

Introduction: Approaching Sylvan and this Collection of Essays

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1 Richard Routley/Sylvan

1.1 The year was 1980 and, at the end of one of the so-called ‘Logic Miniconferences’ held at the Australian National University (ANU), someone decided to take a picture of the participants. Many of them stand right in front of a blackboard, pens and papers are abandoned on a table near a backpack, and the sun casts rays of warm light on their clothes. With a bit of imagination, it is possible to smell the aroma of a cup of coffee or hear someone suggesting that the discussion be carried on at the pub. Errol Martin hides his hands behind his back, Ross Brady smiles at the camera, Chris Mortensen has a long beard, while Graham Priest leans on a lectern. Bob Meyer laughs. Then, front left, there is Richard Routley (or Sylvan to which he later changed his name).¹

In this picture, Richard sits on a chair: he wears a shirt, the legs are crossed, and his hands rest on his knees. The look in his eyes seems to convey the impression of a strong man who refuses to compromise on what he believes in. And, indeed, his whole life was perfectly consistent with this impression. He did refuse to compromise with Blackwells about the publication of his MA thesis and, consequently, he never carried out the necessary revisions.² He did refuse to compromise with Princeton University because he thought that his research was not properly supported: for this reason, he left the institution without completing his doctoral studies.³ He did refuse to compromise about his ethical principles by working in a tent, in isolation from city life, lost in the forest on Plumwood Mountain.⁴ The long list goes on.

1.2 Having said that, it is important to remember that Richard’s character,

¹In the picture, we can also see McRobbie and Slaney.

²Richard’s MA thesis was entitled *Moral Scepticism* and it was unusually long (385 pages). Arthur Prior, one of the examiners, confessed that “he’d given it a mark of 95%, but this was not so much a mark as an exclamation mark” (see Hyde 2001, fn. 5).

³This is how Richard describes his period at Princeton University: “As a brash young man I set out from New Zealand for Princeton University [My research] project was hardly enthusiastically welcomed at Princeton, and I made comparatively little progress on it there . . .” (Sylvan 2000, p. 7). Nevertheless, many years later, encouraged by David Lewis, he submitted the first 200 pages of *Exploring Meinong’s Jungle and Beyond* as a doctoral thesis. Princeton awarded him a PhD in 1981.

⁴Hyde (forthcoming, p. 13) tells us that, from 1975 to 1980, Richard lived in a tent, then a small shed. In the meanwhile, he was building one his stone houses on Plumwood Mountain, 100 kms east of Canberra.

as strong and uncompromising as it was, never forbade him to work with collaborators. On the contrary, from the beginning to the end of his career, Richard was always part of important research groups. Two of them were particularly relevant for the development of his philosophy. The first was the New England Group. After spending two years working at Sydney University (from 1962 to 1964), Richard moved to the University of New England, New South Wales. Here, he helped David Londey and Len Goddard lay the foundation of, not only the first Australian Master’s course in logic, but also a philosophical community able to influence a whole generation of Australian logicians. Over four years, the New England Group, originally composed of only Richard, Londey and Goddard, grew very rapidly, to include Ross Brady, Martin Bunder, Malcolm Rennie, and Val Mcrae, who, later on was to become Richard’s wife.

Gathered together in what Goddard describes as “a rural community whose dominating interests were in sheep ticks and wool” (1992, p. 174), these researchers maintained a fruitful academic life focused on the problems faced by classical logic, and on the possibility of solving them by developing non-classical formal tools. As Richard himself writes, the work of the New England Group was “heavily philosophically oriented” and mainly concerned with “modal logic”, “theories of implication”, “relevant logics”, and “logical paradoxes” (Routley 1984, p. 133). However, during this period, two collaborations had a decisive influence on Richard. On the one hand, the collaboration with Goddard produced important results in the field of significance logic – results that culminated in the publication of a 600-page monograph entitled *The Logic of Significance and Context* (1973).⁵ On the other hand, the collaboration with Val Routley (later, Plumwood) pushed Richard to realize his deep dissatisfaction with what he called the Ontological Assumption, that is, that nothing true can be said about non-existent objects. Such a dissatisfaction would soon turn out to be Richard’s main reason to develop his noneist theory.⁶

1.3 From his arrival at the University of New England, four years had passed.

⁵As we learn from Hyde (2001, fn. 12), there were also parts of an unfinished manuscript which was meant to be Part 2 of *The Logic of Significance and Context*. Unfortunately, this was never completed.

