LANGUAGE, THOUGHT AND COMPREHENSION

A Study of the Writings of I. A. Richards

W. H. N. Hotopf

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NOTES

1. The following abbreviations will be used throughout this work in footnote references to books by I. A. Richards:

M. of M.	*The Meaning of Meaning*, 1st edition
P.L.C.	*Principles of Literary Criticism*, 5th edition
S. and P.	*Science and Poetry*, 1st edition
P.C.	*Practical Criticism*, 9th edition
M. on the M.	*Mencius on the Mind*
B.R.R.	*Basic Rules of Reason*
C. on I.	*Coleridge on Imagination*, 2nd edition
P.R.	*The Philosophy of Rhetoric*
I. in T.	*Interpretation in Teaching*
H.T.R.P.	*How to Read a Page*

2. The number in brackets after quotations in the text refers to the page number in the book there under discussion.
3. Italics is in quotations are always those of the original author, unless otherwise indicated.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

THIS book is the outcome of many years spent in reading and critically appraising the writings of I. A. Richards. I have had two particular motives for doing this: first, an interest in theories about the influence of language upon the way in which we think; and second, a concern with how much we fail in communicating verbally with one another, and the reasons for this. Writing about Richards from these points of view should not result in a distorted picture, since these were themselves the fundamental motives of Richards' writings. But I should like to tell the reader what kind of work this is and why it has been written.

Let us start by considering the influence Richards has had. This has been strong in two areas in particular; that of education in proper thinking and comprehension of written material by improving our skill with words, and that of the appreciation of poetry. Much the most influential book in the first of these two fields was *The Meaning of Meaning*, his second full length work, which he wrote in collaboration with C. K. Ogden in 1923. The effect of this book was considerable: it has run through ten editions, the latest appearing in 1960; and it is still widely referred to. It aimed, as we may judge from its title, at having a wide appeal, but apart from its own particular qualities it was well positioned psychologically—written as a wave was gathering for its forward swoop—to be a great success. It popularised an idea, often put forward by philosophers, about the influence of language upon philosophical theories, and this idea was just starting a new life as a result of an attempt with a reformulated logic to create an ideal language. The new version had been proposed in 1918 by Russell in his lectures on *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*[1] and in 1921 by Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*[2]. There was also a concern at the time

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with the propaganda power attributed to the popular press, which had shown its strength in the congenial setting of the 1914–18 war. Fear of the strength of such propaganda, that was considered to work by manipulating various verbal devices, may have been part of the general reaction to the European trauma of the First World War which expressed itself in the markedly idealistic, war-abolishing rationalism that characterised the period. Holding beliefs and attitudes like these, and bringing to the problem a fervent belief in science as expressed in an enlightened behaviouristic psychology, whilst at the same time talking the language of mentalism; blending this with the methods of philosophical analysis and backing it up with a theory of language-magic, culled from the work of classical anthropologists (but backed, in the person of Malinowski, by the modern movement in anthropology), a theory moreover that was used to account both for Greek philosophy and the most up-to-date views of the Cambridge realists; the work united a wide range of intellectual fashions of the time, and contrived to be at once revolutionary and traditional. Testimony to the breadth of the book's influence was given by the references to it to be found both in works of scholarship and of popularisation. Many writings by logicians, philosophers, and linguists referred to Ogden and Richards' theory of signs and division of language function, though not generally in great detail, since, as we shall see, this work was not very systematic. Its effect was much more that of a stimulus. As its nearest and most influential successor we may take Charles Morris's *Signs, Language and Behaviour* (1946), which aimed at contributing "at this time the kind of stimulation that has been provided for several decades by C. K. Ogden's and I. A. Richards' *The Meaning of Meaning*",[1] but did it by being much more systematic and by being explicitly behaviouristic in the criteria it used to carry out what *The Meaning of Meaning* was a "pioneer attempt" to do, namely, "to distinguish the signification of signs represented in its purest form in science from the kinds of signification characteristic of non-scientific discourse"[2]. In Morris's work we have a tidying-up and detailed working-out of the programme of *The Meaning of Meaning*, joined with the viewpoint of the Unity of Science Movement that had radiated outwards from the Vienna Circle, and was rendered genuinely consistent with the methodological outlook of present-day psychology.

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The influence of *The Meaning of Meaning*, together with that of Richards' next book, *The Principles of Literary Criticism*, was also shown on what, as far as attitude to method is concerned, may be regarded as the other wing of philosophical thinking, in Charles Stevenson's *Ethics and Language* (1944), which, testifying to Richards' influence, sports an epigraph from *The Meaning of Meaning* opposite its Preface, though this was, as we shall see, chosen as a result of a misunderstanding of its authors' meaning.

Popular testimonies to Ogden and Richards' influence came perhaps faster as a result of another shot in the arm from a book that obviously owed some of its stimulus to *The Meaning of Meaning*, Korzybski's geyser-like *Science and Sanity*, published in 1933. Unlike Richards, who has always worked in a university setting, Korzybski institutionalised his influence with some success in the General Semantics Movement. Stuart Chase's *The Tyranny of Words* (1938), the first in a series of smart popularisations of these ideas, hailed Korzybski and Ogden-and-Richards as twin heralds, and from within the movement Hayakawa, its leading propagandist, stressed their role as important precursors.[1]

Richards himself made comparatively little further contribution to these questions until *Interpretation in Teaching* (1938). This book was concerned with increasing prose language skills in order to improve communication and enhance our thinking power. The influence of this book, though by no means negligible amongst educational psychologists in Britain, seems to have been much stronger in America. It was itself a product of American educational concerns, since it was first presented as "a Statement on the Application of Theory of Interpretation to General Education [for] the General Education Board." Other evidences of American educationalists' concern with problems of language teaching at that time bear witness to Richards' influence. We may mention, for instance, *Reading in General Education*, (1940),[2] which was a report of the Committee on Reading in General Education of the American Council of Education; and *Language in General Education*, also published in 1940, this one being a report of the Language Section of the Committee on the Function of English in General Education for *its* parent body, the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum of the Progressive Education Association. The Commission believed, it was

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stated, that "increased facility in the understanding and use of language leads in the direction of realising democratic values" and that "many of the social, economic and cultural factors which profoundly affect men's lives" cannot be understood and coped with effectively "without a firm grasp upon verbal symbols and their ways".

Such emphases, reminiscent with all the capital letters I have had to write of Chuzzlewit's America, are in fact characteristic of Richards' own, and the Committee responsible for the latter work places him foremost amongst their intellectual creditors, recognising a "debt… far more general than it has been possible to acknowledge through scattered specific references to his works". Individual books such as Hugh R. Walpole's *Semantics* were further attempts to adapt Richards more specifically to the classroom situation.

What must not be forgotten in all this is the part played by Basic English. Apart from all that Ogden, Richards' original partner, did from the administrative point of view to further the aims of *The Meaning of Meaning*, such as the editing of the International Library of Psychology, Philosophy, and Scientific Method, the founding of the Orthological Institute, the production of *Psyche* and those well-known essays in popular education, the *Psyche* Miniatures, Ogden's greatest achievement was the devising of this simplified natural language. According to Richards, this was another of the effects of *The Meaning of Meaning*, for it arose out of the discovery in their work on definition that "there might be some limited set of words in terms of which the meaning of all words might be stated"[1].

