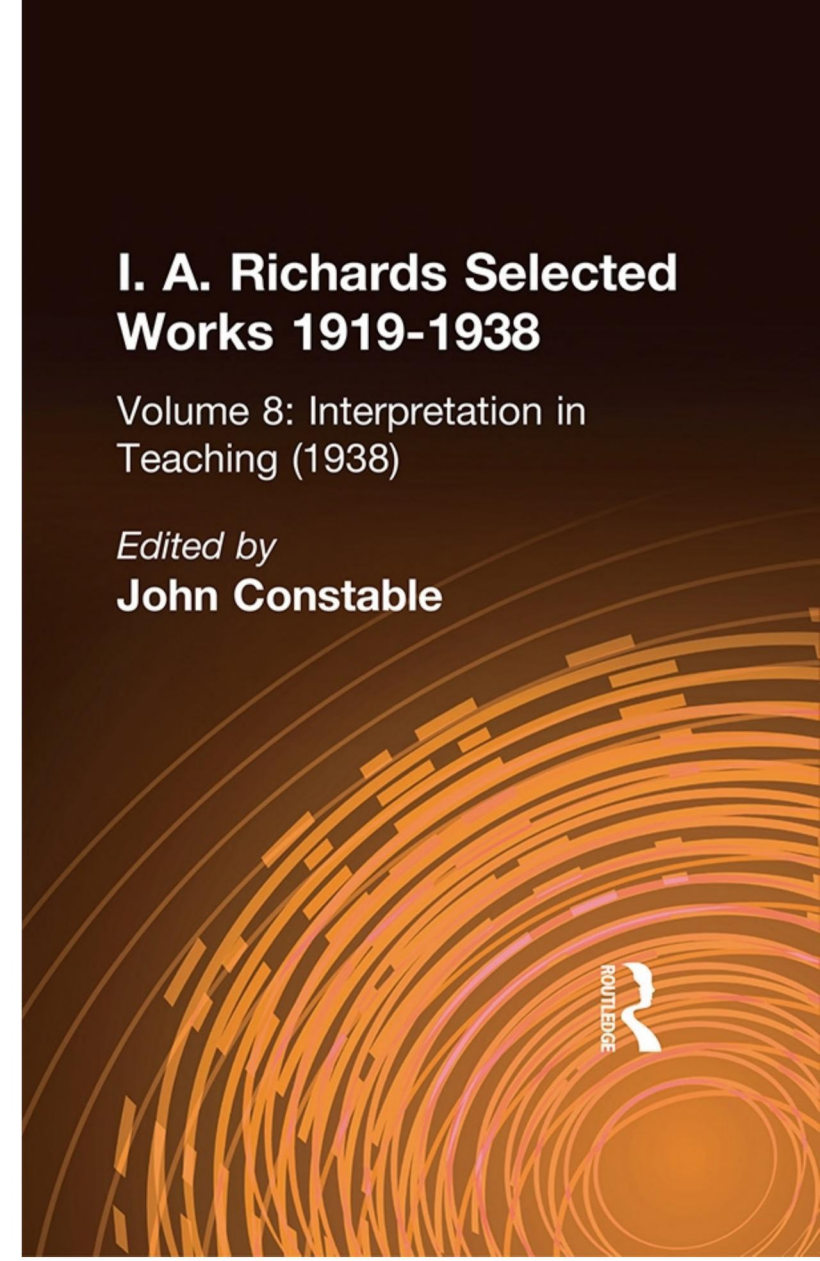
I. A. Richards Selected Works 1919-1938

Volume 8: Interpretation in Teaching (1938)

Edited by

John Constable



First published 1938 by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co Ltd

This edition published 2001
by Roudedge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Roudedge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested.

ISBN 0-415-21739-3 (volume 8)

ISBN 0-415-21731-8 (set)

CONTENTS

Editorial Introduction

The earliest work towards *Interpretation in Teaching* dates from 1928. With *Practical Criticism* substantially completed Richards was planning revisions to his courses and new directions to his writing, which was increasingly moving away from the subject of poetry. In April he had discussed future lecture possibilities with his wife and ruled out 'belief' and 'how to read intricate poems' in favour of 'how to write',[1] and in October in the course of commenting on two recent reviews of Herbert Read's *Prose Style*, which Richards himself was reviewing for Eliot's *Criterion*,[2] he wrote to her that

> It's clear that the standard of reading prose expositions is pretty well as low as that of reading poetry – and I see a prospect of trying to do something to raise it in a similar way. It's clear enough that *Meaning, how not to mistake it* is my subject, to be tackled in as many ways as I can.[3]

His Cambridge 'Practical Criticism' lectures were now asking students for paraphrase rather than critical judgement, and in the course of discussions with Ogden in the late summer and autumn of 1928 he had even envisaged a book on 'paraphrasing' to be written in collaboration. Nothing seems to have come of this joint project, but in January 1929 Richards was still planning something of the kind as a work of his own:

> I seem to have got the English Composition book sketched out so that I can go ahead systematically filling in parts as I can collect the detailed material. It's not the book I thought it would be, but it will do I believe. Doubtless it will change as it grows. The great point is that I now know what instances I want so can keep a notebook. Probably tonight I shall get a good deal of the actual framework drafted. It's to be quite a short thing, not more than 50,000 words at the *outside*.[4]

The following day he wrote again to say that he had 'decided to give the English Composition only as Lectures not a book':

> If the book were not to be disappointing and let me down it would need much more time than I could possibly give before going to China.[5]

Suggestively, the same letter remarks on a discussion with C. K. Ogden about Basic English, observing that 'I think he has hit upon something incredibly clever'. Basic, however, did not appear in the lectures on the interpretation of prose which he was now composing under the title of 'The Philosophy of Rhetoric'. These lectures were drawing large audiences, as Dorothy Richards records in her diary:

> On to Ivor's room at twelve and found it *bulging* – all the English school there for the sake of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. […] he headed off into problems of communication and definition in fine style, making one tremble between thinking one was […] on a cement ring of commonplaces and suddenly finding oneself –

> without apparent transitional phases – in a deep well of confusions.[6]

In notes drafted before departure for China in the summer of 1929 Richards listed a book under the new title, 'Philosophy of Rhetoric' as one of the tasks to be addressed on his return from Peking, along with other volumes on 'Problems of Practical Criticism', 'General Linguistic Methodology', and 'Belief.[7] The visit to China, however, provided material for a study of Chinese philosophy, and stimulated a renewed interest in recasting the dual language hypothesis of *The Meaning of Meaning*, on which so much of his work had been based. The outcome of this, *Mencius on the Mind* (1932), postponed the 'Philosophy of Rhetoric', but Richards continued to deliver the course wherever he was teaching, in Peking (1929–1930) or in Harvard and Radcliffe (Spring of 1931), or back in Cambridge. With *Mencius* completed Richards was in a position to return to recasting this material as a book, but the delivery of a course of lectures on Coleridge in 1932 had aroused an interest, and he deferred his prose studies yet again, writing on the 13th of November to a close Japanese friend, Kinichi Ishikawa that he was

> just sitting down to a book on Coleridge as a philosophic critic before going on to bigger books on the theory of prose and the practise of interpretation.[8]

The Coleridge study was however, dropped in early 1933, when Richards decided instead to compose a short elementary logic in Basic English, which was rapidly becoming a primary interest. He would probably not have regarded this as prevarication, since he told his wife that the logical studies, shortly to be published as *Basic Rules of Reason* (1933), were 'shaping the main stuff for my next book (sequel to *Pract. Crit.*) on language'.[9] Events were, however, gradually conspiring to compel Richards to give the 'Philosophy of Rhetoric' his full attention.

