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The Supreme Organ of the Mind's Self-Ordering Growth

T. Y. Booth

Utah State University

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dead game
Dead game

9.2
#47

I'M CALLING you a

FIRE
FIRE
FIRE
FIRE
FIRE
FIRE
FIRE
FIRE

Plimmed
PROLOSHAR
Evantified

APPRECIATED
PREMATURE
Canonical

Transcendental sensualist
DARKLY WISE
RUDELY GREAT
ABUS'D, OR Disabus'd
GREAT LORD

APPRECIATED
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Transcendental sensualist
DARKLY WISE
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GREAT LORD

PREY to all
JUDGE OF TRUTH
ENDLESS ERROR

**The Supreme Organ of the
Mind's Self-Ordering
Growth**

T. Y. BOOTH

T. Y. BOOTH

Faculty Association

Spring 1973

FORTY-SEVENTH HONOR LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE UNIVERSITY

A basic objective of the Faculty Association of Utah State University, in the words of its constitution, is:

to encourage intellectual growth and development of its members by sponsoring and arranging for the publication of two annual faculty research lectures in the fields of (1) the biological and exact sciences, including engineering, called the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Natural Sciences; and (2) the humanities and social sciences, including education and business administration, called the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities.

The administration of the University is sympathetic with these aims and shares, through the Scholarly Publications Committee, the costs of publishing and distributing these lectures.

Lecturers are chosen by a standing committee of the Faculty Association. Among the factors considered by the committee in choosing lecturers are, in the words of the constitution:

(1) creative activity in the field of the proposed lecture; (2) publication of research through recognized channels in the field administration, called the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities.

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(1) creative activity in the field of the proposed lecture; (2) publication of research through recognized channels in the field of the proposed lecture; (3) outstanding teaching over an extended period of years; (4) personal influence in developing the character of the students.

T. Y. Booth was selected by the committee to deliver the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities. On behalf of the members

The Supreme Organ of the Mind's Self-Ordering Growth

T. Y. Booth

An English teacher complained not long ago in one of the official journals of the National Council of Teachers of English, *College English*, that “. . . the NCTE, like the Dartmouth Conference, proceeds as if I. A. Richards had never existed. . . .” Since this article says very well a good many things that many of us in English think need saying these days, and since Richards thinks about the problems of creating and interpreting language perhaps as deeply as anyone in our time, it occurred to me that I could perhaps do no better for this

Growth

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Richards believes that in one particular complication of language in action, the adequate translating from one language to another not historically or culturally related, from Chinese to English, for example, "We have . . . what may very probably be the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos."² And this particular assertion can be taken as merely giving emphasis to the sufficiently complex process of comprehending a statement in one's own language. As Richards himself goes on to say:

"Translation theory . . . has . . . a peculiar duty toward man's self-completion. . . . [It] has not only to work for better mutual comprehension between users of diverse tongues; more central still in its purposing is a more complete viewing of itself and of the Comprehending which it should serve."³

Now this lecture finally will attempt to focus so much on a particular cluster of language considerations, and will insist so definitely on their importance, that it may be well first to acknowledge at least a few of the many other also important aspects of life and of language that it will not deal with.

I believe, for example, that significant physical and mental experiences do take place apart from language. To insist on the importance of language is not to deny the importance of other experiences.

I also recognize that significant language situations occur that have little or no concern with "taking" thought, little concern with what might be called thought in an overt sense—"phatic communion and of the Comprehending which it should serve."

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I also recognize that significant language situations occur that have little or no concern with "taking" thought, little concern with what might be called thought in an overt sense—"phatic communion," it has been called: many of our routine social signals and responses, some rituals, and the like.⁴

I believe, as a final example of what I shall not talk about, that language can be profitably studied as a separable thing in itself,

²*Speculative Instruments*, p. 22.

its patterns identified, its workings analyzed, its operations described. We ask our English majors to do a fair bit of such study.

What I will attempt finally to deal with in what follows, however, is our developed language as something not separable from us, something that is essentially of us, us as identifiably human beings. Nearly all of the most significant thought, nearly all of our development that is most distinctly and distinctively human, takes place in, by, with, through, language. It is not merely that the development could not take place without language—for that again seems to identify language as something separable. It is that a person's development in language is *his* development, not separable, finally, from him. Language, as Richards puts it, is not "*a code . . . it is an organ—the supreme organ of the mind's self-ordering growth. . . . language is an instrument for controlling our becoming.*"⁵

As is true of other organs, when language is functioning well, we pay little or no attention to it or its complexities. Part of the difficulty, in fact, of doing justice to the problems of expression and interpretation that Richards asks us to deal with is that routine language experience occurs so effortlessly, so unconcernedly, so second-natured naturally, that when we do run into difficulties we do not always recognize them as difficulties of our developing language. Or, what can be even worse, we think of the language difficulties as if they were separable, as if the thought would be available if only we could get at it without having to use language, "as though *composing* were a sort of catching a nonverbal butterfly in a verbal is an instrument for controlling our becoming."⁵

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May I therefore ask you to do some very difficult work as you participate with me in this lecture, work comparable to making your heart skip a beat by thinking about its doing so, work comparable to improving your basal metabolism by paying some atten-

First, let us examine Richards' theoretical analysis of what goes on in language situations.⁸

He begins with what help he can get from the communications engineer, and observes that for communication to occur, there must be a source which selects, encodes, and transmits, and a destination which receives, decodes, and develops.⁹

The fact that the process can be talked of in such terms is no doubt the reason for so many attempts to deal with language as if it were only a code. Unique complexities develop, however, because these processes are not just matters of retrieving one meaning-equivalent for each word, or one pattern of meaning for each pattern of wording. Every creating and every interpreting of a language utterance is influenced or determined by "any number of partially similar situations in which partially similar utterances have occurred," and