⁶For historical clarity, it may be helpful to note that Richard started to present his ideas about non-existent objects publicly around the beginning of 1965. However, in 1964, he had already submitted his first paper on the matter to a journal. Later on, this paper was published under the title ‘Some things do not exist’ (1966b).

At the beginning of 1968, Richard decided to leave there, and to accept a Senior Research Fellowship at Monash University. However, after only three years of intense research on non-classical logic and, in particular, on relevant logics, Richard decided to move again, joining the Department of Philosophy of the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University (ANU). From the time he arrived there, and being supported by the Head of Department, Jack (J. J. C.) Smart, Richard began to create a second research community – the well-known Canberra Group. Some of the people that joined this project were former members of the New England Group (e.g., Malcolm Rennie, Ross Brady, and Val Routley). Len Goddard (by then in St Andrews) became a regular visitor to the ANU as well. The group had also new acquisitions (e.g., Bob Meyer, Chris Mortensen, and Graham Priest), research students (e.g., Michael McRobbie, Errol Martin, and John Slaney) and many frequent visitors (e.g., Nuel Belnap, Michael Dunn, Newton da Costa, and Alasdair Urquhart).

Needless to say, this environment was unbelievably exciting. Goddard writes that, at the ANU, “it was raining logicians and [people had] been caught without an umbrella” (1992, p. 178). True! However, while it was certainly raining cats and dogs (and logicians too!), Richard’s ideas were flooding up as well. First of all, in collaboration with Bob Meyer, he wrote an impressive series of papers which were meant to provide semantics for a wide range of relevant logics (1972a, 1972b, 1972c, 1972d, 1989). The main achievements of this collaboration were collected in *Relevant Logic and their Rivals* (1982). Secondly, Richard strengthened his critiques of the Ontological Assumption by endorsing some of the core ideas of Alexius Meinong with the aim of developing his own theory of non-existent objects. Concerning this topic, Richard published a considerable number of important papers (1979a, 1982); nonetheless, his masterpiece remains the monumental *Exploring Meinong’s Jungle and Beyond: an Investigation of Noneism and the Theory of Items* (1980). Finally, around 1976, Richard started to be attracted by the idea that reality was contradictory. Not long afterwards, the attraction was turned into commitment by the arrival of Graham Priest in the group. He and Priest endorsed the metaphysical position which they called *dialetheism*: namely, the view that some (but not all) contradictions

are true.⁷

1.4 This is enough of what happened inside the walls of academia. What about outside of them? Well, of course, the world kept rolling and, while Richard was busy trying to save Meinong's jungle from the Quinean foresters, another kind of forester was threatening the beautiful Australian landscape. So, Richard decided to fight them too. Around 1973, his work, together with the work of the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, introduced an innovative approach to environmental ethics. Moreover, in their *Fight for the Forest* (1973), Richard and Val directly attacked the Australian environmental policy being applied by the government, with economic, social, and environmental objections. As Hyde reminds us, the impact of this book was so radical that the former Head of the Commonwealth Forestry Economics Research Unit, Neil Byron, declared: "it angered the foresters that two people who had never studied economics or forestry could produce the most incisive and devastating economic analysis of forestry ... in Australia" (Hyde forthcoming, p. 11; also in Byron 1999, p. 53).⁸

Richard was firmly convinced that there is no fundamental moral difference between human beings, often mistakenly taken to be the center of the universe, and the natural world, wrongly treated as a resource ready to be exploited. According to Richard, the environment *includes* the human beings: protecting, saving, understanding and fighting for the natural world is protecting, saving, understanding and fighting for human beings too. For this reason, his passion for the environment was anything but theoretical: this was no detached study of nature, but a deep way of experiencing and living *in* it. Richard knew the names of all the trees, flowers, grasses and seeds; he

⁷For a long time, Richard was agnostic about the consistency of the world. He writes: "the question of the consistency of the world cannot be conclusively resolved" (Routley and Meyer 1976, p.20). However, in 1976, he endorsed a dialectical position, or what is currently called dialetheism. He also claims that one of the benefits of a dialectical position is the possibility of "return[ing] to something like the grand simplicity of naive set theory [W]e should arrive back guided by a dialectical theory which reassembles the intuitive data" (Routley 1979b, p. 302).