In the summer of 1933, Richards visited North America for a conference on Basic English. Whilst in New York he met David H. Stevens of the Rockefeller Foundation, who was taking an interest in Basic with a view to funding projects related to it. Initially they discussed the possibility that Richards might undertake research on the use of Basic Theory for the analysis of 'Chinese forms of thought and Chinese syntax',[10] and they continued to correspond about other Basic related projects in China. But on his return Richards was entangled with final work on *Basic Rules of Reason*, and also felt compelled by the recent publication of T. S. Eliot's *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), which Richards saw was returning to tired and imperceptive eighteenth-century models of poetic function, to take up his study of Coleridge once more. In the summer of 1934, with the Coleridge book complete, Richards was visited by John Marshall, Assistant Director of Education at the Rockefeller Foundation, and they discussed Richards' work on the general theory of interpretation, and on his return to the United States, Marshall wrote to Richards

asking whether this was the work promised in the ‘Summary’ of *Practical Criticism* (p. 329):

> If that is the case, is it by any chance your plan to give the practical uses of the theory in education your attention next? A developed statement of the views suggested by the few paragraphs in the same summary, on the educational implications of your findings, might just now have a special value in this country, where there is an increasingly widespread disposition to recognize the deficiencies of general education, and to take the necessary steps to remedy them.[11]

Richards’ reply was detailed:

> I have gone a long way on from *Practical Criticism*. In fact since then, most years, I’ve given a course of lectures – under the perhaps odd title of ‘Philosophy of Rhetoric’ – which has been on the theory of interpretation and illustrations of its practical uses. I have got almost too large an accumulation of suggestions, plans, experiments and materials towards reconstructing ‘general education’ – chiefly by making people more able to take a fruitful interest in their own learning and thinking processes.
>
> But I had not planned to write anything on the ‘applied’ side for some time still. My notion is to get ahead further with the experimental and theoretical sides; and I want to do a lot of reading at this stage. […]
>
> I don’t gather from your letter what kind of a statement you have in view – a few pages of opinion or a piece of serious work. I might consider putting other things aside and making some detailed applications (if you thought the moment really exceptionally favourable) but not writing something merely persuasive. What I would like to think about is something that would do – for this, at present, nameless field of general education – what a good Latin grammar does for learning Latin, and what nothing yet does for elementary maths. Exercises and explanations in short – rather than principles. *Practical* criticism for *prose* not poetry, something directly on the technique of understanding.[12]

Marshall replied on the 4th of October to encourage Richards to submit a detailed plan of how this work might take shape, and to specify how long he would need financial assistance from the Rockefeller Foundation. Richards replied with only a short delay on the 26th of October, again in a long and informative letter:

> I think that in a years work I could get out both a fairly clear account of the ways in which direct study of interpretation could be used in teaching together with enough examples to allow the proposed methods to be tested in concrete form. And this last is, of course, the essential thing – since to reform teaching is so much easier on paper than in practice. The difficulty of the work would chiefly be to eliminate unnecessary complexities. Anyone who starts discussing how we make out one another’s meaning, and so on, is apt soon to find himself getting hopelessly abstruse and philosophical. This is I think why we haven’t had direct teaching of reading in the schools and Universities long ago. There is no reason though, why these troublous complexities should not be entirely avoided and simple working methods be arranged. The attempt would also, I believe, better than anything else, bring out the causes that make so much reading and teaching at present so profitless, and also the lines on which present defects could be best remedied.
>
> I might not in a year be able to reach a point at which I should like the work to be finally judged. But I should be able (1) to make a fairly good diagnosis of the chief stumbling blocks to good interpretation of straight expository prose. (Analogous to my list of critical difficulties of judging Poetry, *Practical Criticism* pp).[13] (2) to provide a collection of examples with analyses to document this. (3) to give a discussion of the chief causes of trouble in the use of *metaphors* (again with documentation) (4) to prepare a collection of passages of different kinds of writing

> as material for experimental use – with detailed presentation (for the experimenter's use) of the chief ways in which these passages are likely to be misinterpreted or incompletely understood.
>
> The whole aim would be to obtain better devices to make the reader aware of the ways in which he has gone wrong, thus making him more warily attentive in his future reading.[14]

The General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation rapidly approved the grant of £600 to support Richards for a year, and on the 1st of December Marshall cabled Richards with the news, writing in a letter of the same day with the details of the arrangement. A further stipulation had arisen, that Richards should deliver his statement in at least draft form to the Rockefeller Foundation by the 31st of December 1935,[15] but Richards, always a fast writer, didn't find this objectionable, and he agreed. The completion of formalities was prompt, and Richards was soon committed.

Work began almost immediately, though two other tasks, a revision of *Science and Poetry*, recently out of print, and the new short book *Basic in Teaching: East and West* (1935), largely composed of previously published material, were to take up much of his time in the first months of the new year.[16] A further complication was that Richards accepted an invitation to give Bryn Mawr's Mary Flexner Lectures in February and March 1936.

Richards used his Cambridge 'Practical Criticism' lectures in the Lent term of 1935 to gather further materials. The initial attendance was large, over 250 students,[17] and Richards set to work with determination, now seeing not only the Rockefeller's report but a publishable book:

> Lecture went well, I thought. A large audience laughs so loud that *it seems* very uproarious, I'm going on steadily with protocols and hope that I'll have done enough analysis on them (over and above what's strictly useful at once for the lectures) to make the Rockefeller Statement and Book later pretty easy to write.[18]

Fortunately, the numbers gradually tailed off, and by March there were forty regulars.[19] But this was enough, and Richards was able to send Marshall a positive report of progress on the 2nd of May:

> the statement is going on happily. I'm approaching the end of the Courses of Lectures which have been feeding it with examples and materials (in the fashion of *Practical Criticism*). They haven't left much room for doubt as to the need for some fresh attack on the problem. And though the variety of the modes in which people are able to misunderstand one another is shown to be not less appalling than we feared, some practical measures do seem to be in sight. The main sections of my Statement are already outlined in rough. I shall begin a detailed re-examination of the whole mass in about three weeks time. It is mainly a matter of disengaging the various woods from the trees. I've no doubt that a lot can be done by presenting definite specimens of typical elementary misinterpretations and explaining clearly how they happen. The number of such types of blunders seems to be limited. So there is a good hope that fairly simple methods of inducing insight into these typical situations can be arrived at. I shall at least have for the Statement some precise detailed suggestions and no lack of supporting grounds. The work of developing them and testing them out by the various stricter experimental procedures that suggest themselves looks at present very extensive and inviting.