Ogden's interest in Basic English was mainly in its potential role as a universal language. For Richards, however, its main value up to the end of the last war lay in the exercise in linguistic skill which translating from ordinary into Basic English provided, a point of view he put forward in *Basic in Teaching: East and West* (1935), *Interpretation in Teaching, How to Read a Page* (1943), and *Basic English and Its Uses* (1943), and which also received mention in various books influenced by his teaching, particularly Walpole's *Semantics*. Since the war Richards has also concerned himself with the learning of a second language, whether Basic English itself, or some other language taught by pictorial means, an activity which has been institutionalised with the

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establishment at Harvard of the English Language Research Inc., of which Richards is the director.

When we turn to Richards' other main field of influence, that of the appreciation of poetry, we find there are aspects of it closely related to the educational concerns we have been documenting. In *Principles of Literary Criticism*, Richards applied to the analysis of ethical and aesthetic concepts the same method that had been used in the analysis of the concept of meaning, but his interests were always educational, and this was made most evident in his fifth book, *Practical Criticism* (1929), which reported the results of presenting poems to audiences of University students, and asking them, without their being told who the authors of the poems were, "to comment freely in writing upon them". Richards' direct methods of investigating poetic appreciation, so as to uncover faulty conceptions and procedures which interfered with just judgment, have been very influential. "There is no doubt," according to a recent pamphlet produced by the Ministry of Education, "that [Richards' "pioneer work"] has been extremely influential in English Schools during the last twenty-five years. It has been misunderstood at times, and misapplied frequently, but, more than any other single influence, it has helped to change the spirit and method of study of poetry in grammar schools and therefore indirectly in all schools…"[1]. And to this we may add the tribute of an American critic: "I think presently the historians will be rating this book as one of the documents of major influence upon the thinking of our age."

The difference in attitude that these contrasting tributes show illustrates the different conceptions of their influence held by schoolmasters and university teachers. For the latter quotation comes from John Crowe Ransom's *The New Criticism* (1941), a book whose title became the motto of a new dynasty. "The new criticism," he wrote, "very nearly begins with [Richards]. It might be said also that it began with him in the right way, because he attempted to found it on a more comprehensive basis than other critics did." Here again Richards' influence appears to be greater in America than in England. It is true that he has been credited with some influence over T. S. Eliot. Some of the themes we find in *Principles of Literary Criticism* were however already present in various of the essays collected in *The Sacred Wood*, published

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five years earlier. Though both writers were responding to a stock of ideas that was to some extent common to them, we might well expect some reciprocal influence between the two.[2] Richards appears also to have influenced F. R. Leavis, whose books appeared much later, and whose tone in referring to Richards, with many of whose ideas he agreed, was up to 1933 courteous and friendly, but increasingly critical thereafter. Since Leavis' influence on literary criticism in Britain is fairly marked, we may perhaps attribute to this circumstance the smallness of Richards' apparent influence; smallness, that is, in number, for we always have Professor Empson to reckon with. And though Richards has been cast aside by Leavis and his followers, that does not of course mean that his influence has not been absorbed and passed on by them.

With the American critics, who have been organised under the heading of *New Criticism*, the case is different. Ransom, Tate, Burke, Blackmur and Cleanth Brooks, to mention some leading names, have all at one time or another saluted him, and with their widespread influence in America, in universities, in literary criticism, goes some of Richards' too. Let synoptic works, telling of the New Critics and their affines, summarise for us. "The general pattern that emerges", writes S. E. Hyman, after giving, in *The Armed Vision* (1948) details of mentions of Richards, "is of Richards marking almost every serious critic working in our time". Likewise "The New Critics", Stallman's own contribution, to the comprehensive, illustrative survey he has edited,[1] ends with these words: "Our age is indeed an age of criticism. The structure of critical ideas and the practical criticism that British critics—Leavis, Turnell, Empson, Read—and American critics—Ransom, Tate, Brooks, Warren, Blackmur, Winters—have contrived upon the foundations of Eliot and Richards constitute an achievement in criticism the like of which has not been equalled in any previous period of our literary history."

Richards therefore is worth a book, for the sake of his ideas themselves and by reason of his contribution to the history of ideas. These two need not be the same, because what a man says is not necessarily what others understand him to say. If we were to generalise from our experience of how people have taken Richards, we might, instead of talking of the History of Ideas, talk of the History of

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Simplifications and Misinterpretations That Were Not Necessarily Unfruitful. I have come across very few writers, who have made critical comments in any detail, who do not betray some fairly important misunderstanding of Richards' position. And these are people professionally concerned with precision in language—philosophers and literary critics, who are themselves fostering the cult of close reading. One of my aims therefore is to set out what Richards meant as clearly as I can. In doing this, I shall concentrate on Richards' purposes, rather than on his details, and on the type of writing his is and how it should be taken, for some criticisms of Richards are like those of a man who stands close up to a Monet landscape and complains that the leaves have not been properly outlined. Though my book provides an exposition of Richards' views that aims at being more consistent with what he has said, and consequently defends him against certain criticisms that have been made, particularly those of the New Critics (Chapter VII), it exposes him at the same time to other criticisms. These I shall set out, partly in exposition of the books which, from the point of view of his general theory, are the most important (Chapters II–V), and partly in some chapters of appraisal after the exposition.

But my aims go beyond those of the exposition and appraisal of the thought of a writer who is an important figure in the intellectual history of our times. They are concerned with those two issues, mentioned at the start, on which Richards himself concentrates, that of our understanding of what others have written, and that of the role that language plays in thought. I have taken advantage of my detailed study of I. A. Richards to use his writings and those of his critics as case material for investigating these issues.

With regard to the first issue, I shall not only discuss Richards' own theory of comprehension, which treats comprehension very much as a function of attitude to language, but shall consider at length the misunderstandings to which his books have been subjected (Chapters VI and VII). I shall do this partly to illustrate the extent to which we fail to understand one another, but mainly to show how a different theory, one which lays more stress on our previous knowledge of the relevant ideas, provides a more fruitful analysis than Richards' theory does.

As regards the second issue, the part that language plays in thinking,

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Richards' position is similar in a number of respects to that of certain influential modern British philosophers (Chapters IX and X). The case study approach will enter here in two ways. If we wish to show how mistakes about language cause a theory to go astray, before carrying out such linguistic therapy we must be sure that we have understood a writer correctly. Our specimens of philosophers' failures to understand (Chapter VI) show this to be a considerable hazard. But I shall also consider the extent to which Richards' own errors can be accounted for in terms of the theories about the linguistic causes of error that he himself advances (Chapter X). We shall see that there is some evidence in favour of these theories, but that knowledge of these causes of error clearly does not prevent the errors from taking place, and, further, that such knowledge is insufficiently fundamental. So in my last chapter (Chapter XI), I shall attempt an explanation of Richards' theories in personality terms, or, to be more specific, in terms of his attitudes to the self and its relation with others.

One other purpose of this book may be mentioned. This, which grew out of considering Richards' theories and his practice, is that of revealing the anarchic consequences of too great emphasis upon self-expression in defiance, rather than through transcendence, of convention. Richards can be regarded as an apologist for certain trends in modern poetry and art to which have contributed in his case influences as diverse as the Freudian emphasis upon free association, the anti-normative attitudes of linguistics, and the over-individualistic psychology with which Richards operated. I hope to show that, by letting his theory influence his practice, Richards revealed, both in an excessive failure to communicate in his later books and in certain confusions of his thinking, the dangers of his course. We need to be alert to this both because of his influence upon educational theory and because of the rather low level to which writing skills have fallen.