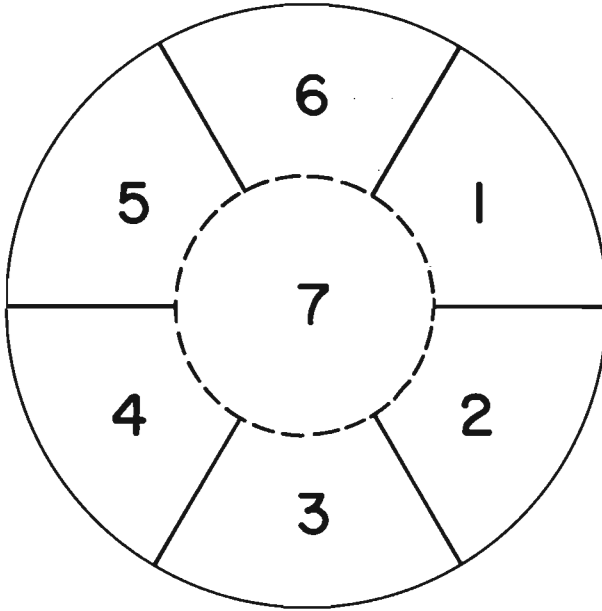
the comprehending is a function of the comparison fields from which it derives. Let the units of which these comparison fields consist be *utterances-within-situations*—the utterance and its situation being partners in the network of transactions with other utterances in other situations which lends significance to the utterance. Partially similar utterances made within very different situations are likely to require different comprehendings. . . .¹⁰

Richards suggests that the total processes of dealing with these innumerable influences plus carrying out the immediate intentions of the source or the destination involve at least seven "*sorts of work*" similar situations in which partially similar utterances have occurred," and

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Richards suggests that the total processes of dealing with these innumerable influences plus carrying out the immediate intentions of the source or the destination involve at least seven "*sorts of work*" all operating more or less continuously and all mutually influencing each other as they simultaneously occur. He offers the following scheme of what is likely to be going on in any uttering or comprehending beyond the simplest.

⁸Again, in the particular discussion I cite most, he is talking specifically



1. Indicates: points to, selects. . . .
2. Characterizes: says something about, sorts. . . .
3. Realizes: comes alive to, wakes up to, presents. . . .
4. Values: cares about. . . .
5. Influences: would change or keep as it is. . . .
6. Controls: manages, directs, runs, administers itself. . . .
7. Purposes: seeks, pursues, tries, endeavors to be or to



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These, mark you again, are all operating more or less continuously, and are all mutually influencing each other as they simultaneously occur. Clearly if there is complexity of the degree suggested by such a scheme, we are not dealing with any direct, one-to-one

all that goes on, or as all going on inevitably, in every language situation.¹² But that at least these complexities are likely to develop I commend for your consideration.

For this lecture, however, having called them to your attention, I would like to focus not on the sorts of work being done but on some aspects of the processes themselves, the processes of creating and interpreting the utterances that do these sorts of work. And the first aspect I would ask you to deal with is the matter of interpreting the “partially similar utterances” in “partially similar situations,” the comprehending of which is “a function of the comparison fields from which it derives.” Let us start with what I hope will seem clear-cut examples, to see if we can catch some language in action, to watch how it behaves, rather than either analyzing it part by part, as if it were a model or a dead specimen, or simply letting it do its work, as we are accustomed to doing, and as we should do much of the time, in routine situations, without trying to see how it does it.

Let us start by looking at one or two samples of a type often used in Freshman English classes, or in beginning linguistics classes. What I am asking you to do is to see if you can tell what goes on. It is not that there is any difficulty of interpretation here. The interesting question is, *why* do we find no difficulty in interpretation? Language functions with human beings. I am asking you to ask yourselves, what happens within or to you as you comprehend?

First, then, examples of a couple of ordinary words requiring completely different comprehendings because they are utterances by part, as if it were a model or a dead specimen, or simply letting it do its work, as we are accustomed to doing, and as we should do much of the time, in routine situations, without trying to see how it does it.

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First, then, examples of a couple of ordinary words requiring completely different comprehendings because they are utterances within different situations.

The report gave full statistics and discussed the implications of the dead game count in Utah for 1972.

Let me tell you the inspiring story of an injured but dead game

Now, you have no difficulty comprehending the sense of “dead game” in either sentence. You do not have to think about *why* you do not have to think about it. Yet how is it that you can immediately and confidently give completely different interpretations to the same two words? Or are they the same words?: and if not, how are their differences established? Certainly not by sound or by appearance on the printed page or lighted screen.

Let us look at a little different kind of sample, wherein the change of one word requires completely different comprehension of otherwise identical structures. Remember that “Partially similar utterances made within very different situations are likely to require different comprehendings.”

I'm calling you a doctor.

I'm calling you a liar.¹³

In almost any actual communication situation there would be no misunderstanding of either statement. But the question I am asking you to deal with is, how do you bring yourself immediately to the one comprehension or the other, without the question of there being a need for a choice even crossing your mind?—unless it is forced to cross your mind, as I am doing. In any given situation the meanings which you probably gave to the two samples could be reversed. If the situation were such that the person using the first statement were accusing you of being a doctor, or categorizing you as one, you would likely understand that that was his meaning. If the person

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The comprehension of such samples is easy: it is, as noted,

hension itself offers difficulties, getting at them can be an extremely tortuous process. Ever since about our ninth year we have functioned so easily and completely within our routine language situations that we have no idea of the complexities we have mastered. Precisely because we do function so easily most of the time, we often do not know where to begin our attack on a non-routine language problem. Comprehending is pulling it all together. We routinely do so at once (or think we do); when we can't do so *all* at once with a particular utterance, written or spoken, we are at a loss about any part of it until we have considered each part and the whole situation, for every part influences every other part, and only after we have considered all parts, from words to any larger language units, not to mention still larger contexts, as I hope to show, can we finally pull it all together.

Suppose there is a single word that we do not understand. Very often we pause on a word—and should pause more often, never assuming that we know what a word means in any given occurrence. When we do have to pause, we often turn to a dictionary for help. Certainly that is one valid approach to a word, to capture it in a dictionary, and examine it as it lies there tranquilized, clearly alive and breathing, but inactive enough to let us turn it over at our leisure.

