

## PAPER- LITERARY CRITICISM

### Explication of *Principles of Literary Criticism*- Chapter 34

#### Introduction

Richards was interested in semantics. His first book, *The Foundation of Aesthetics* (1922) was co-authored with C.K.Ogden and James Wood. Later, he collaborated with C.K.Ogden, the inventor of Basic English, which is a simplified form of English with a limited vocabulary of about eight hundred and fifty words, intended for international communication. Their book *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* (1923) created new technical terms for literary discussion such as the “symbolic use of language and science” and its “emotive” use in poetry.

#### The Essay

In the opening line of the chapter “The Two Uses of Language”, Richards declares that there are “two totally distinct uses of language”. However, the two uses have so far remained undistinguished because the theory of language is the most neglected area of all studies. It should be understood that for the explanation of a theory of poetry and for the parochial aim of understanding what is said about poetry, a clear grasp of the differences between these two uses of language is necessary. The mental processes which accompany the uses of language must also be looked into.

In psychological terms, the terms ‘knowledge’, ‘belief’, ‘assertion’, ‘thought’ and ‘understanding’ are used ambiguously, and that results in failure to record the exact distinctions between the terms. Richards uses words like *causes*, *characters* and *consequences* while analyzing mental activity, in place of *thought*, *feeling* and *will*. Richards distinguishes between two kinds of causation for mental activity. The first kind is represented by the stimuli affecting the mind through the senses immediately and also by combining what survives from comparable stimuli in the past. The second kind of causation lies in the mind itself, its needs, its receptiveness and the readiness with which it responds to the external stimuli. The impulses which originate take their character and course from the interaction between these two groups. However, these two categories have to be clearly distinguished.

The importance of these two factors could be explained by considering a factor like hunger. While a hungry man would eat almost anything which can be chewed or swallowed, he would not bother about the nature of the substance and it will have little effect upon his reaction to the food he eats. In contrast, a person who has had his fill would be selective and eat such things that would be beneficial for health. So far as the character of an impulse depends on its stimulus it would be called *reference*, which would stand for thought or cognition. The mental condition of a person usually interferes to distort *reference* to a certain degree. Individual needs can be satisfied only if the impulses are left undistorted.

The behaviour of a person can be distinguished with regard to the stimuli received and the way in which it could be put into use. The reaction to a stimuli and its nature is almost independent of the *reference*. Complex mechanisms continually change

for the reason that they are independent of external stimuli. The process of selection of stimuli would make an impact on the *reference*. Most ordinary and familiar objects are perceived as they are and whenever there is error it does not deprive the persons of advantages. It is impossible for anyone to secure an exact impression of personal experience.

Truth has claims prior to all other considerations. A feeling like love, for instance should be grounded upon knowledge; otherwise, it could be rendered worthless. A person ought to love his mistress not for beauty but for other reasons because beauty is an internal quality while goodness is an abstract idea that cannot be measured. Both are part of our impulses by habits ultimately derived from desire. The concepts of beauty and good in a thing give immediate emotional satisfaction but they cannot satisfy individual impulses. Goodness or beauty is not necessary to refer to anything. The term 'thinking' would cover mental operations in which the impulses are completely governed by internal factors and so it is considered out of control of stimulus. The definition of 'thinking' would differ, depending on the *reference*.

The scientific use of language relies on *reference*, which is undistorted by the receiving mind. Science is the organization of *references* that has advanced because of the rejection of religion. There are different principles upon which impulses may be organised and an examination of them would make one realise that such organisation is inevitable. Many have tried to explain that science depends on some instinct, emotion, or desire and termed it curiosity. Curiosity is a special passion for knowledge that has never been thought of. All the passions and instincts, human needs and desires may influence science. Every human activity would have required the need for undistorted reference at least on one occasion. The essential point is that science is autonomous. The impulses developed in science are modified by other impulses with a view to systematise and arrive at a conclusion to facilitate further references.

To recognise science to be autonomous is different from subordinating all other activities to it. There are innumerable human activities that require undistorted references if they are to be satisfied. Fiction is a form of distorted reference. The use of fiction is not a process of pretention or the world of make-believe. This state is aroused by statements or by analogous things in other arts and are used in many ways. For example, one could say that fiction is used to deceive; however, this cannot be a characteristic feature of poetry. A statement which may be used for the sake of reference, true or false, is the scientific use of language. When the *reference* is used for the sake of arousing emotions and attitude, it is called emotive use of language.

The distinction between these two uses of language is simple. Words could be either used for the sake of *references* they point to or for attitudes and emotions which arise. Many arrangements of words evoke attitudes without *reference* being made, like the phrases in musical compositions. Usually, *references* are recognised as conditions for or stages in the ensuing development of attitude, for the attitudes are more important than the *references*. The outcome is to bring about attitudes which do not require truth or falsity of the *references*.