⁸The importance of Richard's work is noticed by the environmental historian William Lines as well. He writes: "The Routleys [Richard and Valerie] were unique. They challenged conventional academic boundaries as barriers to understanding and dismissed claims to objectivity as spurious attempts to protect vested interests. They exposed both wood-chopping and plantation forestry as uneconomic, dependent on taxpayer subsidies, and driven largely by a rampant development ideology." (Lines 2006, pp. 144 – 45).

enjoyed to walk and swim.⁹ He loved long and adventurous explorations, the last of which happened in Indonesia.

1.5 It was the 16th of June 1996. Richard was in Bali with Louise, his second wife. They were meant to visit Pura Besakih, a temple, both Hindu and Buddhist. That morning, he woke up at 5 am: he ate bananas and eggs, enjoyed the good weather, and took a swim in the lake nearby. Then, right after entering through the main gate of the temple, he died, quite unexpectedly, killed by a heart attack. As explicitly requested by Richard himself, he was buried in the forest, looking out over the sea. He was 59 years old, and he left the world in a way opposite to the way in which he had lived it – quietly, in silence, and with no noise.

The same people that, 16 years before, during one of the many ‘Logic Miniconferences’ held at ANU, were smiling in front of the camera, would have never been able to guess that Richard would die so young. His heart, full of passion and energy, seemed to be unfailable. Priest: “[Richard’s] vigour had been palpable. He was still in full cry, working on his numerous philosophical projects. . . . Every day he would write from about dawn till lunch-time. Then he would go and carry bricks, move beams, dig foundations. It just didn’t seem possible that this body had a heart that could give out. Suddenly. Just like that. But it had” (Priest 2016, p. 125). The ultimate Australian iconoclast was gone.¹⁰

2 What you *can* find in this volume

2.1 From what we have said up to now, it should be clear that Richard’s philosophy is unbelievably rich. However, a natural way to make his vast production accessible is to divide it into three main topics of research: (1) metaphysics, (2) logic, and (3) environmental theory. This special issue collects 20 contributions on Richard’s work, and one unpublished set of notes written by Richard himself. 6 papers are concerned with metaphysics, 11 pa-

⁹During the Memorial Gathering for Richard, Goddard describes Richard’s relation with nature in this way: “[Richard] took such a delight in nature, not so much the delight that a romantic might take in the overall beauty of it all, but a delight in its richness and complexity, in the detail that he found in the structure of mosses and in the behavior of insects”.

¹⁰Routley/Sylvan’s unpublished work is now held at the library of the University of Queensland in Brisbane.

pers are concerned with logic, and 3 papers are about environmental theory. Given the wide range of topics discussed, we believe that the readers might need a little help concerning orientation. Before entering into the jungle, any good explorer needs a map, and this is what follows.

2.2 Let's begin with the metaphysical part of Richard's production. As we already mentioned in 1.2, Richard was convinced that the so-called Ontological Assumption (nothing true can be said about non-existent objects) is wrong.¹¹ At the end of the day, it seem to be evident that it is possible to make true statements about what does not exist. Sherlock Holmes does not exist but he is *truly* a smart detective (at least in Doyle's stories). Pinocchio does not exist, but he is *truly* a liar (in Collodi's story). Someone might even say that number 2 is a non-existent object, and, still, it is *truly* prime. For this reason, Richard aimed at "a very general theory of all items (objects) whatsoever: of those that are intesional and those that are not, of those that exist and those that do not, of those that are possible and those that are not, of those that are paradoxical or defective and those that are not, of those that are non-significant or absurd and of those that are not; it is a theory of the logic and properties and kinds of properties of all these items" (Routley 1980, pp. 5 – 6).