The dictionary maker, as best he can, first tries to say what a word means all by itself:

'fire . . . *la*: the phenomenon of combustion as manifested in light, flame, and heat and in heating, destroying and altering effects . . .

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'fire . . . *la*: the phenomenon of combustion as manifested in light, flame, and heat and in heating, destroying and altering effects . . .

That seems clear-cut and satisfactory enough. But a good dictionary maker cannot stop there. Into a collegiate-sized dictionary he may put as many as forty or fifty such definitions of various possible meanings of *fire*. Then, if he is conscientious and has space enough, he gives some examples of it in action, lets the tranquilizer wear off a little. *Webster's Third Unabridged* has three-fourths of a column

feels he doesn't know well enough. But even thirteen and a half columns cannot give much experience compared to the total experiences we all have with words that we use or meet at all regularly. And all of these experiences, as Richards has indicated, affect every different occurrence of the word that we experience, and each new experience then affects each subsequent one: thus all language stays alive, changing, developing, as we use it.

Let us look at that word "fire" a little more. It says something all by itself, just as a word. It does not say what "water," just as a word, says. We would almost never think of looking it up in a dictionary — we have already had much, much more experience with it than any dictionary could give us.¹⁴

fire

Now let us release it from its tranquilized state into some simple language contexts and see if we can then sneak up on it and catch it in action:

Just after he had become convinced that he would never be warm again, he had found not only roof and walls, but a hearth containing a most welcome fire.

It's on fire! Get the hose! I'll call the neighbors.

The officer raised his sword. The rifles were leveled. The expected word came with only a

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It's on fire! Get the hose! I'll call the neighbors.

The officer raised his sword. The rifles were leveled. The expected word came with only a slight nervous pause: "Uh, fire!" The figure at the wall jerked and slumped. It was over.

His attempted joking with the jury missed fire, to the great detriment of his client.

His boss fire Joe? He wouldn't dare.

Obviously we could go on indefinitely, if not forever. The word as repeated is spelled the same, would be pronounced the same (or if there were any differences it would not be these that chiefly affected the meaning): in some sense, it clearly is the same word.¹⁵ In another sense, they are not the same words; they communicate different ideas as they are affected by (and as they in turn affect) the contexts put around them. "Fire" even as meaning ordinary combustion, we see, *means something different* depending on whether the context shows that combustion to be a comfort or a threat. Thus we can argue that every use of the word is a unique use: each word used means something that never has been meant before, and never will be meant again. Yet that unique meaning can come into being only because of a word's meanings developed by previous use of it in previous situations. And you think you are dealing with a code, do you?

Will you keep in mind how you interpreted immediately and with very different meanings "dead game," "I'm calling you a," and "fire," as we proceed. What was going on around here as it happened? For the tendency to think that we know, or can find out definitely from a dictionary, what a word means in a given context, the assumption that a word keeps the same meaning from context to context, is, as Richards demonstrates, one of the most persistent causes of misinterpretation. The reader must be ever alert to what *this* word means in *this* context if he is to compose or to interpret well, whether to be benefitted by beneficial expression or not harmed by faulty. in previous situations. And you think you are dealing with a code, do you?

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Now in some scientific and technical contexts, words can be assigned comparatively definite, rather fixed meanings. Whenever we are dealing with things and actions that can be pointed to, and when we for some reason really want to be as precise as possible, we can regiment language to our purposes. There is little problem interpreting such material:

Methods

Dried brine shrimp cysts (gastrulae) were obtained and stored at -20°C . Development was initiated by hydration of the cysts in Instant Ocean Sea Salts at 25°C . Approximately 24 hours were needed for hatching at this temperature. The tolerance of early nauplii to NaCl in the medium was measured as survival percentages in different salinities after 32 hours of incubation (Fig. 1A). Sodium and potassium ion levels were assayed by flame photometry using a Beckman Model B Spectrophotometer. The nauplii were prepared by rinsing with distilled water and drying at 105°C for 24 hours. The dried nauplii were weighed and dissolved in a 1:1:1 mixture of HNO_3 , H_2O_2 , and H_2O at 95°C for 40 min. Results are expressed as μEq of cations per mg of naupliar dry weight.¹⁶

That is, there is little problem for those who recognize the words and other symbols; and for those who have participated in similar actions and who have made and read similar utterances, there is hardly ever any problem of misinterpretation with such a statement competently composed.

But such things and actions, important as they can be to our human purposes and achievements, are ultimately not nearly so important as other activities are. In fact such things and actions cannot become important until we relate them, determine their significance, in fact *make them be* important to us. And "determine their significance" is not an action we can point to; relationship, significance, importance, are not things we can point to. Every time we see such

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Let us, then, look at a different level of utterance:

a criterion of the prolosharity of a discovery other than its failure to make an impact? Yes, there is such a criterion. A discovery is proloshar if its implications cannot be connected by a series of simple logical steps to evantified knowledge.

Do you know what the utterance is talking about, can you interpret it? No, you cannot. You could make an accurate syntactical analysis, diagram the sentences, identify the parts of speech. But you cannot yet know precisely what even the words that you do recognize mean in this passage, because you do not know what some other words mean. Yet this is very often our situation when we are trying to develop ourselves, to increase our mental comprehension. And such a situation is, or should be, the situation a student finds himself in most of the time. If he is not, he is simply rehashing or reviewing, not opening up his mind.

Now it would be unfamiliar material indeed that contained so high a proportion of unrecognized words. But actually, a more important problem of interpretation is that we too often assume we know what a word means just because we recognize it. You all knew what "fire" meant when I first asked you to take note of the word—and you proceeded promptly to assign it a number of very different meanings in different contexts. But what about more subtle differences which are not always distinguished because the context does not insist that we do so? There are often key words to the meaning of a passage that are really, as Richards puts it, lock words that bar us from the meaning until we adequately open up their possibilities. All reviewing, not opening up his mind.