The interests of this book are interdisciplinary. This is because these were Richards' interests. We shall be concerned with ideas about education, literary theory, language, philosophy, and psychology. My own special discipline is that of psychology, and so I shall be particularly concerned with assessing Richards' wholesale application of psychological explanations within the different disciplines. But though

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Richards' explanations were psychological, his approach was philosophical. He believed it important that we should develop philosophical skills in every discipline. In this I believe he is right, so I have paid quite a lot of attention to his philosophical ideas. The other disciplines are less central.

Among the difficulties of an interdisciplinary approach is that of communication, and of the degree of detail with which one deals with the different disciplines. One is liable to fall between two stools in trying to maintain comprehensibility for the educated but non-professional reader and interest for the different professional readers. I may have written at an ellipsis-level which, in philosophy and psychology, is a little high for the non-professional reader. On the other hand, the professional reader may find the ellipsis-level not so much too low as insufficiently technical, detailed, and specific. But it is impossible, in a book of practical size, both to write in the close-meshed way that philosophers, for instance, do and to present Richards' views as a totality in the detail the purposes I have just been describing require. The latter needs must override all others, even though what is new in my intentions may make my choice of where to be detailed appear perverse.

Similar considerations apply as regards psychology. In applying the psychological viewpoint in the realm of these ideas, I must write more loosely, more openly speculatively, than psychologists, burdened by their scientific role, are wont to appear to do. By describing my approach as that of a case study, I hope to suggest that the clinical method may be applied in an area where the experimental approach has so far ruled. In expounding Richards' system of thought, in considering its aetiology as well as the miscomprehensions of his critics, the idea of applying content analysis, the next step in scientific strategy—quantification after systematic observation—has never been far from my mind. Though, having completed the case study, I would now feel much more confident of being able to apply a refined procedure to the test of a worthwhile question, the discrepancy between the articulation and comprehensiveness of the observations and what is yet practical with the procedure is still very great. But the functions of a psychologist are not limited to marching in the scientific procession towards further certain knowledge. Man is an animal who theorises psychologically, and the

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specialist training of a psychologist in a powerful empirical tradition ought to be able to sharpen and further articulate the experiences from which these inevitable theories come.

NOTES

[1] I justify elsewhere this late dating of Russell's concern with the influence of ordinary language on philosophical thinking. There are only occasional and slight references to this in his earlier writings, which were much more concerned to put the blame for philosophical errors on the faults of classical logic, which in *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903), for example, was *contrasted* with ordinary language.

[2] Ogden, Richards' co-author in *The Meaning of Meaning*, both translated and sponsored the publication of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*.

[1] *Signs, Language, and Behaviour*, p. vii.

[2] Ibid, p. 70.

[1] Cf. *Language in Action* (1941), revised in 1949 as *Language in Thought and Action*.

[2] Edited by W. S. Gray. See particularly Gray's own contribution "Reading and Factors Influencing Reading Efficiency", and Zahner's "Reading Through Analysis of Meaning".

[1] *Basic English and Its Uses*, p. 23.

[1] *Language. Some Suggestions for Teachers of English and Others*. Ministry of Education Pamphlet No. 26. H.M.S.O., 1954, p. 145.

[2] Richards, as we shall see, rarely refers except in a critical way to the writings of contemporary critics, so testimonies as to influence amongst strict contemporaries tend to be one-way.

[1] *Critiques and Essays in Criticism*, 1930–1948.

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Chapter Two

THE MEANING OF *THE MEANING OF MEANING*

1. MANIFESTO

WE shall start with Richards' second book. His first, *The Foundations of Aesthetics* (1922), also written in collaboration with C. K. Ogden, and with James Wood as well, is simply a brief description of a number of aesthetic theories with illustrations from the poems or works of the plastic arts that suit them best. Whatever part of it is relevant to our purposes is dealt with more fully in other books and will, if necessary, be mentioned in those connexions.

The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism admirably illustrates, in its full title, its own flamboyance. Perhaps the best way of describing it is as a book written by two young men who pretend to be angry. It is an immensely high-spirited book. They attack almost everybody, and claim to solve a host of fundamental problems in philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and aesthetics, or, if not to solve them, at least to indicate the general lines upon which others might now proceed to their solution. Some of the brash positivism associated with youth reveals itself in their attitudes. It shows itself in great hopefulness, in impatience with uncertainties, in a belief in the practical importance of their mission. "Convinced as they are", they wrote in the Preface to the first edition, "of the urgency of a stricter examination of language from a point of view which is at present receiving no attention, the authors have preferred to publish this essay in its present form rather than to wait, perhaps indefinitely, until, in lives otherwise sufficiently occupied, enough moments of leisure had accumulated for it to be rewritten in a more complete and more systematized form" (xxx).[1] The authors revel in a

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display of learning. The book is a sort of polymathic orgy. We are prepared for this, again in the first edition's Preface, by their description of past work in the field they are to tackle.

Historical research shows that since the lost work of Antisthenes and Plato's *Cratylus* there have been seven chief methods of attack—the Grammatical (Aristotle, Dionysius Thrax), the Metaphysical (The Nominalists, Meinong), the Philological (Home Tooke, Max Müller), the Psychological (Locke, Stout), the Logical (Leibniz, Russell), the Sociological (Steinthal, Wundt), and the Terminological (Baldwin, Husserl). From all these, as well as from such independent studies as those of Lady Welby, Marty, and C. S. Peirce, from Mauthner's *Kritik der Sprache*, Erdmann's *Die Bedeutung des Wortes*, and Taine's *De l'intelligence*, the writers have derived instruction and occasionally amusement, (xxviii).

The book is studded with quotations throughout—many of them bearing testimony on the part of a motley collection of writers to the great importance of language in the determination of thought. This well-known advertising technique is a marked feature of linguistic imperialism or, as I shall call it, 'linguism'. One has only to turn over the pages of *Science and Sanity* by Count Korzybski or that lively journal *Etc*, one of his progeny, to see this displayed. The chapter headings of *The Meaning of Meaning* are graced by epigraphs, often highly entertaining. This is one of Richards' gifts revealed throughout his books. We see this already at the start of the first chapter:

Chapter I

THOUGHTS, WORDS AND THINGS

Let us get nearer to the fire, so that we can see what we are saying.

The Bubis of Fernando Po.

The influence of Language upon Thought has attracted the attention of the wise and foolish alike, since Lao Tse came long ago to the conclusion—

He who knows does not speak, he who speaks does not know.

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Sometimes, in fact, the wise have in this field proved themselves the most foolish. Was it not the great Bentley, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, Archdeacon of Bristol, and holder of two other livings besides, who declared: 'We are sure, from the names of persons and places mentioned in Scripture before the Deluge, not to insist upon other arguments, that Hebrew was the primitive language of mankind'? On the opposite page are collected other remarks on the subject of language and its Meaning, and whether wise or foolish, they at least raise questions to which, sooner or later, an answer is desirable.

Even for those days the tone—literary, scholarly, Common Room talk—was, I think, unprofessional, taking into account the nature of the subject they were dealing with.

But though academic, the effect is of great energy, which seems to be bursting out everywhere, in appendices, in summaries, in the garrulous table of contents, and, with later editions, in a whole string of prefaces exultantly reporting further developments by each author of the programme *The Meaning of Meaning* initiated. Two stately supplements steam, as well as they may, in its choppy wake, one by Dr. Crookshank, *The Importance of a Theory of Signs and a Critique of Language in the Study of Medicine*, the other by Malinowski on *The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages*, well-known in its own right. The book with its great promise and its sketchy, at times slapdash, performance is almost more manifesto than scholarship. When the authors say, in their preface, that "they are, they believe, better aware of [their book's] failings than most critics will suppose", they are certainly right in their supposition. Where after all, beyond this preface, are their critics to get their evidence from? Nevertheless many insights glimmer behind their words, and the book anticipated certain philosophical developments by a number of years.