> But I'm doing no more than note it distantly. I have more than enough detail in hand already. However, the more I see of the detail of these main occasions for stupidity, the more sure I am that something can be done to make them less obstructive and stultifying. It is, in a way, encouraging to notice that our current educational methods seem to make hardly any effort to touch them – though they are frustrated by them at every other sentence.[20]

June found him sifting protocols and 'dovetailing all the possible views and nonsenses into a coherent comprehensible scheme'.[21] After the Richardses' usual summer of climbing in the Alps, he returned to work in September, only for Dorothy to be almost immediately afflicted with scarlet fever and placed in an isolation hospital, in Tooting Graveney,[22] where in spite of a rapid recovery she was obliged to remain for over a month. The domestic calamity at least allowed Richards to write with utter concentration, but he felt that the pressure of work was such that assistance was needed, and he began to hire typists from the Cambridge University typing bureau, thinking that he was no sufficiently advanced to handle some of the work by dictation.[23] The work method was simple, as he explained to Dorothy:

> The typewriter is rattling away at the big table and I'm giving spells of dictation intermittently – plenty of MSS to fill in the gaps while I sort and arrange.[24]

The work was exciting, but arduous, and Richards wrote to David Stevens that he was grateful for having been pushed into the 'jungles of the protocols':

> Without a definite undertaking and a date, I doubt whether I would ever have been into them so deeply or have been able to stay there. I am finding the journey instructive if suffocating (you will see why it is so stuffy later) and I am glad to be making it.[25]

Part of the difficulty was that Richards was not used to dictation as a compositional method, and he seems to have found it difficult to apply to the particular task in hand:

> My MSS piles up satisfactorily. It's as hard work though as I can remember. Very little of it lets me get any swing up. It's all starting and stopping and then putting in another protocol and then thinking of a suitable comment with all the time an eye to keep on 50 odd candidates for the next dozen places and so on.[26]

A slightly worrying sign, suggesting that, as Richards was later to say, 'it was written too fast',[27] was that his typist at this time, a Canadian ex-bookseller, couldn't distinguish, even with the handwriting to help him, between the protocols and Richards' remarks on them.[28] Richards had problems following the track too, remarking on the 23rd that he was in 'tangles' and hoping that clarity would return the following day, since some of his previous day's writing was 'almost too hard to follow for me!'.[29] A few days later he compared the writing to climbing a mountain, the summit seemingly within easy reach when in fact fiercesomely difficult terrain lay concealed just ahead. But the book was already taking shape, the three part plan being decided upon,

though he seemed to have little hope of doing more than sketch the last two sections.[30] The effort of condensing ten years of thought in such a short space of time[31] was beginning to result in serious strain, and on the 28th Richards reported rising in the night to hurriedly make notes on parts of his next chapters that he had been seeing 'very clearly, in DREAMS, definite dreams'.[32] Disconcertingly, he does not seem to have discarded these visions. Part 2 of the study, on Grammar, was now complete, but the pressure was telling on everyone related to the project, and his second typist had fallen away, requiring him to induct another. But he was now dictating on the basis of lecture notes modified the evening before, and a more settled though hardly less strenuous work pattern set in:[33]

> Protocols have been making – I'm glad to say – immense strides. I find to my relief that a lot of the Lecture Notes *are* fully enough written out (I tried to then but haven't since seen clearly how I could use them) to be put in whole sections with just a few linking paragraphs. This week-end I've linked up and prepared, I suppose, something like 20–30,000 words on grammar. And a few mornings, if my new stenographer, starting tomorrow, is any good ought to see the 2nd middle chunk of the thing taking some sort of solid shape. Which will be a vast relief! Also, it encourages me to think that it may not be as tough to as I've anticipated getting the best parts of my endlessly repeated *Philosophy of Rhetoric* lectures worked up into parts of the Logic Section, which is chiefly what frightens me.[34]

Despite being maintained by a conviction that what he was doing would 'really make a serious difference to the America of the next generation'[35] Richards was beginning to realize that the composition method had resulted in a very awkward text, writing to his wife that, as she had warned him, 'what one dictates doesn't sound altogether like what one would write'.[36] During this period Richards was composing for a minimum of thirteen hours a day, and far from producing a sketch of the later sections, as he had earlier imagined would be all he could manage, now wanted to 'make it really overwhelmingly heavy', and to 'accompany it with a sort of abridged version of about 40,000 words' containing 'all the most pointed readable direct recommendations stuff.[37] It was in fact as much as he could do to get the main text of the report completed, and even by the 9th of December he had still not yet begun the final section on Logic, and a start had yet to be made on the Flexner lectures.[38] But work went on with extraordinary speed, and on the 21st of December he wrote to John Marshall to tell him that the 'Statement' was now complete (and, as will become evident later, in a form very close to that eventually published):

> It has swollen into a voluminous affair; in fact there are three of them. The main reason for this size was shortage of time: it is so much easier and quicker just to warm, flavour and serve the stock than to boil it down, and sieve it out and cool it off into a clear little jelly!
>
> I wish time had allowed me to work out a fuller treatment of the suggested class-room exercises. I found that if I separated them I had to elaborate the explanations as to how they should be handled, what to do etc., so that I was virtually redoing the book with them. But, except from the right angle such exercises are neither

> practicable nor desirable – neither intelligible nor politic. So the teaching suggestions have remained embedded in the main discussion and are indicated only in connection with the strategical principles which, I hope, recommend them. I have, however, put in as an Appendix, some supplementary materials and examples aimed rather at the teacher than at the pupils.[39]

Richards and his wife sailed for the United States on the 18th of January 1936,[40] and the Bryn Mawr work had his undivided attention until their stay there was nearing its end, when Richards began preparations for a conference of twenty-five educators which the Rockefeller Foundation had organised in Washington for the 19th of March to discuss what was still being called the 'Statement'. He was exhausted, but managed 'beautifully',[41] though the rest of the meeting was, according to Dorothy, a mixture of 'crusty' and 'rambling discourses' from the other participants.[42] The seminar continued for three days,[43] and then the Richardses took off for a holiday, visiting the Grand Canyon, and finally sailing out of San Francisco for China, where they were to spend the summer engaged on Rockefeller supported work on Basic English.

Though Richards was dissatisfied with the 'Statement' he wanted to see it in print:

> I'm inclined to think it might be well to try to get it published without too great alterations – *soon*. Nothing will make it a real book, so why delay?