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What I am requiring you to do at the moment is to treat the three words as lock-or-key words by withholding them from you momentarily. Let us, then, start pulling the passage together by

translating “evantified” into “canonical”: the passage is talking about canonical knowledge. And “plimmed” means “appreciated.” So Smith’s discovery was not appreciated in its day because it could not be easily and clearly connected to canonical knowledge. Now do we know what is being talked about? Well, we still need to know that “proloshar” means “premature.” Smith’s discovery was not appreciated because it was premature. And incidentally, it was not really a person named Smith, which is just a convenient way of showing it was a person—who can keep all those names straight, anyway. Let us look at the original utterance, accurately quoted:

So why was Avery’s discovery not appreciated in its day? Because it was “premature.” But is this really an explanation or is it merely empty tautology? In other words, is there a way of providing a criterion of the prematurity of a discovery other than its failure to make an impact? Yes, there is such a criterion: A discovery is premature if its implications cannot be connected by a series of simple logical steps to canonical, or generally accepted, knowledge.¹⁸

Now surely we can interpret the passage. Well, we can if we know that the Avery whom Gunther H. Stent is talking about is Oswald Avery, which means then that the discovery is the “identification of DNA as the active principle in bacterial transformation and hence as genetic material.”¹⁹

And we do have to know, or learn in some way about such larger contexts as this last to interpret such a passage adequately—which means that all who really have followed the work of such men as Avery are comprehending this passage much more fully than the rest of us are, right this minute, even though we comprehend it, presumably, about as well as those can who have no expertise in biochemistry.

But now wait a minute. What is “canonical” doing in a passage talking of scientific knowledge? Well, depending on our previous experiences of “utterances-within-situations” we might not pay any

¹⁸Gunther S. Stent, “Prematurity and Uniqueness in Scientific Discovery,” p. 84.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

attention to the word, perceiving (or thinking that we perceive) immediately what the writer means; or it might give us pause—and apparently he thought it might give some readers pause, because he throws in “generally accepted” to help point toward what he means by it.

But actually it is to some extent the word “appreciate” and to an even greater extent the word “premature” that the reader must be most careful not to misinterpret, and Stent alerts us to be particularly careful of the latter by putting it in quotes. If we take care to understand *what he means* by it, we are able to interpret the passage (and his whole article, which has as one major concern this question of prematurity in scientific discovery). But if we start off thinking that *of course* we know what “appreciate” and “premature” mean, and assign to each of them immediately *some one* of their *many possible* meanings (remember “fire”), then we are liable to a misinterpretation. Avery’s work not appreciated? Nonsense. Everyone noted it at the time and agreed that it was important. A genuine scientific discovery premature? Nonsense. It was brilliant, it has been verified, it had to come at that time or (after still other discoveries) Watson and Crick probably wouldn’t have been inspired to search out the structure of DNA, which led to their discovery of the double helix. Therefore, Avery’s work obviously was not only not premature, it came barely soon enough.

Such reactions are all too common as we read.²⁰ Those who take care to understand what Stent is talking about may like or dislike, agree or disagree with his idea that Avery’s discovery was premature. But one has to interpret Stent’s meaning to have any of these responses to Stent’s meaning, and the above “nonsense” responses are not dealing with what “appreciate” and “premature” mean *in Stent’s passage*.

As a significant part of Richards’ practical investigations into problems of interpretation, he has had many, many students write interpretations of written material for him over the years and has

²⁰It is clear from the helps he offers the reader that Stent realized very well the danger of his point being misunderstood. Unfortunately, not all writers take pains to ward against misinterpretation, and readers still misinterpret no matter how careful a writer may be.

published some of the results.²¹ To work through some of these exercises as he sets them forth is a sobering experience for anyone in terms of his own interpretative abilities, and an overwhelming warning system for teachers—and I do not mean just teachers of language and literature. We all expect students to be able to interpret what we have them read and what they hear from us, and we assume that they do. But whenever we possibly can, we need to have them compose utterances-within-situations, and we need to interpret these utterances carefully, so that we *and they* have some chance of seeing whether they have in fact *interpreted* what we asked them to.

For particular kinds of information, and under pressures of some necessarily large class sizes, we may have to do a lot of routine checking by asking students to write numbers or fill in blanks in response to such items as the following:

The experiments by Conte and others measured the tolerance of brine shrimps to (1) AgNO₃ (2) NaCl (3) PO₄ (4) KCl (5) None of the foregoing.

Yet we must be aware that such checking can give no assurance that the student who *knows the right answer because of attentive reading* (let alone the one who guesses it), *understands the distinction* he is being asked to make. The only reasonable assurance we have is that he will come to understand it if he continues dealing with such situations, and makes and receives utterances about them.

With a statement such as Stent's there is no way to get at whether the reader has come to a valid interpretation or any guarantee that he will *develop his ability to interpret*, if he simply checks off word repetitions, identification of meaning by synonyms, or the like. A reader may know very well that Stent called Avery's discovery premature, and may never come to doubt that he therefore understands Stent's meaning (since he does "of course know" what "premature" means) without in fact ever understanding it at all. That such misunderstandings do occur continually among intelligent and well-educated people, Richards has documented, as noted.²² Once we

²¹Especially in *Practical Criticism and Interpretation in Teaching*.

²²Edward R. Ducharme, in "The Evasion of the Text," and, according to Richards (*So Much Nearer*, pp. 254-255), F. L. Lucas, in an article in

move beyond things and actions that we can point to, move to significances, relationships, meanings, no matter what the field of knowledge is, understanding can come only in language, "the supreme organ of the mind's self-ordering growth."

So far, what I have tried to illustrate is that we can interpret language only as we grasp an entire utterance, and grasp it entirely, as is indicated etymologically in "comprehend." I hope that I have provided convincing illustrations of how the immediate language context brings us to meaning, and we could spend much more time on this: illustrate in detail how sound, syntax, the range of meanings that each word has for us due to its previous uses (meanings denotative, connotative, relational, etymological . . .) *all must come together* if we are to interpret a text. But we must not forget that all utterances are made within larger human situations, and that previous, present and future human situations provide in all language situations innumerable influences that also affect the meaning and comprehension.