The key to the understanding of *The Meaning of Meaning* lies in our recognition of the immense importance the authors attributed to language in our thinking, or rather, to our attitudes to language.

All the more elaborate forms of social and intellectual life are affected by changes in our attitude towards, and our use of, words.… Only those who shut their eyes to the hasty readaptation to totally new circumstances which the human race has during the last century been blindly endeavouring to achieve,

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can pretend that there is no need to examine critically the most important of all the instruments of civilization. New millions of participants in the control of general affairs must now attempt to form personal opinions upon matters which were once left to a few. At the same time the complexity of these matters has immensely increased (xxix).

The hundred-page-long second chapter, *The Power of Words*,[1] documents this. "From the earliest times", the authors write,

> Symbols which men have used to aid the process of thinking and to record their achievements have been a continuous source of wonder and illusion. The whole human race has been so impressed by the properties of words as instruments for the control of objects, that in every age it has attributed to them occult powers. Unless we fully realise the profound influence of superstitions concerning words, we shall not understand the fixity of certain widespread linguistic habits which still vitiate even the most careful thinking (32).

There follows a survey of verbal superstitions in primitive societies, in ancient civilisations, and in European society from the Dark Ages to the present day, leavened only by an account of early attempts at Nominalist theories of signs, anticipating that of the authors,[1] from which it is interesting to note the name of Bentham is as yet absent.[2]

The author's omnibus way of characterising this is as "Word Magic"; they describe it as a "*superstition*", which is "*barbarous*", or "*mediaeval*", or "*primitive*", something whose "roots go down very deep into human nature", an "instinctive[3] attitude to words as natural containers of power, which has… from the dawn of language been assumed by mankind, and is still supported and encouraged by all the earlier stages of education" (225). They quote Frazer to the effect that "Superstitions survive because, while they shock the views of enlightened members of the community, they are still in harmony with the thoughts and feelings of others, who, though they are drilled by their betters into an appearance of civilisation, remain barbarians or savages at heart"[4] (33), and they speak of language as something that has survived rather than evolved, as the following rather extreme statement indicates —

> … from the structure of our language we can hardly even think of escaping. Tens of thousands of years have elapsed since we shed our tails, but we are

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still communicating with a medium developed to meet the needs of arboreal man. And as the sounds and marks of language bear witness to its primeval origins, so the associations of those sounds and marks, and the habits of thought which have grown up with their use and with the structures imposed on them by our first parents, are found to bear witness to an equally significant continuity (34).

This is not, as we might expect, a phenomenon whose strength declined with the growth of scientific ways of thought. On the contrary, "in some ways the twentieth century suffers more grievously than any previous age from the ravages of such verbal superstitions", nor is this confined, as Frazer held, to the unenlightened "members of the community", for "owing to developments in the methods of communication, and the creation of many special symbolic systems, the form of the disease has altered considerably; and, apart from the peculiar survival of religious apologetic, now takes more insidious forms than of yore" (38). Amongst their targets were those "analytic thinkers in fields bordering on mathematics, where the divorce between symbol and reality is most pronounced and the tendency to hypostatisation most alluring" (39). This is then backed up by that quotation-soiled affirmation of Russell's early Platonism from his *Principles of Mathematics*.[1]

Not only this but also the Realism, prevalent at Cambridge in their time, was regarded as the product of Word Magic. With thorough-going Nominalism they rejected the independent status of universals, concepts, and propositions, the existence of unanalysable qualities and relations, and the concept of judgment or knowledge as involving a direct and unique relation between a knower and objects of knowledge; Moore, Russell, Johnson and Wittgenstein are all the dupes of Word Magic, of the *same* instinctive superstition that caused primitive peoples to believe in the magic of names and the mysterious power inherent in certain words.[2]

We have concentrated on contemporary philosophers in order to bring out the extremism of Ogden and Richards' attitude, and also because it is with philosophers that the book is mainly concerned, in particular with the analyses they have put forward to establish the meaning of 'meaning'.

The reason for this concentration, as we shall see, is that Ogden and

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Richards believed that a popular understanding of the correct answer to the epistemological problems with which philosophers concerned themselves was the best means—because the most fundamental and therefore applicable to the widest range of situations—of counteracting "the ravages of verbal superstitions" which were so prominent at the time. It would be wrong however to think that Ogden and Richards were only thinking of philosophical malpractices. Besides developments in mathematical logic, they also mentioned, as contemporary reasons for the urgency of the treatment,

> possession by journalists and men of letters of an immense semi-technical vocabulary and their lack of opportunity, or unwillingness, to inquire into its proper use;… the extension of a knowledge of the cruder forms of symbolic convention (the three R's), combined with a widening gulf between the public and the scientific thought of the age; and finally the exploitation, for political and commercial purposes, of the printing press by the dissemination and reiteration of *clichés* (38–39).

Let us now consider in turn the actual ways in which the authors believe that attitudes to language affect thinking and communication and what remedies they propose.

2. DIAGNOSIS: LANGUAGE AND THE DISEASES OF THOUGHT

Five types of what we may call linguogenetic error are specially mentioned by Ogden and Richards. These are the "Phonetic", the "Hypostatic", and the "Utraquistic Subterfuges", Word Magic, and the confusion of referential with emotive meaning.

(1) The "Phonetic Subterfuge". This "consists in treating words which sound alike as though their expansions must be analogous. The most famous case is Mill's use of 'desirable' as though it must expand in the same way as 'visible' or 'knowable'."

(2) The "Hypostatic Subterfuge". "We must," say our authors, "if we are ever to finish making any general remark, contract and condense our language, but we need not hypostatise our contractions." They mention here not only superfluous entities introduced into philosophy but also such as are connected with words like "Virtue, Liberty, Democracy, Peace, Germany, Religion, Glory".

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(3) The "Utraquistic Subterfuge". "It has long been recognised that the term 'perception' may have either a physical or a mental referent. Does it refer to what is perceived, or to the perceiving of this? Similarly, 'knowledge' may refer to what is known or to the knowing of it. The Utraquistic subterfuge consists in the use of such terms for both the diverse referents at once. We have it typically when the term 'beauty' is employed, reference being made confusedly both to qualities of the beautiful object and to emotional effects of these qualities on the beholder" (134). This subterfuge, the authors claim, "has probably made more bad argument plausible than any other controversial device which has been practised upon trustful humanity" (239).

These types of error are called 'subterfuges' because it is the authors' wish to draw attention to various tricks of controversy. It is quite evident, however, that they also regard them as effects which can come about without any dishonest intention on the part of those debating. As they say, somewhat ingenuously, of the Phonetic Subterfuge in the case of Mill, "the subterfuge is to be charged against language rather than against Mill" (239). The status of these types of linguogenetic error is a subordinate one. The 'subterfuges' are introduced in a section entitled "Rules of Thumb", which comes after the presentation of their theory of signs, upon which, as we shall see, they mainly rely for remedying linguogenetic error.