Writing to Stevens from Peking in May he was thinking of breaking it up into sections, and suggested that he might 'do over some parts of the Grammar Section of my Report in detail', under the new heading 'The Uses of Grammatical Study in General Education', perhaps with a view to a book *Grammar in Education*. On the second of July he had changed his mind again:

> I have been collecting some opinions about it and they put me in some uncertainty as to the best thing to do. To rewrite it to the degree required to make it a proper respectable book would be a fairly big job, I feel. I am very loth to give the time to it – so many other things are claiming it out here. But to postpone publication seems a pity, and I am not very sure that the result would, in the end, be a much more useful thing as regards its main purpose. So I am tempted to take a middle line, which being in China just now offers me, and get it out with a minimum of corrections (a few excisions and shifts of emphasis, not much more) as a sort of rough draft or blue-print. It would be possible to print it, the whole thing including the *Logic*, here for an absurdly small sum – cheap enough to let it be sold in America for at the *most* U.S. $1.50 […] My idea would be to do it in stiff paper covers – like a Blue Book or Report […] There ought to be room for volumes that do not pretend to be permanent works, for bulky contributions that aspire to no more status than the magazine article.[44]

Due to missing correspondence it is not known when this scheme was abandoned, and the eventual plan, to revise the report and publish the book through Harcourt Brace in New York, with simultaneous publication of imported sheets by Kegan Paul in London, was adopted. But this decision must have been made shortly afterwards, since Richards, despite being extraordinarily busy at this time, with the

Basic projects in China, reports to Marshall that he expected to be able to send the finished text on to Harcourt Brace by mid-January 1937, doing the last revisions on the Trans-Siberian railway. The expectation was that it would be 'not much changed except trimmings', and that *The Teaching of Interpretation* or *Interpretation in Teaching*, as he was now calling the report, might be published by June.[45] This was all hopelessly optimistic, and pressure of other work, accidents (their carriage on the Trans-Siberian broke in half while passing Lake Baikal), and Cambridge duties to be completed before departure for the United States on the Queen Mary in March, prevented Richards from working on the script until May, when he was on board ship travelling from San Francisco bound for Yokohama on his way back to Peking. Arriving in Japan he wrote to his wife that after twelve to fifteen hours a day on *Interpretation in Teaching*, 'which is to be title (I think)' 'it's almost finished',[46] and the manuscript was sent to Harcourt shortly afterwards, the first proofs finally reaching him in Hong Kong on the 19th of January 1938. The finished volume was at last published in late 1938, probably in November or early December, in London.

The resulting book, undoubtedly hard to write, has proved to be difficult to read. He continued, up until the end of his life, to regard it as a major statement, and to regret that it was so little known. But its composition history is perhaps enough to show why it is so problematic a book to come to terms with. It is a vast summary of ten years of thought, partly dictated, partly boiler-plated from lecture notes, written in round-the-clock shifts in bursts of frenetic activity. *Interpretation in Teaching* requires a very sympathetic and skilful reader, a reader in fact who has already undergone the instruction the book aims to design. Aside from its merits as a quarry for teachers of composition, it is an essential document for our understanding of Richards' turn from literary criticism in the late 1920s, for, and this point should be re-emphasized, it is a book with roots in courses of lectures which followed immediately after the groundbreaking 'Practical Criticism' courses of 1925 and 1927, and should be read in conjunction with *Practical Criticism* (1929), and not as an offshoot of Richards growing involvement with Basic English. Indeed, the pressure of thought evident in *Interpretation in Teaching* explains the interest in Basic English, not the other way around.

When Richards wrote to his wife in 1928 that '*Meaning, how not to mistake it*' was his subject he had already taken the decision to move out of academic literary discussion. An interesting indication of the reasons for this can be found in a response to a letter from his wife, who needed to include a reference to her husband on some promotional material connected with her own *Climbing Days*.[47] How should she describe him? Richards replied she should say he was 'I. A. Richards author of *The Meaning of Meaning* and perhaps add 'of *Basic Rules of Reason*', or perhaps he could just be 'the semasiologist', or perhaps it would be better to say 'I. A. Richards (who wrote *The*

Meaning of Meaning, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, or who recently published *Coleridge on Imagination*), has been twice round the world not neglecting any big mountains passed en route).'[48] The evasion is obvious, but just in case there is any doubt, Richards has written to one side of these suggestions a brief explanation:

> I hate the word 'critic' myself.

By the late 1930s these feelings had strengthened, not so much because of the composition of *Interpretation in Teaching*, but just as part of the same movement of thought which brought the book into being in the decade after 1928. Writing to his wife in 1938, when the Rockefeller Foundation was encouraging Richards to return to Cambridge, and the Faculty of English, he observed that he had no wish to go back, that the best he could do there was 'correct trimmings of miseducation', and that 'the whole world of Post War Literary Criticism has quite vanished from my interests now':

> Why shouldn't I be the *Rimbaud* of Criticism? […] Why shouldn't I resign from Cambridge and Magdalene – giving the needs of the China of the future as my main reason.[49]

At first sight puzzling, the trajectory, from admired literary theorist and leading figure in Cambridge English to educational theorist in China, will on reflection come to seem reasonable. Richards' commitment to a science of literary criticism was motivated by a recognition that within the university, at least, it should be an intersubjective activity. Lecturing in 1920 he had presented his audience with two alternative conceptions of criticism:

> You can *either* think of the literature of criticism as an assemblage of disconnected conflicting opinions to which if you write criticism yourself you can only add another such opinion. Or, you can think of it as a *science*, a body of coherent knowledge with many provinces […].[50]

There was no intention of turning the entire subject over to the laboratories, far from it, but only the much more modest aim of making criticism sufficiently clear in its reference and its terminologies that it would be an activity in which agreement could be reached through logical argument, not merely by suasion. Richards' own project for achieving this goal, though admirable in many respects, employed, as I have argued at greater length in the introduction to *Principles of Literary Criticism* (Volume 3), a flawed naturalism, one which presumed the intuitions of value reported by readers to be sound, and only in need of explanation by science. Had he taken a different line, that it was not the value that should be explained by science, but the judgments of value reported by readers, perhaps he would have been better able to resist the growth of mere controversy, mere 'disconnected conflicting opinions', in the Faculty at Cambridge, and in the rest of the world's departments of English. But he wasn't able to rethink his naturalism, so powerful were his own

intuitions of the value of literature, and in any case a large part of his interest had always been in the service of communication, and it was not necessary to preserve his scientific criticism in order to fulfil this goal. In his earlier writings, *Principles* for example, Richards is concerned with the improvement of communication between author and reader, and also between readers engaged in critical discussion, and his use of science in this period, his attempt to employ scientific methodologies, can be seen as only a means to this end. Where he had explanatory goals it was because he wished to foster communication, not because the goals in themselves were of deep interest. This would be an incomplete view – I think Richards was to a significant degree, certainly in his very early writings and lectures, in 1920 and 1921, more purely a scientist – but it does appear to be a just understanding of *Principles* and of *Practical Criticism*. The difficulties he encountered in making an intersubjective criticism plausible and workable were troubling, but not, therefore, disastrous. Some other route towards intersubjectivity might be found, and he learned from the courses in 1925 and 1927 that the basic reading skills were in themselves so poor that, even if he had been able to find a more widespread interest in his version of critical activity, the students might would not have had the equipment to benefit from it. His conclusion was simple: it was necessary to start his project at a much more fundamental level, that of instruction in reading.