The differences between the mental processes involved in the scientific use of language and the emotive one are different. Whereas the scientific use of language should avoid ambiguity and have a fixed single meaning, the emotive use encourages multiple meanings and various connotations of a word. The scientific use of language

uses logic, and the ideas are organised so that they do not contradict each other. Emotive language does not give importance to logical arrangements but relies on emotional interconnection to bring diverse attitudes into one, and in this way it does not matter even if there is contradiction of the references.

Richards goes on to illustrate his propositions by discussing the way truth is used in criticism. He discusses three important points in this regard – the scientific sense and its relation to truth; truth as understood as acceptability; and truth that could be regarded as equivalent to sincerity.

In the scientific sense, a *reference* is true “when the things to which it refers are actually together in the way it refers to them.” This means that a reference is true only when the things it refers to are united in the way in which it refers to them; otherwise, it is false. Such a meaning does not involve the arts. The emotive power that is attached to a word cannot be deciphered in a general discussion. In criticism, the most usual sense of the word truth is of acceptability.

An understanding of the ‘truth’ of *Robinson Crusoe* is the acceptability in the interests of the effect of the narrative, not their correspondence with any actual facts involving the principle character. The falsity of happy endings to *Lear* or *Don Quixote* is unacceptable to those who have fully responded to the work. In this sense, truth is to be understood as necessity or doing justice. Truth may also be used in the sense of sincerity when discussing art. It may perhaps be most easily defined from the critic’s point of view negatively as the absence of any apparent attempt on the part of the artist to work effects upon the reader which do not work for him. External circumstances are irrelevant where the sincerity of the artist is involved.

### **Other Significant Points in the Essay**

Richards refers to the word ‘pseudo-statement’ for poetical statements in his work *Science and Poetry* (1926). Truth in a scientific statement is a matter of laboratory verification. A ‘pseudo-statement’ is recognised to be true if it is able to link together certain attitudes and suit and serve other attitudes, which are desirable. Richards uses the word ‘symbolistic’ for the referential use of language. There is a difference between his view of language and Saussure’s. For Saussure, the meaning of words does not depend in any way on the relationship with things; it is completely determined by the arbitrary and conventional structure of language. Richards and Ogden, in contrast, stress that words are used to point to things and that their meaning does not depend on the things they are used to point to, that is their referents. In *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* (1923), Ogden and Richards assert that there is an essential distinction between language and reality, and that it is wrong to believe that “words are in some ways parts of things.” Language may be different from reality but it reflects reality. Their position is thus an empiricist one, in that it rests on the principle that knowledge is a product of experience.

### **Summary**

Richards views the poem as a response to a stimulus, which could render the reader to be important. But this subjectivism leads him to the conclusion that all poetic language is ambiguous and open to different meanings. In this context, David Daiches

points out that Richards investigates what imaginative literature is, how it employs language, how its use of language differs from the scientific use of language, and what is its special function and value.

Richards, in "Principles of Literary Criticism" expounds a theory of language, and distinguishes between the two uses of language – the referential or scientific, and the emotive. A statement may be used for the sake of reference, which may be verified as true or false. This is the scientific use of language. A statement used for the sake of the effects in emotions and attitudes produced by the reference is the emotive or poetic use of language. The poet uses words emotively for the purpose of evoking emotions and attitudes considered valuable by him. For instance, the word 'fire' has only one definite scientific reference to a fact in the real world. When poetry uses a phrase such as 'heart on fire' the word, 'fire', in relation to 'heart' evokes an emotion, that of excitement.

While science makes statements, poetry makes pseudo-statements that cannot be empirically tested and proved true or false. A statement is justified by its truth or its correspondence with the fact it points to. On the other hand, the pseudo statement of poetry is justified in its effect of releasing or organising our impulses or attitudes. Richards says, "The statements in poetry are there as a means to manipulation and expression of feelings and attitudes." Poetry communicates feelings and emotions. Hence, poetic truth is different from scientific truth. It is a matter of emotional belief rather than intellectual belief.

Poetry cannot provide knowledge, and intellectual doctrine in poetry does not exist. Poetry speaks not to the mind but to the impulses. Its speech, literal or figurative, logical or illogical is faithful to its experience as long as it evokes a similar experience in the reader. Thus, a poem, as Richards defines it, is a class of experiences "composed of all experiences, occasioned by the words", which are similar to "the original experience of the poet."

## **References**

### **Web Links**

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## **OBJECTIVES**

- Introduce chapter thirty-four, “The Two Uses of Language”.
- Comprehend the significant arguments in the essay “The Two Uses of Language”
- Comprehend the differences between scientific and emotive uses of language.
- Frame Richards’ argument in the essay “The Two Uses of Language”,
- Understand the significance of the essay “The Two Uses of Language”.