It is Richards' work with context²³ that perhaps more than anything else sets him apart from most others who work in linguistics and semantics. He keeps insisting on both the necessity and the difficulty of bearing in mind, in any working with comprehending language, whether composing or interpreting, all the influences in the process, anything from the immediately surrounding words (as I have tried to illustrate to this point), to the complete history of the utterer, of the comprehender, and of the language being used. And although completeness in any sense in regard to these latter is just plain impossi-

Cambridge University Studies, offer further evidence of the kind that Richards gives.

²³Richards uses "context" in *The Meaning of Meaning*, but says elsewhere (*Speculative Instruments*, p. 23n.) that it apparently misled some readers. It seems to me the best word still. In *Interpretation in Teaching* he suggests "context" to mean "whatever meaning . . . [a word] has through belonging to a recurrent group of events. . . ." and "setting" to mean "the words which surround it in the utterance, and the other contemporaneous signs which govern its interpretation." (p. viii; see also *So Much Nearer*, pp. 144-145.) In any event, he wishes to have us consider all of the influences at work in the whole communication situation. In *Speculative Instruments* he tries *nexus*, and says there that comprehending "is an instance of a nexus established through past occurrences of partially similar utterances in partially similar situations—utterances and situations partially co-varying." (pp. 23-24.)

ble, we must always go as far as we can, or as far as the situation justifies, for *the extent* to which this total context can be brought to bear on the communication situation determines *how much* comprehension can be achieved.

Let me see now if I can illustrate in brief something of how context in this larger sense can help determine interpretation of a text.

A Modest Proposal by Jonathan Swift is a straightforward essay whose words and structure offer so little difficulty to an experienced reader that he is likely to have no appreciation for the complexities he has mastered as he moved to his understanding of it. The interesting question is, how does its actual and plain meaning emerge as being almost entirely the exact opposite of what the words, as such, say? There is no doubt in any reader's mind that the meaning of the words, the immediate language utterance, can be understood only in a wider human context. Even younger students, who are sometimes disturbed when they first read this essay, know that further understanding is called for. Even though the tone seems so neutral, the atmosphere so bland, the development so reasonable, they never fail to puzzle over what the author can possibly be up to, because he cannot be serious about what he says—they know that. Yet only one who has grown up in a society whose members never eat people—or do so only under great stress—and who knows that Swift was not mad (at the time), and that although he was a misanthrope he sought genuinely for the welfare of his fellow man, can finally with confidence comprehend that Swift was being savagely and bitterly ironic in proposing that the poverty problems of Ireland be solved by the well-to-do paying poor mothers for yearling children, who are to be slaughtered and eaten. Only because people in our society cannot accept this proposal at the literal word meaning, is everyone driven to a comprehending at some other level, and the essay continues to give readers profound experiences with irony.

We may note by contrast the career of Daniel Defoe's *The Shortest Way With The Dissenters*, written not many years before Swift's proposal. Defoe's text advocated extreme measures against all who would not worship in the Church of England, who wished to establish their own independent chapels and congregations. Again, what he really meant could only be determined by total context, and

it took some time for this to prevail. Defoe assumed that his proposals were so outrageous that they would cause people to think carefully about what would really be proper treatment for dissenters. Actually, a number of the extreme churchmen thought the suggestions were excellent, and a number of dissenters saw them as serious threats. Unfortunately for Defoe, in the minds of a number of people it was not impossible to pass and enforce a law in England at that time “that whoever was found at a conventicle should be banished the nation, and the preacher be hanged.” When the more sensible leaders who saw that it really was impossible pointed out this fact, the high Tories were highly incensed that the low fellow had so taken them in, and the government arrested him, fined him heavily, and sent him to the pillory. Fortunately for Defoe, the more balanced among the dissenters also by this time saw that what he had proposed was impossible, that therefore he really was on their side, and they rallied round to make sure that he didn’t get stoned²⁴ while in the pillory. Thus at the end of the affair, his roles had been reversed: he was a villain with the Tories and a hero with the common people. But again, from only the language itself, it had proved impossible to tell what was meant: only the total context could do it.

Now, perhaps if we take seriously the term “total context,” we have by definition included everything of the language situation. But in this total context of the language situation there is yet one more specific aspect that I would like you to look at.

There is little difficulty these days in getting acknowledgment that words are symbols: the word is not the thing or the action it points to. Your eyes were neither dazzled nor smoke-filled, your skin neither warmed nor burned by having the word “fire” brought into your presence. But to say that a word is a symbol hardly gets us started. In any given language utterance we must distinguish—I hope you now agree—whether a given word (say “fire”) means, stands for, symbolizes, something as clear cut and identifiable, as point-to-able, as physical coals in a stove or the process of, the changes that are taking place in, a combustion; or whether there is an extension

²⁴How does any reader know that what I mean here is not “experience the effects of smoking marijuana or of drinking alcohol”?

of meaning, whereby, say, the result formerly achieved by the placing of a process of combustion against some highly combustible material is now accomplished by pulling a trigger; or whether there is even simply a designating of the word itself: a four-letter noun, or verb, or adjective, or whether . . . and so on.

As we come seriously to wrestle with language, we at times yearn for a system that would give us clear-cut, definite meanings for words, so that we could always say what we mean, and mean what we say. Let "fire" mean the coals, or at most the coals and the process. In particular, some say, let us not get fancy and talk of our hearts being on fire or of lighting a fire under a committee slow to turn in a report.

The point again is that if we simplify we can develop a great deal of precision in actions, observations, language. Consider the technical report that water boils at 100°C. It does, does it? Not very often; it doesn't. Life as we live it, experience as we have it, significance as we achieve it, is not simple. It is well to know that water boils at 100°C, but it is also well to remember that "as a matter of fact" it seldom really does so. Without rigorous exclusion of non-water materials nearly always associated with water as we find it—is laboratory water more real than that in a mountain stream?—without rigorous control of atmospheric pressure, we cannot *make* water boil at precisely "its" boiling point. Probably everyone who grew up in the mountains has learned the difficulties of hard-boiling an egg at 10,000 feet.