With hindsight we can see that his naturalistic program for scientific research was bound to fail, for the reasons given above, but we can also see that there is very little to prevent a fully naturalized study of cultural materials succeeding, as part of the sciences of human behaviour, of psychology and linguistics. Richards need not have abandoned science for education as he did. A science is, despite appearances, possible. But his example is exemplary and instructive for those who believe, as Richards passionately did, in the value of poetry and of literature. He eventually seems to have concluded that these were subjects which were better taught indirectly, through an enhancement of the reader's own skills. His writings in the 1930s are an attempt to provide a blueprint for methods to bring about such an enhancement. Whether *Interpretation in Teaching* is in its entirety still a viable blueprint seems open to doubt, not so much because it was misconceived but because those whom Richards would most wish to help today are in need of still more basic instructional remedies.

---

1 D. E. Richards' diary, 30 Apr. 1928. Richards Collection, Magdalene College, Cambridge (hereafter RCM).

2 'Books of the Quarter', *Criterion*, 8/31 (Dec. 1928), 315–24. Review of Herbert Read, *English Prose Style* (G. Bell & Sons: London, 1928).

3 IAR to D. E. Richards, 13 Oct. 1928, Richards Collection. Quoted in John Constable, ed., *Selected Letters of I. A. Richards* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1990), p. 48.

4 IAR to D. E. Richards, 5 Jan. 1929, RCM.

5 IAR to D. E. Richards, 6 Jan. 1929, RCM.

6 D. E. Richards' diary, 23 Apr. 1929, RCM.

7 This ‘Programme for after return from China’ is dated 14 June 1929, and is found in Notebook 3, RCM. The plan appears to have been based on an earlier outline dated 14 May 1928.
8 Transcribed in D. E. Richards’ diary, 13 Nov. 1932, RCM.
9 IAR to D. E. Richards, 7 Nov. 1933, RCM.
10 IAR to D. H. Stevens, 18 Jan. 1934, Rockefeller Archives Center.
11 John Marshall to IAR, 4 Sep. 1934, RCM.
12 IAR to John Marshall, (undated, but stamped as received 3 Oct. 1934), Rockefeller Archive Center.
13 Editorial Note: Richards left this space blank, intending to fill it in later. He presumably means the obstacles dealt with in the eight chapters of Part Three.
14 IAR to John Marshall, 26 Oct. 1934, Rockefeller Archive Center.
15 John Marshall to IAR, 1 Dec. 1934. RCM.
16 IAR to D. E. Richards, 13 Jan. 1935, RCM.
17 Figures given in a diary entry by David H. Stevens and reported to the General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation, dated 27 May 1935, and based on conversation with Richards during a visit to Cambridge.
18 IAR to D. E. Richards, 26 Jan. 1935, RCM.
19 IAR to D. E. Richards, 11 Mar. 1935, RCM.
20 IAR to John Marshall, 2 May 1935, Rockefeller Archive Center.
21 IAR to D. E. Richards, 16 June 1935, RCM.
22 D. E. Richards’ diary, 5 Sep. 1935, RCM.
23 IAR to D. E. Richards, 13 Sep. 1935, RCM.
24 IAR to D. E. Richards, 16 Sep. 1935, RCM.
25 IAR to David H. Stevens, 16 Sep. 1935, Rockefeller Archive Center.
26 IAR to D. E. Richards, 19 Sep. 1935, RCM.
27 ‘Beginnings and Transitions: I. A. Richards Interviewed by Reuben Brower’, in Reuben Brower, et al., eds, *I. A. Richards: Essays in his Honor* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1973), [17–41], 28.
28 IAR to D. E. Richards, Undated letter (filed as 1935), RCM.
29 IAR to D. E. Richards, 23 Sep. 1935, RCM.
30 IAR to D. E. Richards, 26 Sep. 1935, RCM.
31 IAR to D. E. Richards, 27 Sep. 1935, RCM.
32 IAR to D. E. Richards, 28 Sep. 1935, RCM.
33 IAR to D. E. Richards, 28 Sep. 1935, RCM.
34 IAR to D. E. Richards, 29 Sep. 1935, RCM.
35 IAR to D. E. Richards, 29 Sep. 1935, RCM.
36 IAR to D. E. Richards, 30 Sep. 1935, RCM.
37 IAR to D. E. Richards, 1 Oct. 1935, RCM.
38 IAR to D. E. Richards, 9 Dec. 1935, RCM.
39 IAR to John Marshall, 21 Dec. 1935, Rockefeller Archive Center.
40 D. E. Richards’ diary, 19 Mar. 1936, RCM.
41 Remark of David H. Stevens, reported in D. E. Richards’ diary, 19 Mar. 1936, RCM.
42 D. E. Richards’ diary, 19 Mar. 1936, RCM.
43 IAR to the Master of Magdalene, quoted in D. E. Richards’ diary, 14 May 1936, RCM.
44 IAR to John Marshall, *2* July 1936, Rockefeller Archive Center.
45 IAR to John Marshall, 17 Dec. 1936, Rockefeller Archive Center.
46 IAR to D. E. Richards, 7 May 1937, RCM.
47 Dorothy Pilley, *Climbing Days* (G. Bell and Sons: London, 1935).
48 IAR to D. E. Richards, 23 May 1935, RCM.
49 IAR to D. E. Richards, 20 Feb. 1938, RCM. Quoted in John Constable, ed., *Selected Letters of I. A. Richards* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1990), 101–2.
50 Lecture I, page 1, Notebook 4, RCM.

Reviews and Other Discussions of Interpretation in Teaching

Reviews

Clutton-Brock, A. F. [Unsigned], 'Studies in English Usage: Function of Metaphor', *Times Literary Supplement*, 37/1922 (3 Dec. 1938), 766.

House, Humphrey, 'The New Phaedrus', *New Statesman & Nation*, 16/410 (31 Dec. 1938), 1136, 1138.

Mason, H. A., 'The Central All-Connecting Study', *Scrutiny*, 8/1 (June 1939), 78–80.

Ransom, John Crowe, 'The Teaching of Thinking', *Yale Review* 28/2 (Winter 1939), 410–11.

Roberts, Michael, 'The Philosophy of Grammar', *London Mercury*, 39/231 (Jan. 1939), 358–9.

Willey, Basil, 'Thought About Language', *Cambridge Review*, 60/1472 (24 Feb. 1939), 273.

Wodehouse, Helen, 'Critical Notices: I. A. Richards, Interpretation in Teaching', *Mind*, 48/190 (Apr. 1939), 227–36.