(4) Word Magic. This, which we will remember was again and again referred to in the opening section as responsible for so much in all societies and in all ages, is what the authors are mainly concerned with. They described it as "the superstition that words are in some ways parts of things or always imply things corresponding to them" (19).[1] This clearly includes the Hypostatic Subterfuge. Basically what this "superstition" does is to prevent us noticing that words are *instruments*, and that therefore their relations with things are indirect, depending for their full understanding on knowledge of their user's purposes. For this reason it also comprehends "the curious instinctive tendency to believe that a word has its own true or proper use, which", the authors add, "we have seen has its roots in magic" (225), a belief later described by Richards as the "Proper Meaning Superstition"[1]. It follows that the "Utraquistic Subterfuge" can also be included under this general

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explanation, for according to this, we neglect that a word has more than one meaning, which enables us to shuttle to and fro to suit the purposes of our argument.

(5) The confusion of referential with emotive meaning. Among the effects of failure to make this distinction in theory of language, the authors referred (i) to attacks on reason and logic in favour of feeling and intuition on the part of philosophers like Bergson,[2] which were further confused by failing to distinguish different meanings of such words as 'truth' and 'knowledge'; (ii) to subjective factors in theory-making and accepting, such as the emotive components of metaphysical theories, which lead us wrongly to accept them as referential accounts and to feel that such a theory as their own is inadequate; and (iii) to the notion of *unique, unanalysable* concepts, belief in which they explained as due to the particular "emotional aura" of a word which, though unique, did not mean that the reference was unique also.[3] This last theory of linguogenetic error was another of the weapons they used against current Realism. It was another answer to Moore, whose theory of the unanalysable nature of 'good' they took as example, thus finally clearing the way for Richards' naturalistic theory of value in *Principles of Literary Criticism*.

3. DIAGNOSIS: LANGUAGE AND THE DISEASES OF COMMUNICATION

The Meaning of Meaning proceeds from a major concern with theories of language as a source of error in thought, to a major concern with communication. One source of this was failure to distinguish between emotive and referential uses of language which led, in the authors' opinion, to a good deal of fruitless controversy, but the main trouble was the "Proper Meaning Superstition". Given their psychological theory of meaning, an associationist one as we shall see, and given that "the past histories of individuals differ" (230), it is "extremely unlikely that any two references will ever be *strictly* similar" (189). This does not make communication impossible, provided the "two references have sufficient similarity to allow profitable discussion" (189–190); nevertheless "we ought to regard communication as a difficult matter, and close

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correspondence of reference for different thinkers as a comparatively rare event" (226). But, it is not just a matter of differences about shades of meaning, for "it constantly happens that one word has to serve the functions for which a hundred would not be too many" (235). This is because, "with sciences in their initial stages, before they have developed into affairs for specialists, and while they are still public concerns, the resistance to new terms is very great", probably, Ogden and Richards suggest, because of "the lack of emotive power which is a peculiarity of all technicalities". This is one "cause for the extravagant ambiguity of all the more important words used in general discussion" (236). The other is the process of "metaphorical shift" in the history of words, according to which any two or more senses of a given word may have no meaning in common since they derive from different aspects of their original, a conception similar to that which Wittgenstein later used the phrase, "family resemblances", to describe,[1] and for the treatment of which, as we shall see later, Ogden and Richards recommended a similar cure (see p. 31 below). Two other reasons for difficulty in communication that should be mentioned, perhaps not unrelated to one another, are the shorthand nature of much of our communication, and the fact that language, having evolved from speech, requires for its supplementation gesture and tone, which are necessarily absent from written language.

To illustrate their thesis that lack of awareness of these varieties of meaning results in communication failures, Ogden and Richards have a chapter in which the dull thudding noise that throughout the book has syncopated with the bugle flourishes and rattling drumsticks of their rhetoric now executes a virtuoso solo and is seen to originate from the banging together of many heads. What we have here is an exhibition of uses of the word 'meaning', taken from articles and symposia (including the "Meaning of Meaning" Symposium in *Mind*, 1920–21, Vols. 29 and 30) to substantiate Ogden and Richards' assertion that "the resort to such a term in serious argument, as though it had some accepted use, or as though the author's use were at once obvious, is a practice to be discredited" (273). Though the chapter is entitled *The Meaning of Philosophers*, others are included; "so helpful a term", they write, "is equally in demand as a carminative in ecclesiastical controversy, as a *vade mecum* in musical criticism, as an indication of the precise point

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where doctors differ, and as a lubricant for the spinning-wheel of the absolute relativist" (296); psychologists and psycho-analysts, "historians of philosophy and childhood, Reformers, social and grammatical—all have their own uses of the word, obvious yet undefined" (300).

4. CURE: CULTIVATING THE CORRECT AWARENESS

Among those who concern themselves with the distortions that the language we use can cause to our thought, two types of remedies circulate. One of these is altering our language, when used for philosophical purposes, of which we can take Carnap as an example; the other is alerting its user to its systematically misleading properties. This is the attitude of Ayer in *Language, Truth, and Logic*[1] and, of course of Linguistic Philosophers. These remedies I would describe respectively as 'changing the instrument' and 'changing the user'.

Ogden and Richards are convinced user-changers. They reject changing the instrument on the stock ground that, for anything other than the sciences dealing with "the simplest aspects of nature", "the stage of systematic symbolisation with its fixed and unalterable definitions has not been reached" (224). This follows of course from the world-saving nature of their educational ambitions. In one of a series of water images, *à propos* Frazer's picture of the superstition and barbarism "honeycombing… the ground beneath our feet", they say, "only… by foregoing the advantages of this or that special scientific symbol system, by drinking of the same unpurified stream, can we share in the life of the community", and continue, "If the clouds of accumulated verbal tradition burst above us in the open—in the effort to communicate, in the attempt at interpretation—few have, as yet, evolved even the rudiments of a defence." (34). But just as occasional references to "the vernacular" by the instrument-changers indicate a bias, despite their protestations that they are not concerned with language in its everyday uses, so I think are there many signs in *The Meaning of Meaning* of a partiality for language just as it is. Apart from their enjoyment in using it, their emphasis upon "the plasticity, facility and convenience" of ordinary language, there is a constant hostility against '*artificiality*',[2] with which they stigmatize current theories of meaning of their day. They also criticise the

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dissatisfaction with language which they attribute to Wittgenstein[1] or Bergson, and the plain man's "It's all a matter of words" cynicism.[2]

Awareness is the authors' solution, and to this purpose they instruct the user in two ways, in theory and in practice. The former we shall consider here; the latter in our next section.

That instruction in the right theory should be important follows of course from the authors' diagnosis of the malady, namely, that the trouble is due to the inherited and educationally fostered wrong beliefs about language. And just as the wrong views are due to barbarous superstitions in whose toils the leading philosophers of the day were enmeshed, so the right view is to be found in one source and one source only, Science. In this book Science is the shining white to Word Magic's black; they are hero and villain, the clash of whose arms resounds on page after page.

The science the authors appeal to is psychology; not introspectionist psychology, but a true "scientific" psychology, one basically derived "from observations of other people". Though in 1923 the day was yet to come when "more accurate knowledge of psychological laws will enable relations such as 'meaning', 'knowledge', 'being the object of, and 'cognition' to be treated as *linguistic* phantoms…, their place being taken by observable correlations" (326—my italics), they considered psychology already sufficiently well advanced for it to be no longer necessary for "the science of Symbolism" to "remain in abeyance". And they certainly had considerable hopes of its future. Because of this the authors content themselves with adumbrating their theory of signs and symbols, the so-called *Context* theory of meaning. In describing this, we shall for a little while have to be rather technical.

