’.” Taking his hint, we can be forgiven for re-phrasing him: it is not words that mean but human beings who do so. It is the gift and practice of articulate utterance which marks us.

We all recall from childhood the experience of “looking up” a word in a “dictionary” to “see what it means” only to find ourselves moving in a lexical circle: the dictionary points us to another word which we do not know; we “look it up” to find its “meaning”; and so on, until we arrive where we started (though not necessarily to find that we “know the place for the first time”). Nor, by definition, can what “means” means be explained ostensively. If words “signify,” it is not in any semiotic sense. Even by reference to a full linguistic context, to the “completed” unit—clause, sentence or language—of which words are in some sense the disaggregated parts, meanings cannot be made co-terminously explicit. But nor are they purely “subjective” and private. Their “meaning” is “in me but outward bound” and “there is no meaning unless individual beings can meet in it."

The child’s discovery, and construction, of the world [Leavis quotes Marjorie Grene as saying] already takes place with and through others, through question and answer, through social play, through the older child’s or the adult’s interpretation.... All knowledge, even the most abstract, exists only within the fundamental evaluation, first of the total community, which permits and respects such knowledge, and second, within this totality, of the special community whose consensus makes possible the existence of...special discipline[s]. (Emphases added.)

And he adds “an insistent explicitness”: “The child’s discovery, and construction, of the world is possible because the reality he was born into was already the Human World, the world created and renewed in day-by-day human collaboration through the ages.”

In linking Grene’s perception of the way we discover ourselves in relation to our fellow human beings with the practice of “meeting” in meaning, Leavis illuminates the nature of value-judgement and of the “standards” it tacitly involves. His “exorcism of the Cartesian ghost” (that pervasive scientism which has invaded almost every branch of modern thought) generated in him a deeply humane counter-affirmation:

Mankind is incurably...anthropocentric. Pure reality an sich—reality not humanly created—is beyond our experience.... in “meeting” [in meaning] we get beyond paradox, which is a word that belongs to the linguistic mode of la raison and the testable commonsense for which there are respectable criteria. The relation between life and
the living individual (if it is properly called a relation, for it means that only in the individual can life be pointed to) is *sui generis*, and the importance of art-speech is that it establishes a recognized expressive relation—a relation belonging to a mode of articulate thought—between what can’t be stated directly and language.37

The key perception here concerns the common human gift and practice of articulate meaning. It is this which necessitates our engagement in the common pursuit of true judgement (*pace* the “decentring” of deconstruction). In adopting the principle of “truth” as the object of our pursuit, and making his implicit appeal to this, Leavis has made it possible to see that “meeting” in meaning is a continuous characterizing activity of human-kind.38 (Eliot may not have appreciated the full implications of his felicitous expression.39) We *meet* spiritually (or “are met together” might be a better phrase since the activity while personal is simultaneously collective) though not generally recognizing ourselves as doing so, the experience being continuous with the spontaneous and unmediated immediacy of living. And how much subtler and more sensitive is Leavis’s way with language in the difficult effort to suggest its own nature—“the upshot or precipitate of immemorial human living”, it “embodies values, distinctions, identifications, conclusions, promptings, cartographical hints and tested potentialities”40—than anything linguistic science can offer.

Exploring the nature of Eliot’s “hints and guesses” in “The Dry Salvages,” with a fine nose for self-refutation in the poet, he notes how

They suggest that “being”…means some-thing positively other than the unlivingsness of death. But they do that…by being essentially of the life that Eliot lives—*lives purposefully* and creatively *in the way his undertaking commits him to, as he works at the poem, corrects his proofs, and remembers childhood in Missouri and holidays on the Massachusetts coast.*41 (Emphases added.)


The conception of value-judgement embedded in Leavis’s work is much more than an ideal model. It has, I think, what could properly be called a religious basis. His deference to the principle of collaborative creativity, which must depend for its existence on something other than itself, and the repudiation of modern humanism which this entails, enables us to reconcile the search for the significance of life itself with the rejection of formal theology. It offers us too a new, “anti-philosophical,”42 way of doing philosophy which affirms literary art as a supreme mode of *thought*. It establishes the reality of reality (that something does in reality answer to the idea of reality) without recourse to theory. The reality thus affirmed includes, and is itself the product and coordinate of, human perception. It incorporates all human ideas, including those—like “pure reality”—to which there is no corresponding human experience.