Other Discussions

Anon, 'Perils of Reading', *Times Literary Supplement*, 37 (3 Dec. 1938).

Bilsky, Manuel, 'I. A. Richards' Theory of Metaphor', *Modern Philology*, 50 (1952), 130–7.

Crane, R. S., 'I. A. Richards on the Art of Interpretation', In R. S. Crane, ed., *Critics and Criticism: Ancient and Modern* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1952), 27–44. Reprinted from *Ethics*, 59 (Jan. 1949), 112–26. Reprinted in Volume 10.

Derrick, Thomas J., 'I. A. Richards' Rhetorical Theories in the Classroom', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 10/4 (Fall 1980), 240–53.

Kotler, Janet, 'On Reading I. A. Richards – Again and Again', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 10/4 (Fall 1980), 231–9.

Note on the Text

There are three states of the text of *Interpretation in Teaching*. That of the first edition of 1938, that of the second impression of 1949, which incorporates a number of changes (e.g. a passage on p. 6 concerning Charles Hoole), and the second edition of 1973, which is a photolithographic reprint of the second impression introducing a few corrections to the analytic contents, some changes to the preface to remove references particular to the first edition which might appear dated or out of place in a reissue, and various other revisions in the main body of the text (some pages, 87 and 94 for example, have been completely reset without alterations, except the introduction of errors, the reasons for the resetting being unknown). The text reprinted here is that of the 1973 edition and incorporates all corrections made in that edition. In some cases the readings of the editions of 1938 and 1949 have been preferred, and these are indicated in the footnotes.

The ‘Retrospect’ which Richards added to the reprint of 1973, is included here as an appendix.

To facilitate the tracing of references the page numbers of the original editions, identical in 1938, 1949, and 1973, have been supplied in the margin of the pages. It should be noted that this occasionally results in two sets of original numbers on the same page of the current edition, since footnotes were occasionally allowed to run over on to a succeeding page. All internal crossreferences, including those of the analytic contents, are to the original page numbers.

When originally published *Interpretation in Teaching* did not have an index; that given here has been generated for this edition and the references are to the pagination of the current volume.

In some places in the commentaries supplied by his students, here called ‘protocols’, Richards has inserted comments within parentheses. To differentiate these from the protocol writer’s own parentheses Richards’ insertions use the form […].

INTERPRETATION IN TEACHING

Preface

[v] These pages came into being under the kindly stimulus of the General Education Board, as a Statement on the Application of Theory of Interpretation to General Education; my thanks are due to the Board for permission to publish them. They were written for teachers and concern the layman only in the degree to which he recognizes that in the matter of the conduct of our native language we are all our own pupils.[1]

The argument from time to time looks forward to the general achievement – in a perhaps not very distant future – of levels of intelligence in interpretation higher than those yet reached. Failure to attain such levels here does not put that prospect in doubt. It may be called a dream of impossibilities – more hopelessly beyond human powers than even our present verbal and mathematical skills must have seemed to the earliest users of language had they speculated about the future; but it is always absurd to set limits to intelligence.

Those who sigh or fret at such optimism will find plenty in this book to confirm them in a low estimate of our current linguistic ability. Part of its bulk comes from the documentation I have included. Every candid teacher knows already the main fact that it illustrates: the majority of his pupils at the end of all their schooling understand remarkably little of what they hear or read. But to reflect profitably on the modes and the causes of these failures we need detailed examples rather than principles.

The most general principles and upshot I have summarized in the Introduction and the various Landing Stages which punctuate the course of the argument. These might be glanced through first to give a perspective which may be lost in the detailed treatment. The analytic contents may also assist and I have gathered into an Appendix some further examples of the class-room exercises through which the aims and attitudes recommended [vi] would have to be translated into teaching procedure.

The weighty and all but overwhelming objection which every reader will feel is that many of the topics suggested are ‘right over their heads’, far beyond the reach, of any probable students. When Mr A. D. Sheffield was addressing an audience of working men, a voice exclaimed, ‘Say, Prof! Your sentences skid off our domes!’ I am aware enough, I believe, of this objection. It is the prime difficulty of the whole undertaking that the thoughts we most need are those that are hardest to elicit. But this does not invalidate the choice of topics. A certain kind of thought about language, if instigated early, is our surest remedy for the cruel waste of effort (for teacher and pupil alike) our present courses entail. But only certain kinds of thought about

language are fruitful, and I have tried to separate them from other kinds which have been, and still are, a hindrance to everyone rather than a help.

Once the desired modes of reflection upon language are distinguished, the best methods of inducing them will be developed less by conjecture than through class-room experience. The initial difficulty is to make a theory of interpretation sufficiently explicit for experience of its applications to begin to accumulate. Trial sieves out what is practicable from the rest – which passes into the teacher's theoretical reserve. But without a well-developed theoretical reserve, some of the most important points are likely to be mishandled – as, I think, my selection of *experimental material* (pp. 26, 27, and 79) shows. With an improvement in the theoretical reserve, much in it that at first seems to be impracticable as teaching theme may go over adapted into the lesson. My main argument indeed is that it is the pupil's theoretical weakness which halts him. He must amend it by exercise under guidance. We cannot give him better ideas, he must grow them; but the better *our* ideas about interpretation are, the more we may help him.

The whole subject requires to be simplified, but we cannot simplify any confused subject without a preliminary treatment which seems at first to make it more complex. That is only a first stage. The result, if the work were properly done, would be to make safe simplifications much easier. We are mainly suffering from premature false simplifications.

[vii] No excuse is needed for treating the conduct of the mind in interpretation as a philosophical subject, or, if we distrust that word, as a subject that requires us to attend critically to its methods and assumptions. I take the doctrine of 'usage' and the theory of metaphor as examples of enquiries which will yield nothing profitable unless they are so treated. *Then*, they replace, it seems to me, many of the more traditional philosophic questions which, while they were neglected, have been labour in vain.

Reviewers of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* have complained variously. Since this is a more detailed development of the same positions, I may perhaps summarize these objections. Most of them concern the stabilities of words. I have been accused of making meaning in each case unique. But, for me, meanings arise only through recurrences, and what is unique would be ineffable. For the same critic, I deny the principle of contradiction by saying that if a passage means one thing it can at the same time mean other incompatible things, or, as Freud puts it, a symbol may be over-determined. But the principle of contradiction has to do with *logical* relations between meanings, not with the *psychological* concomitance of contradictory meanings. For the same writer, I deny that words may refer to constant things. But my point was that there are many types of constancy and many types of things, and that these ought to be distinguished. Again, I am supposed, by one critic, both to harbour a dislike for traditional

reason and to be ‘determined to begin only with the verifiable facts and to draw from them only such inferences as can be checked against other facts’. But that seems no bad description of the traditional process of reason.