The theory is an associationist one which, true to their desire to banish "linguistic phantoms", they present in causal[1] terms, it being important for them that psychological theories should use the same terms as the natural sciences and not require a special language of their own.[2] Their theory is, as we shall see, a centralist theory like Tolman's, rather than a peripheralist one like Hull's,[3] showing the characteristic bias of such theories in stressing interpretation rather than in pursuing the will-o'-the-wisp of behavioural actualisation, a circumstance which fits in with their reluctance to trust in artificial language.

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According to their theory, whenever an object, which has been experienced together with or just before another object, causes us to think of that other, then it acts as a *sign* of the other. These objects are said then to form a context; supply one part of the *context*, and thought of the other follows. This thought, being directed to another object, is described as *referring* to this other object. In their technical language, it is a *reference*. Though it is quite natural, in virtue of their past association, to describe the relation between sign and reference as a *causal* one, Ogden and Richards often talk as though they accept what in psychology is called a substitution theory of learning, according to which learning basically consists in one stimulus substituting for another in calling out the same response. Thus, in their paradigm of the scrape of a match stick which is a sign for the appearance of a flame, they describe the relevant expectation as a thought which is "directed to" the future and is "directed to" flame; and by "directed to", they understand "similar to *what has been caused by*." In other words, what in this case is caused by hearing the scrape is a thought which is similar to past ones caused by seeing flames and experiencing temporal succession. This analysis is obviously influenced by the Pavlovian theory of conditioned reflexes, which is also a substitution theory. According to this theory, the conditioned reflex is regarded as the same as the unconditioned one, only it is elicited by another stimulus. An alternative view, which points out behavioural differences between the two 'reflexes', suggests that the conditioned 'reflex' is the consequence of an expectation[4] and different in kind from the unconditioned one.

Another example of Ogden and Richards' use of a substitution theory is shown when they describe "recognitions, inferences or thinkings" as "members of certain recurrent psychological contexts", and assert that "an interpretation is itself a recurrence". But these in fact all *depend* upon contexts and are not therefore to be identified with them. Despite their constant criticism of the theories of others on the grounds of artificiality, their own is somewhat artificial too.

Their sign theory, which they apply to perception, and which as they indicate in a brief chapter can solve all the old epistemological problems that the paradoxes of perception give rise to, is also extended to language. "Symbols" they call a class of signs that "men use to

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communicate one with another and as instruments of thought" (30). Symbols have the special feature that not only can they cause references, as all signs do, but they can also be caused by them. How, psychologically, this is done they do not indicate, seeming to be unaware that since communication is purposive, the initiation of it must be psychologically more complex than the simple model of sign interpretation they use suggests.[1] Their aim, however, is only to indicate some kind of empirical solution to the problem of meaning. "Something along these lines" is what they are saying, and they illustrate it cursorily by advancing from a genetic account of object words to an account of different types of logical form, adding characteristically, "the detailed investigation of such contexts is a task to which sooner or later psychology must address itself, but the methods required are of a kind for which the science has only recently begun to seek. Much may be expected when the theory of the conditioned reflex, due to Pavlov, has been further developed" (66, 6th edn.). Certainly there is no lack of more systematic schematizations, though none, I think, yet does justice to the need to recognise that linguistic responses are purposive and not automatic.

One of the purposes of their psychological model was to make readers more aware that the same word is unlikely to have the same meaning, to cause, that is, or to be caused by, the same reference, because the contexts in which it occurred will be different from one person to another. Therefore no two people's references are identical. We have already referred to this belief when dealing with Ogden and Richards' attitude to communication. There is no reason, of course, why the contexts should not lead to references of "sufficient similarity to allow profitable discussion", but it is clear that the authors think it will result in a great deal of variation. Richards, as we shall see later, was always concerned with emphasising the individuality of linguistic experience. This is perhaps a consequence of his concern with literature.

The authors also thought, as we have seen, that the same word will have a number of different meanings for the same person; in other words, it will be for him a member of different contexts. But they did not show how this could be so in terms of their theory of signs. All along in their theorising, they acted as though each symbol has only one meaning for

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each person. This was perhaps a simplifying assumption, necessary for them to make the particular points they wanted to make.

Another of the purposes of the model was to defeat Word Magic, to show that, far from it being the case that there is any direct relation between words and things, the relationship is always indirect, for between words and things there comes the slippery mind. References, thoughts, events in the central nervous system—whatever we like to call them—cause or are caused by words. They are intervening variables, standing between words and 'things'. Hence the *triangle of reference* with which Ogden and Richards popularised their conception. But more is involved than merely to stress that between the words and what they refer to, there is the individual experience, the cerebral event. There is also the conception of words being used as instruments. "Language", they say, "though often spoken of as a medium of communication, is best regarded as an instrument" (196). As an instrument it has to be "a ready instrument"; therefore "the handiness and ease of a phrase is always more important in deciding whether it will be extensively used than its accuracy" (16). This is another reason why it is not possible to tell directly by what references particular symbols were caused. Very likely they are shorthand for something that would have to be spelled out at greater length. The consequences of the realisation of this for expectations of ease of communication are obvious.

As for the tendency to hypostatisation, awareness of the instrumental nature of language and of the fact that it is often abbreviated expression should counteract any very simple linguistically determined entities. What entities are admissible was in fact determined by the authors' bald assertion, "the only entities in the real world are propertied things which are only symbolically distinguishable into properties and things" (309), "the most important argument" for which is "the natural incredibility of there being such universal denizens of a world of being" as "'character', 'relation', 'property', 'concept' etc." (154). Therefore words for properties and universal words, as well as logical words, were not classed as symbols at all, because not accountable for in terms of the context theory of meaning. They were "linguistic accessories", which could be part of a symbol ('symbol' was used both for object words and true declarative sentences, distinguished as simple and complex symbols

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respectively). They were also regarded in the light of instruments, as "conveniences in description, not necessities in the structure of things". "This is shown", Ogden and Richards went on to say,

by the fact that various alternatives are open to us in describing any referent. We can either use a grammar of 'substantives' and 'attributes' (nouns and adjectives), or one of 'Events' and 'Objects', or of 'Place' and 'Referent', according as we favour an Aristotelian outlook, or that of Modern Physics, or a pictorial exposition of the views here advocated. To discuss some questions in any other spirit than that in which we decide between the merits of different Weed killers is to waste all our own time and possibly that of other people (199–200).

There are many affinities between the approach of Ogden and Richards and that of Russell. In some respects one might describe theirs as a psychological translation of Russell's logical extensionalism. But though psychological, they follow Russell (and Bradley) in rejecting Mill's purely psychological analysis of meaning. Their key-word, 'refer', ensures that theirs is a relational theory; realism is, as it were, built-in. Judgments are basic for them, though, in contrast to Russell, they conceive every use of a symbol as a judgment—an existential judgment, as will become clearer when we consider their analysis of false statements. They also anticipate later developments in philosophy in their heightened awareness of, and the great stress they lay on, the actual conditions of use of language as a corrective against faulty theories. This is suggested by their description of language as an instrument and their reminders concerning the way language is actually learned. But though, in this respect, they anticipate Wittgenstein in his later incarnation, they do not, like him, do this in order to stimulate the reader into awareness of the different *uses* to which different words may be put. They stuck to what Ryle would call a proper name theory of meaning, though I think the fact that it was a sign-theory better explains its weaknesses and omissions.[1]

To do justice to Ogden and Richards, we have to recognise the extent to which they were individual. Different philosophers during the last fifty years have had different touchstones of reality—ostensive definability, verifiability, use, capacity to yield deductively statements that are empirically testable, and so on. Ogden and Richards' touchstone—one

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they were always fingering—was the actual psychological conditions that caused an individual utterance. Use of this—and they were not always consistent here—led them to deny that we ever actually talked nonsense. It was also the means by which they rejected many theories that seemed fanciful because remote from common-sense ways of talking. Let us see how this touchstone operates in connection with specific issues.