Leavis many times observed that the word “life,” so essential to discourse, cannot be readily defined (it can, of course, be defined only by reference to variants of itself, “state of being alive,” etc.).43 It also presents a paradox. Life is unquestionably “there”44 but only in (or as) unique individual lives. It cannot be abstracted. But we transcend our uniqueness through meeting in meaning.

2. Leavis adverted to this idea in lectures given late in his career at Bristol and York: “Looking round at this beautiful university city, I have said to myself: Surely here the creative battle to maintain our living cultural heritage—a continuity of profoundly human creative life—must seem worth fighting; must be seen as a battle that shall not be lost.” (Nor Shall My Sword, London, 1972, 160.) “Here, bearing the name of the historic city, ancient second capital of England, is this convincing evidence of modern skill, modern and humane architectural intelligence, and modern resources, seeming, on its beautifully landscaped site, to grow in its modernity out of the old Hall, the old lakeside lawns and gardens and the old timbered grounds. It is easy to see that the architects have been guided by an idea that kept them in touch with true and highly conscious academic foresight, and that the idea of the university as I have been insisting on it isn’t merely mine.” (Op. cit., 193.) The mention of “pride in being allowed to feel still associated,” words with which he concluded the York lecture, recalls for us his “deep piety towards Cambridge” of which he spoke to Michael Black (The Leavises, 93), and of the memories of him, such as the late Brian Redhead’s (BBC radio), teaching in the Fellows’ garden at Downing. It surely underlies too his remark that it was “advisedly that I particularize ‘ancient English university’: the preoccupation is not with the generalities of philosophical and moral theory and doctrine, but with picking up a continuity; carrying on and fostering the essential life of a time-honoured and powerful institution, in this concrete historical England.” (Education and the University, London, 1943, new edition, 1948, 19.)


5. The Living Principle: “English” as a Discipline of Thought (London, 1976), 44. Paul Dean in his Introduction to the American edition (Chicago, 1998), footnote, p. 4, has made a shrewd guess as to the origin of Leavis’s title, which, he suggests, “may derive from Newman’s Idea of a University, Discourse III.” Here, by reference to the active, volitional “living principle” in human life Newman invokes analogically the presence in the universe of an intelligent creator. Although Newman’s theology cannot have been congenial to Leavis, there are indications that he had a high regard for his intellect, and an interesting likeness is suggested by Newman’s emphasis on the primacy of concrete experience in, for example, his Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent (1870). 7. See John Marsh, The Gospel of St John (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1968): “The Word thus conceived is really life itself… the creative Logos.” (97) And “In spite of the somewhat vague sense of the translation Word, it is wiser not to replace it with a more definite meaning, for any more restricted significance would fail to do justice to the rich allusiveness of John’s language. Nowhere is it more creatively at work than here.” (102-103) 8. In “Thought, meaning and sensibility: the problem of value judgment,” Valuation in Criticism (posth), ed. G. Singh (Cambridge, Eng., 1986), 293.


10. New Universities Quarterly, Volume 30, Number 1 (Winter 1975), 34.

11. “…[T]he intimate letters between Pound and Eliot of the early 1930s reveal a shared anti-semitism directed at the critic F.R. Leavis (‘Leavis louse’) who, wrote Pound, dumped his ‘anglo-yittisch and other diseased putrid secretions/notably a mess…spewing his Whitechapel spittle upon Sitwell,’ his ‘Leavis jew ooze,’ etc.” (Carole Seymour-Jones, Painted Shadow: A Life of Vivienne Eliot, 2001, 485.) It should be said that although there is little evidence of a collaborative spirit in Eliot’s dealings with Leavis, there is no evidence that he directed anti-semitism towards him, unless he is assumed to have been unconsciously influenced by Pound. Leavis’s wife, Queenie, was of Jewish background but neither Eliot nor Pound are likely to have known this unless via her Ph.D. supervisor, I.A. Richards. 12. See “Restatements for Critics,” Scrutiny, Volume I, Number 4, March, 1933, 315-323; re-printed in Valuation in Criticism, 46-53. See also note 16 below.