And to achieve meaning, significance, a sense of relationship in our most important, never simplified, always "impure" (in the sense that all non-laboratory water is impure), cluttered-up experiencing, we have to have expressions that embrace, seize together, "comprehend" a whole cluster of meanings "all at once" and "all together." And the most important way that language accomplishes this is metaphor.

Richards of course is not alone in noting metaphor in language as both elemental and pervasive, operating in all language situations except those from which it is deliberately and rigorously excluded for particular purposes, the distilled laboratory language of the technical report, for example—and there are always dead and very often living metaphors even there.

We tend to think of poets and people like that using figurative

language, but no doubt most of you here have had called to your attention the fact that we all use it continually. Metaphor is so much a part of language, so much a part of thinking, that it becomes a real question to find out—if we can even begin to—how much our figurative way of expressing something determines how and what we think as well as feel about it. All students of language feel a close affinity with the person who said, “How do I know what I think about the matter until I’ve heard what I have to say about it?” The fact is that we do not know what we think—we do not *know* what we *feel*—on most matters until we have worked through our expressions about them, and those expressions seem just naturally to keep breaking away from, or out of the restraints of, literalism, to *have to do so*, to keep saying what we wish to say.²⁵

Suppose that we are *thinking* about something. What metaphor do we decide to use for the kind of thinking we are doing? Are we *pondering*? Are we *speculating*? Are we *ruminating*? For most of us most of the time these words are dead metaphors, but they still carry over in connotation some sense of the original figure: and interestingly, we have again come up with the same figures in our modern words. We ponder something, or we *weigh* the matter in our mind. We speculate about something, or we *take a look* at it, not meaning

²⁵For a sampling of Richards’ dealing with metaphor, see *Interpretation in Teaching*, chapter 2. He of course deals with it continually in his discussions of interpretation.

Susanne K. Langer postulates that “The spontaneous similes of language are our first record of *similarities* perceived,” that metaphor is therefore the law of the life of language, “the force that makes it essentially *relational*,” and that only after language has developed its great practical applications can human beings actually come to “believe that it was invented as a utility, and was later embellished with metaphors for the sake of a cultural product called poetry.” *Philosophy in a New Key*, pp. 141-142.

One can be continually brought up short by terms obviously technical that on the face of them suggest fascinating metaphorical origins. I can see that I have no business reading any social or literary extension into the word as Stent uses it when he talks about the studies that led to the realization that “DNA might not be a monotonous polymer after all;” but “the question of the reality of the negative image,” and “a pointwise-degenerate system of the form,” and an “electron scavenger,” and numerical values that are “sensitive to the choice” (all samples from recent technical journals) make an outsider think that metaphor is still very much at work in the creation of technical terms.

with our literal eyes. We ruminate, or we *chew* on a problem for awhile. Why do we go along a *line* of thought, but have an *area* of study? Why not develop a *volume* or *room* of study, not just an *area* or *field*? (Are these more open, with the third dimension taken for granted?) When we say that one idea depends on another, the metaphor is dead, but we say in the words of our own language that a series of ideas, all *hang together*, or that an outcome *hangs on* whether something else happens.

Now the word “fire,” we agreed earlier, does not mean what the word “water” does.²⁶ And the word “lips” does not mean what the word “rosebud” means, yet we have all experienced the use of the word “rosebud” to mean someone’s lips.

A. E. Housman ends one of his poems thus:

About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

The first of those two lines seems to be completely literal — at least there would seem to be no reason to doubt that Housman, or his implied speaker, the 20-year-old lad, did intend to go about the woodlands whenever the general situation of the poem did recur. But in the second line “cherry” means “whatever cherry trees are there,” or something of the sort, and “snow” means cherry blossoms, while still carrying some of the meanings of snow: its beauty, perhaps its coldness, certainly the fact that it comes seasonally and does not last. And “hung” is both literal and suggestive: cherry blossoms and snow do hang from branches, though they also stay on top of them: and of course “to hang” also means “to decorate.”

What all users of language do with shiftings, overtones, and ambiguities such as these is to blend a whole complexity of experiences — seeing, feeling, and whatever else we call experience — into a response that we would not have except for this human genius within all of us that lets us both blend experiences and respond to words *all at once in many ways*, in a flash, or in something less than a flash.

²⁶Carlton Culmsee likes to see how prospective teachers react to a bit of advice: If you detect a spark of genius in a student, he tells them, by all means water it.

Therefore, as a final specific set of exercises, in my attempt to show you something of what I think I. A. Richards means by identifying language as "the supreme organ of the mind's self-ordering growth," consider with me the sense that I suspect all of us here have, that we as individuals are inevitably at the center of our psychological and physiological universe. The universe, for each of us, starts with us and stretches out forever in all directions away from our sensory and mental focus, and we therefore find ourselves responding to expressions that communicate and enlarge this sense of being at the center of all that we know.

Now, I do not say that we are inevitably, or from every viewpoint, at the center of this universe. We may even accept the findings that our solar system is toward an edge of our galaxy, for example. But our culture and the individuals in it generally see man as at the center: some objects, we say (do not we *have to* do so?) are so many light years *away*, and are *receding*; or, angels and heaven are above us, beasts and insects and hell below us; or, the complete cosmos is grander, more largely organized than we, the amoeba and mineral existence are less developed, less fully organized. Some such organizing overviews of all experience seem essential to us; apparently we cannot function as humans (become human?) without some such. Our particular view of ourselves as being in the middle, however, should not be considered as even psychologically inevitable. It may be that the sense of having "some position" in the scheme of things (some sense of there being a scheme of things) is inevitable for the mind that can be called human. But it would appear that at least an individual here and there has, for example, viewed himself as the lowest entity on the universal totem pole, and another has seen himself as the apex of all that is.