Richard believed that a theory able to achieve such a goal is Meinong's Theory of Objects. He writes: "Meinong's theory provides a coherent scheme for talking and reasoning about all items, not just those which exist, without the necessity for distorting or unworkable reductions; and in doing so it attributes . . . features to nonentities [namely objects that do not exist]" (Routley 1980, pp. iv – v). Following the Meinongian jargon, we can say that Richard accepts Meinong's *Principle of Aussersein*: the *Sosein* of an object (the set of properties satisfied by the object) is independent of its *Sein* (being). *Prima facie*, this idea seems unacceptable; however, this is not the case. In this volume, Plebani successfully argues that, working in the framework defended by Stephen Yablo and many others, the Principle of Aussersein can be accepted by philosophers that are not necessarily Meinongian, as well.

Of course, Richard did not simply rephrase Meinong's ideas. On the contrary, in order to overcome the well-known difficulties faced by the Theory

¹¹As Hyde suggests (2001, fn. 17), Richard explicitly rejected the Ontological Assumption in print for the first time in 'Non-existence does not exist' (1970). However, the rejection of the Ontological Assumption was probably made by Richard way before, since the same paper was already under submission in 1965.

of Objects, he defended an updated version of Meinong’s ontology (called noneism) which relies on the distinction between nuclear (characterizing) and extra-nuclear (non-characterizing) properties. A similar approach to Meinong has been endorsed by many other philosophers (e.g. Parsons 1980; Jacquette 2015) and it usually goes under the name of ‘nuclear Meinongianism’. Unfortunately, Richard’s nuclear Meinongianism has been too often assimilated to Parsons’ positions: for this reason, the specificities of the former has not been properly considered. In this volume, Fujikawa begins to fill this gap in the secondary literature by critically addressing some of the under-discussed features of Routley’s noneism.¹²

Richard spent almost an entire working life defending noneism. In particular, he was convinced that Meinongianism can be fruitfully applied to those fields of research in which non-existent objects are heavily employed. “The more comprehensive case for the importance of nonentities includes . . . their role in mathematics and their roles in theoretical explanations of science” (Routley 1980, p. 768). Examples of nonentities are “seventeen dimensional spaces”, “ideal points”, “religious positions which consider God as a non-entity” (Routley 1967, pp. 2 – 6) and, of course, fictional objects. In this volume, some interesting applications of noneism are discussed as well. Wigglesworth merges a modal conception of sets and noneism. Gonzalez defends Richard’s account of universal fictions while Proudfoot discusses his idea that a comprehensive theory of fiction is impossible. Finally, Voltolini orients noneism towards a *syncretic* view of existence, according to which existence can be captured both by means of second-order and by means of first-order notions, which are related.¹³

2.3 The second part of Richard’s production is concerned with logic. As we have already discussed in §1, right after his arrival at the University of New England, he developed an interest in significance logics, namely formal systems that are able to handle non-significant sentences. On the one hand,

¹²According to Fujikawa’s paper, given a formal treatment of the so-called supposition operator *s* which employs the framework of world semantics, Richard’s nuclear Meinongianism can be assimilated to Priest’s modal Meinongianism. It is interesting to notice that, for completely different reasons, such an assimilation has been defended by Casati as well (Casati forthcoming).

¹³Voltolini’s contribution contains an interesting comparison between noneism (or, more generally, Meinongianism) and Crane’s psychological reductionism. For the readers that are intrigued by the topic, it can be helpful to mention that a similar comparison has been discussed by Casati and Fujikawa (2016), and Priest (2016, Ch. 14.6.1).

he analyzed the philosophical importance of the notion of nonsense (1966a; 1969); on the other, with the help of Goddard, he modeled this philosophical notion with the help of many-valued semantics, i.e. semantics containing the truth-values t and f (standing for truth and falsity, respectively) and some additional non-classical ‘algebraic’ values (1973). In this volume, Szmuc and Omori cast a new and interesting light on these matters, merging them with the plurivalent semantics developed by Graham Priest.¹⁴