14. The
The Courage of Judgment: Essays in Criticism, Culture, and Society, with a Foreword by Austin Warren (Knoxville, 1982)—and nowhere more so than in his reflections on the critique of Four Quarters, where Leavis’s powers are exercised on the boundary with theology. 25. The Living Principle, 257. 26. Experience into Words, 123. 27. The Living Principle, 258. 28. Op. cit., 236. 29. Op. cit., 214. 30. Op. cit., 181. 31. Original (broadcast) version of his lecture “F. S. Eliot and the Life of English Literature,” given at the 1968 Cheltenham Festival of Literature (BBC Sound Archive). In Valuation in Criticism, the variant text refers to: “those who today are troubled over the questions: What is English literature? where is it and how is it there? how does it have its life—which must be in the present or not at all (and I indicate here how urgent and troubling the questions are)?” (129) Leavis later extended these questions to the nature of a language (Living Principle, 37) and of words themselves—“what is a word?” (Op. cit., 57). 32. The Living Principle, 58. 33. Op. cit., 37. 34. Op. cit., 34. 35. Ibid. 36. Op. cit., 35 and 229. 37. In “Thought, meaning and sensibility: the problem of value judgment,” Valuation in Criticism, 296. This passage should be read with reference to Leavis’s penetrating insights at the beginning of that essay: “‘objectivity’ in an immediately recognizable sense is a product of human creativity” and “in creating language human beings create the world they live in.” (285) 38. I am aware that this idea may appear to be in contradiction to Wittgenstein’s view (as interpreted by Peter Hacker) that “Meaning is not an act, activity or event.” (P.M.S. Hacker, Wittgenstein, Mind and Will: Volume 4 of an Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations, Part I, Essays (London, 2000), 276. But see also his observation that “‘Words,’ Wittgenstein emphasized, ‘are deeds,’ in Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies (Oxford, Eng., 2001), 58. Other aspects of the Investigations, including Wittgenstein’s perception of the ‘bewitching’ nature of language, seem to resemble Leavis’s own thinking. Leavis was much absorbed in his later years with Wittgenstein and those interpreters whom he referred to as “the Wittgensteinians.” This significant interest remains largely unexplored. “I am not... a philosopher, and I have found most philosophers, in the pejorative sense, academic. Wittgenstein, who was my friend forty years ago, wasn’t to be dismissed as that... though I had a basic antipathy to what he stood for... I was faced with having to state and justify—marginally to a work centred in literary-critical thought—that antipathy. I must do it, dauntingly to philosophers, without the impossible expenditure of time and energy that would be incurred in attempting to do it in a ‘philosophical’ way. I must do it ‘finally’ but not thoroughly...” [T]he Wittgensteinians... call the philosophy they are interested in ‘linguistic’.


42. "The title ['Thought, meaning and sensibility: the problem of value judgment'] sums up the preoccupations that have led me...to present myself as an anti-philosopher." (Valuation in Criticism, 285; "I state the essential and desperate need for anti-philosophers that afflicts the civilization we live in." (Op. cit., 292); "It’s anti-philosopher—merely more explicitly so than my work of the last 40+ years..." (of The Living Principle to Michael Black, The Leavises, 95);

43. "[Tanner] thinks highly of my treatment of language, meaning and the ‘third realm,’ and regards it as philosophical. No doubt that use of the adjective can be justified. But the account, direct and implicit, I give leads in a central way into concerns that seem to me most decidedly not philosophical." (The Critic as Anti-Philosopher, 192.) But: "I should like to think that in my work’s becoming the subject of discussion by philosophers...I might in a modest way have promoted the development in a few universities of relations between the two disciplines." (Op. cit., 193.)

44. "Life’ is a necessary word, but what it denotes is ‘there’ only in the individual." (Introduction to Nor Shall my Sword (London, 1972), 17; "...genius is intensity of aliveness. Its creations make it impossible for us not to see that ‘life’ is a necessary word—and at the same time that life itself is not on all fours with electricity, which doesn’t need to be incorporated to be ‘there.’" (Valuation in Criticism, 289; And passim. (See the reference to Lawrence at note 44 below.))