To come up with the idea that man "has a position," let alone the idea that he is somewhere in the middle, would be impossible, of course, without language. To deal with such an idea adequately makes the greatest demands possible on both our expressive and interpretive powers. Simply to mention many of the possibilities shows off a great deal of language in action. Is man "the heart of the universe," or is he "caught in the middle of things"? Is his life an ordeal

or an opportunity, or both, or something in between? Whichever it is, is it a time interlude in an eternal existence, a preparation for a new existence, or a brief consciousness between endlessly back and endlessly forward projecting situations of individual non-awareness? How much have you heard and read of such possibilities? How much more do you hear and read and think and react within a context of the unspecifically-thought-of assumption that such is your situation? Yet we cannot begin to deal with such speculations, ideas, sensings, without language.

And language cannot begin to deal with them without metaphor. We cannot get single-word, pinned-down technical expressions for such encompassing experiences.

Let me try to give point to this assertion by having you look at just three or four excerpts from as many attempts to give expression to this general idea, of the many, many that we have in our Western culture. At the same time, of course, we will be dealing still with the total context of these utterances within situations. See if you can watch what is happening, as I asked you to watch what happened with "fire."

How is man in the middle of things? Consider how the counsellor of King Edwin expressed it, when the court were asking themselves whether this newly learned of Christianity could give them some help on the problem.

I have observed, my King, that this present life of man on earth, in comparison to the time that is unknown, is as though you were sitting at a banquet with your chieftains and retainers in the wintertime, when the fire is kindled and the hall warmed, and it is raining and snowing and storming outside; and a sparrow comes in through one door, and departs out another. Behold, during the time that he is inside, he is not smitten by the storm of winter. But, it is merely the twinkling of an eye and the least space that he is out of the winter before he goes back into it. Man's life is also thus, and what comes before, or what comes after, we do not know.

The comparison reaches us still, over a millenium of years,²⁷

²⁷Tautological, or does it add meaning because we now think of a millenium as one unit of time, not a thousand years?

long after the meadhalls have fallen, and glass panes keep sparrows from flying toward our fires. Whatever we believe about the times that have come before or shall come after, these times on occasion look cold and alien to us.

How is man in the middle of things? In the duality that is his particular situation and problem. If he were pure spirit or pure mind, he would not be troubled with sensuality; if he were only sensual, he could not have any concern about being sensual.

Goethe's Faust, having developed as far as any person might reasonably be expected to, still feels unfulfilled and would willingly give allegiance to any system that could prove able to fulfill him—and he concludes such a bargain with the devil. Mephistopheles offers Faust any experiences he wants, and Faust tries a lot of them, but Mephistopheles, being wholly²⁸ a devil, cannot understand the half-risen, in-between position of the human being. Faust likes a party, but he can't fulfill himself only by partying. Faust wants sex, but finds himself also in love. Faust fulfills himself finally by service to others, a path he had to find for himself, since it never would have occurred to Mephistopheles to "tempt" him in that direction, Mephistopheles having nothing in his nature to incline himself that way.

At one point Mephistopheles, impatient with this human dimension that he simply cannot understand, sneeringly refers to Faust as a "transcendental sensualist."²⁹ Goethe's whole play actually is a metaphor of man in that particular situation, and in such a context, this phrase is a brilliant language achievement. It says in two words what the whole play is saying, yet those two words could not say what they do say if their meaning were not established by the total play—and by the total context provided by Goethe's and his readers' sense of man being in the middle of things. Just as only the context could determine which meaning we give to "fire," and what Swift meant by advocating that his contemporaries eat the children

²⁸Might one say he is purely a devil, or a pure devil?

²⁹*übersinnlicher sinnlicher Freier*. "Transcendental sensualist" is C. F. MacIntyre's translation, and it seems to me a much more apt term than the usual more literal "super-sensual, sensual wooer," or some variation.

of the poor, so only by knowing the context in as large a sense as we can, are we able to understand what Goethe means by “transcendental sensualist.”

How is man in the middle of things? In Eugene O’Neill’s *The Hairy Ape*, Yank, having lost his innocent sense of “belonging,” at which time he was not concerned about where his position was in the scheme of things, knowing only that he did “belong,” is finally driven to say:

I ain’t on oath and I ain’t in heaven, get me? I’m in de middle tryin’ to separate ’em, takin’ all de woist punches from bot’ of ’em. Maybe dat’s what dey call hell, huh? But [to an ape in a zoo] you, yuh’re at de bottom. You belong! Sure! Yuh’re de on’y one in de woild dat does, yuh lucky stiff!

Though the language is deliberately unpoetic, the impact in the total play is great. We watch this limited human being—limited if in no other way in his opportunities to know anything of other men’s wrestlings with the problem—lose his unreflective sense of belonging and have to try to search out his place in the universe. In that context³⁰ his expression of where he stands, his envy of the beast’s uncomplicated position, as he sees it, at the bottom of things, his novel positioning of hell as being *between* earth and heaven, are all very meaningful to us. Because we see him working out his expression, because we join him in his context, we can interpret what he means, and can experience with him.

Let us look at a little longer excerpt—and are you seeing how all of our previous ideas help provide context for any partially similar utterances?

³⁰*In that context.* One reason it is difficult to do justice to any piece of literature by talking about it is that such activity by itself has insufficient context. In the classroom, of course, every effort is made to have each student read the work before there is any discussion of it (and ideally he will read it again—and some works again and again—after any discussion, critique, analysis, what you will). One invited to talk about literature in some way, to a group whose common literary experiences cannot be identified, is tempted to say, Do not come hear me philosophize about literature—stay home and read something I have read, go see a play that I have seen, write about something meaningful to you and let me read it. *Then* we can have a meaningful discussion.

Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
 A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
 With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,
 With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,
 He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
 In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;
 In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
 Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;
 Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
 Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
 Chaos of thought and passion, all confus'd;
 Still by himself abus'd, or disabus'd;
 Created half to rise, and half to fall,
 Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
 Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd:
 The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!³¹

There is no word here that anyone in this audience does not recognize. With what I have tried to show about context and metaphor, do you see what alert attention nevertheless would have to be given by a reader who would comprehend the passage as fully as he can?