## **Frequently asked Questions (FAQ)**

**Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.**

1. What is Basic English?

a. A simplified form of English with a limited vocabulary of about eight hundred and fifty words, intended for international communication.

2. What does Richards mention in the opening line of the chapter “The Two Uses of Language”?

a. Richards declares that there are “two totally distinct uses of language”.

3. Which are the words used by Richards to analyse mental activity?

a. Richards uses words like *causes*, *characters* and *consequences* while analyzing mental activity.

4. Which are the two kinds of causation for mental activity?

a. Richards distinguishes between two kinds of causation for mental activity. The first kind is represented by the stimuli affecting the mind through the senses immediately and also by combining what survives from comparable stimuli in the past. The second kind of causation lies in the mind itself, its needs, its receptiveness and the readiness with which it responds to the external stimuli.

5. How can the behavior of a person be estimated?

a. The behaviour of a person can be distinguished with regard to the stimuli received and the way in which it could be put into use.

## **Answer the questions in a paragraph of 100 words**

1. The differences between scientific and emotive uses of language

a. **Hints:** The distinction is simple - Words could be either used for the sake of *references* they point to or for attitudes and emotions which arise - many arrangements of words evoke attitudes without *reference* being made - *references* are recognised as conditions for or stages in the ensuing development of attitude - attitudes are more important than the *references* - outcome is to bring about attitudes which do not require truth or falsity of the *references* - the differences between the mental processes involved in the scientific use of language and the emotive one are different - scientific language should avoid ambiguity and have a fixed single meaning, the emotive use encourages multiple meanings and various connotations of a word - Scientific use of language uses logic, and

the ideas are organised so that they do not contradict each other - Emotive language does not give importance to logical arrangements but relies on emotional interconnection to bring diverse attitudes into one.

2. Richards' views on truth.

**a. Hints:** Richards discusses three important points in this regard – the scientific sense and its relation to truth; truth as understood as acceptability; and truth that could be regarded as equivalent to sincerity - In the scientific sense, a *reference* is true only when the things it refers to are united in the way in which it refers to them; otherwise, it is false. Such a meaning does not involve the arts - emotive power that is attached to a word cannot be deciphered in a general discussion - In criticism, the most usual sense of the word truth is of acceptability - understanding of the 'truth' of *Robinson Crusoe* is the acceptability in the interests of the effect of the narrative, not their correspondence with any actual facts involving the principle character - falsity of happy endings to *Lear* or *Don Quixote* is unacceptable to those who have fully responded to the work - truth is to be understood as necessity or doing justice - used in the sense of sincerity when discussing art - external circumstances are irrelevant where the sincerity of the artist is involved.

**Answer the following questions in an essay of about 250 words**

1. Explain the major propositions in the essay "The Two Uses of Language"

**a. Elaborate:** Richards, in "Principles of Literary Criticism" expounds a theory of language, and distinguishes between the two uses of language – the referential or scientific, and the emotive. Science makes statements, poetry makes pseudo-statements that cannot be empirically tested and proved true or false. A statement is justified - the pseudo statement of poetry is justified in its effect - Poetry communicates feelings and emotions - poetic truth is different from scientific truth - Poetry cannot provide knowledge, and intellectual doctrine in poetry does not exist - Poetry speaks not to the mind but to the impulses. Its speech, literal or figurative, logical or illogical is faithful to its experience as long as it evokes a similar experience in the reader.

**Quiz**

- Richards' first book, *The Foundation of Aesthetics* (1922) was co-authored with  
a. Allen Tate      b. Yvor Winters      c. Eliot      **d. C.K.Ogden and James Wood.**
- When the character of an impulse depends on its stimulus, it would be called  
a. sense      b. truth      **c. reference**      d. thought
- Complex mechanisms continually change because they are independent of  
**a. external stimuli.**      b. experience      c. reference      d. emotion
- The scientific use of language relies on  
a. attitude      **b. reference**      c. emotion      d. intellect
- the scientific use of language should avoid  
a. feeling      b. emotion      **c. ambiguity**      d. meaning

## **Glossary**

expound: explain

empiricist: relating to or characteristic of the theory that all knowledge is based on experience derived from the senses.

## **Assignment**

### **I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.**

1. Name the works by Richards on Language.
2. Explain the example provided by Richards to distinguish between two kinds of causation for mental activity.
3. What are the differences between Richards' view of language and Saussure's.
4. What is a 'pseudo-statement'?
5. What is a 'reference'?

### **II. Answer the questions in a paragraph of 100 words**

1. Richards' explanation of the two uses of language.

### **III. Answer the following questions in an essay of about 250 words**

1. Summarise the chapter "The Two Uses of Language".

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