Their theory of meaning was set out in one of a number of "Canons of Symbolism" that they drew up, namely, the "Canon of Actuality". According to this, "A symbol refers to what it is actually used to refer to; not necessarily to what it ought in good usage, or is intended by an interpreter or is intended by the user, to refer to" (201). They called this "the most important sense in which words have meaning" (325–6). The emphasis, as we pointed out before, is upon interpretation. This applies to the speaker just as much as to the listener. What a person thinks he is saying is not necessarily what he is saying. "Introspective judgments like other judgments are interpretations" (326). Ogden and Richards illustrate this in connection with psychoanalysts. In discussing the psychoanalyst's use of 'meaning', they say

> When he discovers the 'meaning' of some mental phenomenon, what he has found is usually a conspicuous part of the cause, and he rarely makes any other *actual* use of the word. But by introducing theories of unconscious wishes, 'meaning' in the sense of something unconsciously intended, and by introducing 'universal symbols', kings, queens, etc., 'meaning', in the sense of some intrinsic property of the symbol, may easily come to be what he believes himself to be discussing (325, my italics)[1].

This same actualising tendency is also shown in Ogden and Richards' treatment of negative facts. They "solve" the problem of truth by stating that if a reference actually has a referent, then the reference is true. Now the reference may be symbolised by a sentence. If this reference is true (or "adequate", to use their technical term), then there *is* a referent, and the true sentence is a single, albeit complex, symbol. This is laid down by Ogden and Richards in the first of their Canons of Symbolism, "One Symbol stands for one and only one Referent". If however the sentence is false, then it consists of a set of symbols and symbolic accessories, whose relationship amongst themselves is not that which exists amongst

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the individual referents to which the symbols refer. It is not necessary to assert the existence of negative facts. A false sentence is said to be composed of a number of *true* symbols, each of which has a referent. Ogden and Richards' point is that any object word must, by definition, have a referent, even if only a very general one, and therefore the object word will be "true". "Thus, if we say 'This is a book' and are in error, our reference will be composed of a simple indefinite reference to any book, another to anything now, another to anything which may be here and so on [and] these constituents will all be true" (6th ed., 72).

It might look as though this commits them to a belief in universals and imaginary objects. But they have an escape hatch in their third Canon of Symbolism, "The referent of a contracted symbol is the referent of that symbol expanded". This recognises the point we made earlier about the instrumental nature of language resulting in our often speaking in an elliptical, "shorthand" way. "When a disputed symbol is encountered… [we should] expand it, if possible, to its full form—to such a form, that is, as will indicate the sign situations behind the reference it symbolises."[1] "Instances of this expansion", they add, "occur continually in all scientific discussion" (192). According to this excellent prescription, which was the pragmatic motive behind Russell's reductionist analysis and was exemplified in Moore's passionate hunting of the problem,[2] a sentence like "Hamlet is mad" is "a contracted symbol needing to be expanded before it can be discussed." "Hamlet was mad on the stage" or "in my interpretation of the play" may be expanded symbols for what is referred to" (93). This clearly gives Ogden and Richards considerable scope in dealing with the problem of the ontological status of imaginary objects. Similarly, when we find them referring in connection with the object word 'green', not to any potential universal like 'greeness' but to 'green things', we can see how obedient the expansion of symbols is to the ontology they prefer.

Strictly speaking, since Ogden and Richards allow that sensations may be referents, the Canons of "Expansion" and "Actuality" mean that no statement that is used in a particular situation can ever be false. They introduce the Canon of Actuality whilst discussing the statement, "My pipe is alight", when in fact it is out. They point out that the *actual* referent may have been "some feeling and not burning tobacco". The

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statement was therefore shorthand and could be "expanded" to "my pipe feels as though it were alight". (103, 6th edn.) Although this consequence, that by their analysis no actual statement can ever be false, was not intended by the authors in this book, Richards in his later works in effect frequently accepts it.

Because of their emphasis upon actualities, which is due to their fear of the dangers of abstraction, Ogden and Richards often give the impression of advancing empirical solutions of philosophical problems.[1] Certainly they have difficulty in thinking in terms of the hypothetical. The status of their Canons of Symbolism, for instance, is ambiguous. These six Canons, three of which we have already mentioned and of which Aristotle's "Laws of Thought" constitute a fourth, are described as "rules or conventions of symbolism" (6th edn., 246), as "postulates [or] regulative presumptions without which no system of symbols, no science, not even logic could develop." Ogden and Richards add that "modern mathematicians… either tacitly assume these Canons, or when confronted by difficulties due to their neglect, introduce *ad hoc* complexities into their systems" (6th edn. 87), of which they give as example Russell's Theory of Types. They claim further that "the observance of these Canons ensures a clear prose style" and that when they "are fully set forth in the forms implied by systematic discourse, the solutions of many long-standing problems are found to be *de facto* provided" (6th edn., 246).

On the other hand, the Canons are also described as being "as essential to all discourse as chemistry to physiology,… or psychology to aesthetics" (6th edn., 246). Here evidently what is being assumed is not certain *postulates*, but knowledge of certain *facts* which are relatively more basic. The Canons are described as "deriving from the nature of mental processes", and in fact they are, with one exception, all presented in declarative sentences, as the reader will have noticed in the case of the three we have already mentioned (see pages 25 and 26). The exception is the Canon embodying Aristotle's Laws of Thought, "No complex symbol *may* contain constituent symbols which claim the same 'place'" (6th edn., 105, my italics).

What Ogden and Richards are implying is that the problems which the systematic setting forth of the Canons will solve, which they say include

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those of "Truth", "Universals", "Negative Facts", and "Round Squares", are ones which depend upon a proper understanding of how symbols are learned. The inadequate solutions they describe, generally in such terms as "highly artificial", are merely verbal ones, which no one could possibly remain satisfied with if he were really alert to the relations between words, ourselves and things. As for the ambiguity in their formulation of the status of the Canons, this looks like careless writing but, as we shall see later in Richards' case, it is more likely to be deliberate—at all events, unashamed.

One more aspect of Ogden and Richards' theory needs to be considered, namely, that relevant to errors in thought brought about by confusing referential with emotive language. This can be dealt with quite briefly. Contrary to the general view, Ogden and Richards had *two* different distinctions in mind. 'Emotive' writing could refer to the purpose of the writing or to the psychological conditions of its production.

According to the first distinction, referential or, as they sometimes call it, 'symbolic' writing is writing that aims only at informing the "reader; emotive is that done for the sake of its effects on the reader. This is what the authors had in mind when making such widely quoted statements as "[a poem] tells us, or should tell us, nothing" (270) and "The best test of whether our use of words is essentially symbolic or emotive is the question—"Is this true or false in the ordinary strict scientific sense?" If this question is relevant then the use is symbolic, if it is clearly irrelevant then we have an emotive utterance" (259).[1] "*Symbolic* statements", they say, "may indeed be used as a means of evoking attitudes, but when this use is occurring it will be noticed that the truth or falsity of the statements is of no consequence provided that they are accepted by the hearer" (my italics). Most use of language, they hold, is either emotive in function or has a mixed function; the exception is "scientific statement, that recent new development of linguistic activity"[2] (227).