In general it is not easy to make the scale, or mesh, which is being used in the enquiry clear to the reader. Confusion naturally ensues if what is seen through a lens is mistaken for the naked-eye appearance, and the degree of magnification attempted in these analyses varies. This parallel is defective and we know less about the laws connecting interpretations than about the laws of optics. But charges of perversity must arise unless the influence of the general purposes governing the work are taken into account. We can use lenses in studying vision without recommending that everything be seen through a microscope all the time. Such misunderstandings are to be expected in this subject. Some further remarks on this point will be found at the opening of Chapter 16.

But one set of complaints has a specific source – a misapprehension [viii] of the ‘special and technical sense’ I gave to the word *context* in my account of meaning. ‘“A word means the missing part of its context”: this remark’, writes Mr Sackville-West in the *Spectator*, ‘is easy to misunderstand; but it is worth understanding aright, and Mr Richards sees that we do so.’ Unhappily, I did not equally succeed with other readers. By them the technical sense of *context* was identified with that of *literary context*, and then the whole theorem becomes nonsense. A note on these two senses in this prominent place may help to prevent some confusion. For further explanations I must refer to *The Meaning of Meaning*.

(1) A word, like any other sign, gets whatever meaning it has through belonging to a recurrent group of events, which may be called its context. Thus a word’s context, *in this sense*, is a certain recurrent pattern of *past* groups of events, and to say that its meaning depends upon its context would be to point to the process by which it has acquired its meaning.

(2) In another, though a connected, sense, a word’s context is *the words which surround it in the utterance*, and the other *contemporaneous* signs which govern its interpretation.

Both senses of ‘context’ need to be kept in mind if we are to consider carefully how interpretations succeed or fail. For clarity we may distinguish the second sort of context by calling it the *setting*. It is evident that a change in the setting may change the context (in the first sense) in which a word is taken. We never, in fact, interpret single signs in isolation. (The etymological hint given by *inter* is very relevant here.) We always take a sign as being *in some setting*, actual or supplied, as part of an interconnected sign-field (normally, with verbal signs, a sentence, and an occasion). Thus, insufficient attention to the accompanying sign-field (the setting and occasion) which

controls the context (recurrent groups of events in the past) is a frequent cause of mistaken understanding. But equally, no care, however great, in observing the setting will secure good interpretation if past experience has not provided the required originative context. Here comes in the stress which teachers are so often forced to put upon the need for ‘actual experience’ in the individual’s past history if verbal representations are to be understood. The stressing is justified if it does not overlook the indirect ways in which words can analyse features of experience and recompound them into wholes which may never have occurred in the readers history. It is these features of experience, not specific integral experiences as distinct moments of being, which enter into contexts with words. If words – to be understood – must reinstate such integral experiences, the services of language to us would be far less than they are. A crude view here would obviously deprive literature of some of its greatest values.

The interactions of what I am calling the contexts and settings are as intricate and incessant as life itself. Thus a general exposition of them would be inherently a difficult matter. Signfields (or settings), by recurring, generate contexts (under certain conditions of interest structure); and which contexts are operative (how the signs are read) is determined later by the new settings. Thus the contexts which control meanings are always fluctuating with changes in the setting: the teacher’s aim is to help them to become as orderly, as supple, and as serviceable as possible.

Such an account makes us expect the widest variability in the senses of our words, and is the theoretical ground for objecting to over-simplified doctrines of usage. It does not deny, however, the part played by convention in language, nor the stabilities, of various orders, which come from the uniformities of contexts. It only attempts the beginning of an explanation of these constancies. Nor does it overlook the importance of the distinction between words as *symbols* and sounds, or marks, as *signs*. A symbol is a higher level co-ordinating unit by which we are enabled to take any one of a class of perhaps very different sounds or marks as being, for interpretative purposes, the same symbol. To describe words as signs is a way of reminding ourselves of the mode by which they acquire and maintain their meanings and a useful warning against simple-mindedness.

Finally, as to the limitation of this study to the interpretation of *language*. I would urge that there is no such separation between verbal and non-verbal intelligence, rightly conceived, as is sometimes suggested. There are trivial ways of studying language which have no connection with life, and these we need to clear out of our schools. But a deeper and more thorough study of our use of words is at every point a study of our ways of living. It touches all the modes of interpretative activity – in technique, and in social intercourse – upon which civilization depends. It touches them, moreover, at the most malleable points, at the most convenient points, where most may be expected from an effort to clarify and assist them.

I. A. R
Peking, June, 1937.

---

1 Editorial note: The first edition continues this paragraph thus: ‘I hoped to revise them further before publication; but two years’ work in China and lately the War have made that impossible. This must be my excuse for clumsiness and prolixity.’

[xi] # Analytic Contents[1]

Introduction

Part One: Rhetoric *[xii]*

Chapter One: Simple Sense

---

1 Editorial Note: References are to the pagination of the original publication, given in the margin of this edition.

2 Editorial Note: First edition reads ‘not discourse when interpreting’.

he reads anything which stretches his intelligence; the pupil meets with it all the time, and if he is being well taught he should be expecting it and enjoying the sense of increasing power that his progressive mastery of it can afford. For this growth in power is, fundamentally, the vitalizing incentive with which education builds.

The beginner, in studying the most elementary matters, is doing nothing which is (or should be) *for him* any simpler than what we are doing when we try to follow a new and difficult author. And we can only help him in a fashion parallel to that in which we ourselves would wish to be helped or to help ourselves: that is, not by supplying the 'right answer to the difficulty (with some unexamined criterion of 'right answers') but by making clearer what the difficulty itself was, so that when we meet it again we shall not have to 'remember the answer' but shall see what it must be from our understanding of the question. A learner at all stages learns – for serious purposes – Only in so far as he is a thinker, and the difficulties of thinking are never new. We overcome them – in elementary mechanics, and in the Theory of Relativity, in learning to read words of one syllable and in reading *Ulysses*, alike – by taking account of them, by seeing what we are doing and setting aside other things which we should not be trying to do there. We solve them finally by discovering how much more simple the task was than we had hitherto supposed.

[5] As language, in its multiplicity of modes, and our always incomplete mastery of them, is the source of most of our preventable stultifications, so the study of how language works and fails is our great opportunity.

With reason did Coleridge dilate upon 'the advantages which language alone, at least which language with incomparably greater ease and certainty than any other means, presents to the instructor of impressing modes of intellectual energy so constantly, so imperceptibly… as to secure in due time the formation of a second perceptibly nature'. Well did he urge his generation 'to value earnestly and with a practical seriousness a means, already prepared for us by nature and society, of teaching the young mind to think well and wisely by the same unremembered process and with the same never forgotten results, as those by which it is taught to speak and converse'. (*Biographia Literaria*, II, p. 117.) We cannot think, as Coleridge thought, about language, without recognizing that he is not overstating its powers. How to use them, how to develop the instructive possibilities of this universal switchboard, how, by investigating them, to improve, at the same time, our command of all the inter-connections of thought, non-verbal as well as verbal, is our problem. We are better placed for this than Coleridge's contemporaries were, because we have come to see still more clearly how central the fact of language is.