As the years went by, Richard became more radical: he started to claim explicitly that classical logic needs to be abandoned because “[it] has failed to live up to its early promise as a tool for clarifying and in some cases resolving philosophical and methodological issues” (Routley, Meyer, Plumwood, Brady 1985, p. *xi*). Moreover, Richard thought that the most robust alternative to classical logic is represented by the family of relevant logics. For this reason, Richard invested a lot of energy in developing an adequate semantics relying on two main ideas. The first one, developed in 1969 in collaboration with Val Routley, is the well-known star operator ($*$) which was used to describe the behavior of negation.¹⁵ In this volume, Ferguson adds an interesting piece to the already vast literature about the star operator by exploring its relation to the less famous *mate function*.

The second idea, developed around 1970, is the so-called ternary relation R which was used to provide the truth-conditions for relevant implication ‘ \rightarrow ’.¹⁶ Bimbo, Dunn, and Ferez describe the genealogy of the ternary relation by commenting, in a clear and accessible way, on an unpublished work by Richard. Both their paper and Richard’s unpublished manuscript are collected in the present volume. Moreover, Ciuni, Ferguson, and Szmuc merge Richard’s interest in significance logic with relevant logics by appealing to the principle of *Component Homogeneity*.

Relevant logics, as well as many other ideas developed by Richard in the field of both mathematical and philosophical logic, have been very fruitful.

¹⁴Szmuc and Omori’s paper has the virtue of drawing attention to Richard’s under-considered work on the notion of nonsense. Concerning this topic, it would be interesting to compare Richard’s account of nonsense with the more recent one discussed by Moore (1997; 2012) and Mulhall (2015).

¹⁵Hyde explains the relation between $*$ and negation in the following way: $\sim A$ is true in a set-up a iff A is false in a companion set-up world a^* , the image of a under the one-one function $*$. For more details, see Hyde (2001, p. 189) or Mares (2012).

¹⁶Hyde explains the the truth-condition for relevant implication in the following way: $A \rightarrow B$ is true in a set-up a iff for all set-ups b, c in K , whenever $Rabc$ and A is true in b then B is true in c . For more details, see Hyde (2001, p. 190) or Mares (2012).

For this reason, they are still being applied with great success. Some of the papers collected in this volume discuss these applications. Brady delivers a *tour de force* concerning the universe of inconsistent mathematics;¹⁷ Ramirez discusses a non-classical approach to Bayesian confirmation theories; Tanaka employs the semantics of relevant logics to provide a better grasp of impossible worlds; Skurt and Wansing discuss some problematic aspects of negation as cancellation, as discussed by Richard and Val. On the more philosophical side, Barrio and Da Ré defend a novel account of the relationship between paraconsistency and dialetheism; da Costa and Becker investigate the relation between Richard's views on logic, anti-exceptionalism, and pluralism. Finally, Nolan engages with Richard's Ultralogic Program. First of all, he sketches how Richard addresses the demand for an all-purpose universal logic. Secondly, he explores how it is possible to satisfy this demand without endorsing a Routleyan Ultralogic as a foundational logic.¹⁸

2.4 We conclude with a brief discussion of the third and last research topic: environmental theory. One of the main ideas defended by Richard is that human beings have been wrongly thought to occupy a special, central and, therefore, predominant moral position in the world. Nothing, in the whole universe, is more important than human beings, human beings declare. One of the corollaries of this idea is that the environment does not have any (intrinsic) value, just the (extrinsic) one given by the fact that it can be profitably used by human beings. For instance, the deforestation of thousands and thousands of acres is bad, not because cutting trees is bad *per se*, but just because the forest might help to prevent landslides that can be dangerous for human beings, and so on. Moved by the idea that the environment has (not only an extrinsic, but also) an intrinsic value, Richard decided to challenge this *chauvinistic*, anthropocentric ideology. In order to do so, he developed his famous 'last man argument'.