But writing can also be distinguished according to its causes. "… in speaking a sentence we are giving rise to, as in hearing it we are confronted by, at least two sign-situations. One is interpreted from symbols to reference and so to referent; the other is interpreted from verbal signs to the attitude, mood, interest, purpose, desire and so forth

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of the speaker, and thence to the situation, circumstances and conditions in which the utterance is made" (356). A word may be *associated* with an emotion or feeling by a speaker so that, when he speaks it, it is no more than a sign (provided he does not have the intention of communicating, of presenting it so that it will be taken as a sign); or it may be associated with a thought or a perception, in which case it will be a symbol. The word or sentence may be part sign, part symbol, as when our choice from synonymous alternatives is determined by attitudinal factors, or it may be purely emotive, as the authors thought sometimes happens with words like 'good' and 'true', when what is said in controversy has no other effect than to incite approval or disapproval.[1]

Three kinds of emotive function are distinguished.[2] These are the expressing of the writer's attitude to his audience, the expressing of his attitude to what he is writing about, and the expression of his intentions in writing, later referred to respectively as *tone*, *feeling*, and *intention*. This classification is of relevance whether it is the *purpose* of the writing or the causal sign-situation that is being referred to. As Ogden and Richards put it, "each of these non-symbolic functions may employ words either in a symbolic capacity, to attain the required end through the references produced in the listener, or in a non-symbolic capacity when the end is gained through the direct effects of the words" (359). The other function, the symbolic one, which, unlike the emotive ones, could only be served by words having references as their causes, comes to be referred to as *sense*.[3] The rather passive role the authors seem to assign to the language-user might be explained on the assumption that their major interest was an educational one, namely improvement in comprehension.

5. CURE: THERAPEUTIC EXERCISES

Ogden and Richards' main remedy for counteracting the evil effects of Word Magic on thinking and communication was to practise the technique of multiple definition. Two things were involved. First, emphasising that there are a number of different meanings of various important words and that our knowledge of what these are would make us more cautious in interpretation and less liable to error; and, second,

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practice. For

> On a huge hill,
> Cragged and steep, Truth stands and hee that will
> Reach her, about must, and about must goe;
> And what the hills suddennes resists, winne so.[2]

The highest type of Knowledge is described, following Plato, by contrast with the knowledge of the sciences. It is distinguished from them by not being departmental. It is the consequence in us of the analysis of concepts, which may be common to a number of sciences and which each takes as analysed. This was a modern enough notion of the purpose of philosophers, and one acceptable enough to Richards with his programme of Analysis for Everyman. 'Reason' is treated similarly. "In the sense which goes with the highest mode of knowledge, REASON is the dependence of all knowledge upon one principle. Only as viewed through or with that would all become reasonable" (210) and, referring to Plato,

> The REASON which rules in the most inclusive study of all—Dialectic is the name he gave it—is by him expressly distinguished from reason in the sciences …
>
> Each science, for its own purposes, simplifies by abstracting, … It is this which separates them. If the body of knowledge they together compose is to be seen as a whole, these abstract simplifications must be put together again. Moreover, each science takes these abstractions as its starting points "without troubling to give any account of them, to itself or to others, simply believing they are clear enough to anyone. They start out from these assumptions and go on from them in an ordered way, till they come to the end for which they started … And in this (in the sciences) the soul is forced to use these starting points; it does not go on up to a first principle because it is unable to escape from and get up higher than these starting-point bases". But, in Dialectic, "The things reasoning takes as bases are not taken by it as unquestioned starting points, but as helps or steppingstones, as something to give a footing, or as springboards, by which it is made able to go up to that which is no such base which needs to be taken, but is the first principle of everything. And after getting to that, it takes again a grip of the first things dependent on that, and so goes down again to the outcome. (*Republic*, 511) (215–216).

Many things come together here.

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To be a good Dialectician—a good reasoner in this superdepartmental inquiry—he must not only be able to "see very different sorts of things (e.g. Ideas and atoms) together"; he must be able "to ask questions and answer them." Thought here is internal dialogue, a process which examines itself. This is connected with Definition. He must be "able to give and audit a full account of what may be meant in a discussion" (*Republic*, 532). This amounts to being able to say what he is talking about, and being able to find out what others are talking about—in other words, to a mastery of definition. The Dialectician is an expert in knowing what he himself and others are talking about, and whether their professed definitions, set forth in the same words maybe, are in fact the same or not. To fit the departmental studies together, he has to see whether, for example, "matter" and "observe," as the physicist is now using them, mean the same as the similarly spelled words the psychologists use and so on. (217)

Multiple Definition is what Plato cares for. "Thought here is internal dialogue, a process which examines itself" hints at the Imagination. As Richards says, Coleridge's "co-ordinating imagination is a close analogue, if no more, to the synoptic activity of 'the true music of dialectic'."[1] Dialectic reasoning is carefully distinguished from arguing and controversy.

It works not through contention and debate, which are modes of verbal *fighting*, but through displaying clearly the relevant differences and connections between the things we may be saying. It is the art of exhibiting and respecting the divisions between the Ideas (the sense of words) which are needed for the purpose of the discussion and of remaining undistracted by the innumerable irrelevant others; it is the art to which all readers aspire (221–222).

This is clearly related to that internal dialogue which Richards recommended to his readers as worth cultivating when reading, and to the "drama of berths" that he tried to describe in *Interpretation in Teaching*. There is a suggestion of an activity that should go on of its own accord like growth, not something that is the consequence of an act of will separated in experience from what we do, or something that involves force like "verbal fighting". Again and again, Richards says things which suggest this. We have already referred to his statement, in the book we are at present considering, that "the pages which on a long view have mattered most to the world … have an inexhaustible fertility

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… [for] they are the great exercisers of the spirit" (11–12). To this we might add his comment on a remark by Emerson that "a man might have, if he were fortunate, some hundreds of reasonable moments in a long life."—

> The great pages are the most constant and dependable sources of "reasonable moments", if we mean by them moments when we know more completely what we are, and why we are so, and thus "see into the life of things" more deeply than in our everyday routine of existence. Such reasonable moments are the highest aim of reading. In them we do more than communicate with our authors—in the humble sense of communicate. We partake with them of wisdom (15).

One consideration that might weigh against this identification of Reason with Imagination is that of the position of feeling, attitude, or emotion. Little mention is made of these in Richards' description of Dialectic or reasoning. But since he is talking about the inter-relatedness of all "knowledge" in his 'highest' sense, he should be talking about experiencing in which there is no abstraction of either reference or feeling alone, the experiencing whose value he argued in his treatment of poetry. On the other hand, passages such as he quotes from Aristotle which, given proper communication, result presumably in "reasonable moments", do seem to differ very much, in the exercise they provide for the emotions from passages from Shakespeare or the book of Job. The generality or absence of separation that results from the analysis or definition of words, which are common to separate sciences, seems to be a purely intellectual matter, different from that generality where feelings are not excluded as irrelevant. There are two kinds of growth, it will be remembered; that which results from practising theories which brings about an increase in ordering capacity, and that which results from a poetical experience being communicated, which communication can only be successfully achieved through having attained this earlier increase in ordering capacity. In both cases, growth follows from the kind of intense, concentrated experience that was described in *Coleridge on Imagination*, Perhaps in *philosophic* poetry the two may be the same, and this is why a consideration of Coleridge made the identification possible. But if this is so, it would seem that Richards' concerns here changed from the time he wrote *Principles of Literary Criticism* and *Practical Criticism*, with the

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