The unintelligibility of a problem may sometimes be due to lack of special experience, but most often it is due to the language in which the problem comes to us – or our lack of experience with such language, or with the ways of language as such. As Sayce said, in his

problem here – and, I insist, not a whit more difficult essentially than the schoolboy's task in seeing what sort of a sum he has been set and how he is to tackle it.

The way to the generalizing power, or better, to the general insight that we seek, does not lie through classification or a listing of uniformities. This is another grand traditional error. Catalogues of predicaments and arguments, of typical fallacies with representative examples, tables of grammatical constructions with their appropriate breaches, classifications of tropes and modes and genres – these may have done some good; but time and effort have shown often enough that they will not give us what we want. They look like the fumbling first steps of young sciences: what we want is the further development of what is already an advanced art, the art of intellectual discernment. For this reason – and here I am probably turning my blows from dead donkeys to a live enough lion – educational psychology is not what we want. That, too, is still a toddling infant science and our ordinary tact and skill and common sense are far in advance of the utmost reach of its present purview. I would not (and could not if I would) discourage the labours of those who are enquiring methodically, in the psychological laboratories, into the learning process, into memorization, the conditions of retention and undistorted recall, into IQs and other factors, and transferences of ability; into typology, needs, motivation and the [10] rest. May they succeed beyond all expectations – but would they even *then* have found out anything which for practical purposes (as apart from theoretical interest) would add to our present powers? I wish I could hope so. What I have seen of this work makes me think that it will yield increasingly exact but *increasingly abstract* statements of laws with whose general form we are already sufficiently acquainted to be able to use them in practice, though we need not necessarily be able to state them. That these refinements will have much direct bearing upon teaching I doubt. Refinements in the Theory of Gravitation make no difference whatever to the way we throw stones. The sort of psychological laws we use in teaching are: like the physical laws we use in playing baseball; if we knew them more precisely we still would not use the refinements. The complexity of the conditions would make the attempt unprofitable. *Theoretically*, on the other hand, it may happen – I believe it is happening – that exact experiment and abstract reflection, in that branch of biology which we call psychology, and in its other branches, may make immense changes in our whole conception of education. The changed conception may well change our aim but we should still try to attain that aim by ways that we know about already – that we know about, at least, when we wake up to ask ourselves what we are doing.

To put this, possibly ungracious, point briefly: Our errors in teaching technique can be corrected more easily, and more safely, I believe, from our own awareness of how we ourselves learn and think, than from the recommendations of educational psychology, which at

Meaning'). Then a chapter with the fine title, 'What is the cause that nonsense so often escapes being detected, both by the writer and by the reader?' This he treats with a dissertation on 'The Nature and Power of Signs' which leads him on to 'The extensive Usefulness of Perspicuity'.

Campbell does not fulfil this programme, which indeed almost comprises all we need to know; but he does lift the subject into a light in which its central position in education can be fairly seen. Later Manuals by trying to dodge the difficulties (which are its value) have degraded it.

The most *general* task of the Art would be to distinguish the different sorts of ends, or aims, for which we use language, to teach how to pursue them separately and how to reconcile their diverse claims when, as is usual, the use of language is mixed. That our uses of language can be divided under several different main heads, no one will doubt; though just which divisions are the most illuminating and convenient in teaching may be a puzzling matter. This is that question of 'the classification of the Language Functions' which makes a brief and unsatisfactory appearance among the preliminaries of many works on general linguistic.

How many things does language do? It is possible to make a very baffling tangle (Stern, for example, in his valuable *Meaning and Change of Meaning*, does so) out of the different answers: that it records or *communicates* thought, *expresses* mental processes, *symbolizes* states of affairs, *promotes* human co-operation, and so on. 'The interrelations of the functions are not known in detail', observes Stern, p. 21. They *cannot*, of course, be known, until the functions themselves have been more clearly determined and distinguished. Which we take to be fundamental and how we arrange the others, are not matters to be settled until we have [14] decided *why* we are distinguishing them, for what purposes. This first language problem, like a hundred later ones, is apt to be stated in a way which from the start prevents any progress. Language has infinite uses, and which main categories we introduce to facilitate study of these infinite uses, depends upon the proposed scope and aim of our study. The psychologist, the jurist, the social historian, the logician, the lexicographer, the semanticist tracing the history of sense changes, the critic, and the pedagogue will use different principles of classification. The apple grower establishes grades among his fruit for marketing purposes which are of no significance whatever to the plant physiologist.

For our purposes the last thing we wish to do (literally the last thing) is to introduce a classification to be taught and relied on. To introduce one too early would interfere with one of the most healthy exercises that the student can indulge in. As we shall see, it is easy to offer him passages in a way which will force him to work out for himself some of the implications of the perception that a plain neutral statement of fact is in some way different from an appeal to passion. To start out, *in*

teaching, from a division between, say,

(1) pure scientific impersonal or neutral statement,

and

(2) emotive utterance which expresses and evokes states of feeling

is a good way of helping him to encyst, and so to dodge or hide from himself, just the very things whose differences and connections he should be puzzling over. I mention this here as another example of the danger, throughout the subject, of supposing that instruction in linguistic theory (whether Rhetorical, Logical, or Grammatical) can replace insight into, self-discovery of and thus understanding of, the matters with which it is concerned. (If I insist too often upon this, the fault will be readily forgiven me by those who realize what a new world that would be in which there was no need especially to remind ourselves of this failing!)

The general task of Rhetoric is to give, not by dogmatic formula but *by exercise in comparisons*, an insight into the different modes of speech and their exchanges and disguises. The chief divisions of these general fields for comparison may be: statement, full and explicit, or condensed (by abstraction, ambiguity or implication, the hint, the aposiopesis); statement, literal or direct, and indirect (by metaphor, simile, comparison, parallel, etc.); suasion, open (from appeal to cajolery) or concealed [15] (either as mere statement or as mere ornament); and so on.

But we should do little good by explaining this, even with examples. All our pupils know it already. What they do not know is how to distinguish and meet the varying modes of language *in practice*. The theory of the divisions is only useful when it comes in later to aid them in noticing explicitly what they are already doing – for good or ill.

The more special problems of Rhetoric have to do with the Figures of Speech – about which current theory is oddly out of date, and our practice most deceiving. Experiments with figures easily awaken a raging curiosity which, if it is suitably fed and not choked with formulas, can cut deep and spread wide. Well led, it should be able to fertilize almost any topic, redeeming it from the status of desert to be crossed to that of region to be cultivated.

Some figures of speech can be translated into relatively non-figurative language with ease, others only with difficulty, and some perhaps not at all. Such translation exercises, if used with discretion (they can be paralysing), are an invaluable device for redirecting attention to what is being said and how: it is being understood. They lead naturally and insensibly into Logic. I might equally say that Logic, for our purposes, is just a more thorough enquiry into these translations. For example, if we try to say what is said in one metaphor by means of another metaphor (e.g. try replacing the water-figure at