In this volume, Lamb discusses in scholarly details how the 'last man argument' works. Moreover, since a number of environmental philosophers have used it to draw different, sometimes even contrary, lessons, Lamb aims at determining what this argument *really* shows. By drawing on a wide range of hard-to-access papers by Sylvan, Lamb gives an account of the unique meta-ethics that underpins his position. In another paper, Hyde defends the importance of accepting the intrinsic value of the natural world for conserva-

¹⁷A discussion of inconsistent mathematics can be found in Mortensen (1995, 2010).

¹⁸For a beautiful introduction to Richard's Ultralogic, see Weber (forthcoming).

tion biology. In particular, he shows that the critiques against this position (Macquire and Justus 2008; Justus, Colyvan, Regan and Macquire 2009) do not succeed. Finally, Malavisi explains the extraordinary importance of Richard’s deep-green environmental ethics. Furthermore, she passionately argues that deep-green theory can become a relevant practice if and only if Richard’s ideas are seriously discussed, taught and, of course, applied in our everyday life.

3 What you *cannot* find in this volume

3.1 Even though the present volume covers many important topics, other crucial ideas in Richard’s philosophy are not discussed. In particular, two important aspects of his production have been left out. The first is represented by what Richard himself calls ‘pluralism’, namely the idea that there is more than one actual world. In 1983, during the second paraconsistency conference held at ANU, Richard challenged the uniqueness of the actual world for the first time. It is not difficult to imagine the astonishment of the participants. Later on, Richard described this idea in the following way: “Pluralism . . . comes in two distinct forms: a theory of meta-pluralism, according to which there are many correct theories (especially larger philosophical positions) but at most one actual world; and radical or deep pluralism which goes to the root of these differences in correctness to be found in things, and discerns a plurality of actual worlds” (Sylvan 1988, p. 253).¹⁹

3.2 The second unrepresented aspect is what Hyde labels the ‘comprehensive nature’ of Richard’s philosophy. It is undeniable that Richard was not only a thinker, but also a *systematic* thinker. As there are paintings that can be fully appreciate only by looking at them from a distance, in the same way, Richard’s philosophy can be fully appreciated only by looking at it as a whole. Only in this way, is it possible to realize that his thoughts about logic, metaphysics, and environmental theory fit coherently together into what he called a ‘deep theory’, that is, a broad worldview. For instance, Richard’s

¹⁹Richard’s account of pluralism was deeply connected with his political views and, in particular, with his defense of anarchism. In *Transcendental Metaphysics: From Radical to Deep Pluralism*, which represents his most developed and coherent endorsement of pluralism, he writes: “[The] government should not be too pleased with this book. One of the underlying aims of this text is frankly subversive. . . . It is intended, among many other things, as a metaphysical prelude to theoretical anarchism (Sylvan 1997, p. xiii).

anarchist political views can be understood only by assuming his views about plurallism, and his plurallism can be understood only by assuming relevant logics; relevant logics and, more generally, non-classical logics go hand in hand with his endorsement of noneism, while noneism is essential to understand Richard's sistology (theory of objects).²⁰ In Nola's words, Richard tried to "put together a systematic and comprehensive deep theory, including, among other parts, deep green theory and its practice, deep pluralism and its regional applications, deep relevant logic and its dialectical elaborations, all set within integrated object and process theory [deep item theory]" (Nola 1988, p. 295).

3.3 These topics, together with a number of others, are absent from this volume. Nonetheless, we do not think this is a problem. On the contrary, this just shows the richness and deepness of Richard's work. For this reason, we hope that our special issue can stimulate more interest in his philosophy: both the academic and non-academic world still needs him. Paraphrasing the title of the Australian novelist, Gerald Murnane, Richard's philosophy has *a million windows*. Now, we just need to look at the world through them.

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²⁰This is how Hyde describes the systematic nature of Richard's philosophy: "The relation between the various parts of his 'deep theory' was as follows: the work on deep pluralism was made possible . . . by the technological advances in logic he [Richard] had long laboured to bring about, in particular the adoption of his preferred deep relevant logic; it was couched within deep item-theory, thereby, he claimed, avoiding damaging ontological excesses; and it provided a sound metaphysical basis for ethics, properly understood, namely deep green theory" (Hyde 2001, p. 199).

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