How much context do you bring to the basic figure of the isthmus, and what is in the masses that you put on either side of that isthmus? Some sort of masses have to be there for the word "isthmus" to exist, to have its meaning—what masses do you put there for the word to develop its meaning for you *in this text*? What do "darkly" and "wise" do to each other reciprocally in such a juxtaposition? The metaphor that talks of—equates?³²—intelligence and wisdom in terms of—with—light, and of ignorance and other mental

³¹Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, "Epistle II," ll. 3-18.

³²Does a metaphor equate something with something else? I believe we might try saying it does if we look at the range of meanings we give to the idea of "equal." Note just a very few samples:

In "Sixteen ounces equal one pound," the word means "is the same as" or "add up to" or "is another way of designating." What does it mean in, "The planted acreage was equal to last year's" or "He was equal to the occasion," or "All men are created equal"?

The relationships of ideas in metaphors, those expressions that equate, or make equal, or make parallel, or blend in thought or feeling or attitude, or whatever it is they do, are indeed fundamental in all language development and use.

deficiencies in terms of darkness is one of the pervasive ones of our culture.³³ Does “rudely” here mean “impolitely,” and if not, what partially similar utterances and partially similar experiences do you have that would let you approach the meaning in this text? What different kinds of relationships are generated between these various opposing terms? How, for example, is the relationship between thinking too much and thinking too little, different from the relationship of abused and disabused, or of between being a lord of all and a prey to all? What about the whole pattern of many kinds of opposition all affecting each individually stated opposition? What about the final triplet: the juxtaposition of “glory” and “jest” makes for a riddle—but do not all the previous lines as well as these two words give a meaning to “riddle” here that it could never have without all of them?

Not such questions but the responses implied by such questions and innumerable others are involved in the comprehending. And with a passage of this complexity—and it is of course a straightforward passage, comparatively—a great many language and experience resources are needed to re-establish its potential.³⁴ A high-school or freshman student might be taxed simply to get the plain sense. Any of us might open up new insights on any careful re-reading.

Interpreting anything that provides a developing, an opening up of the mind, says Richards, requires attentiveness, “vigilance,”³⁵—it cannot be done mechanically, routinely, slackly. But vigilance is not enough if we do not know how to get started on a problem of interpretation.

The prime obstacle in general education is a feeling of helplessness before the unintelligible. Every problem is new to the mind which first meets it and it is baffling until he can recognize in it something which he has met and dealt with already. The all important difference between the mind which can clear itself by

³³For a mention of several such important and pervasive ways of looking at things and of how critical they might be in translation, see Richards, *Speculative Instruments*, pp. 33-34.

³⁴Richards offers as a tentative definition of the valid reception of an utterance as being a reincarnation to “*more or less the same potentialities*” as it had when it was uttered. *So Much Nearer*, pp. 166-167.

³⁵See Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, chapters 22,25,32.

thought and the mind which remains bewildered and can proceed only by burying the difficulty in a formula—retained, at best, by mere rote memory—is in this power to recognize the new problem as in part, an old conquest. Language, with its inexhaustible duplications (which here are duplicities), ceaselessly presents to us the old as though it were new, familiar ideas in novel disguises, understood distinctions as fresh opportunities for confusion, already assimilated combinations as unforeseeable conjunctions. The teacher meets with all this whenever he reads anything which stretches his intelligence; the pupil meets with it all the time, and if he is being well taught he should be expecting it and enjoying the sense of increasing power that his progressive mastery of it can afford. For this growth in power is, fundamentally, the vitalizing incentive with which education builds.

The beginner, in studying the most elementary matters, is doing nothing which is (or should be) *for him* any simpler than what we are doing when we try to follow a new and difficult author. And we can only help him in a fashion parallel to that in which we ourselves would wish to be helped or to help ourselves: that is, not by supplying the 'right answer' to the difficulty (with some unexamined criterion of 'right answers') but by making clearer what the difficulty itself was, so that when we meet it again we shall not have to 'remember the answer' but shall see what it must be from our understanding of the question. A learner at all stage learns—for serious purposes—only in so far as he is a thinker, and the difficulties of thinking are never new. We overcome them—in elementary mechanics, and in the Theory of Relativity, in learning to read words of one syllable and in reading *Ulysses*, alike—by taking account of them, by seeing what we are doing and setting aside other things which we should not be trying to do there. We solve them finally by discovering how much more simple the task was than we had hitherto supposed.³⁶

Composing utterances, whether written or spoken—that is, utterances of the sort we are dealing with here, not our routine social responses—is at least as difficult as interpreting, and is solvable in essentially the same way, and only in that way: by thinking through each new problem of expression as it occurs. Composing is not learned once for all, like riding a bicycle—and we might note that even an experienced cyclist rides to a fall now and again. It is not a matter

³⁶Richards, *Interpretation in Teaching*, p. 4.

of “finding” words that “fit” a meaning already achieved in some way, for “*what is said* depends on *how it is said*, and *how it is said* on *what is said*. *What we say* and *how we say it* are inseparable—in utterances which are entire.”³⁷ The most significant kind of meaning must find “itself in its words by finding the words for itself.”³⁸ In the process, “the arrival of a word and of a meaning may be indistinguishably welcome, or a proffered word because of an accompanying meaning is just as instantaneously dismissed.”³⁹ Sometimes in this struggle toward meaning the writer achieves a statement that so clearly shows him what he has been groping toward and for, that everything written to that point must be extensively reorganized, or even discarded and a “radical restart” undertaken.⁴⁰

I have tried in this discussion, by looking at some comparatively *simple and straightforward* examples of language in action, to open up our perception of *some of its complexities*. I can only hope that they were simple enough to let you actually catch a glimpse of your own language in action within you, and not so simple that you were not impressed by what you were able to do: I hope indeed that you marvelled and continue to marvel at the tremendous feats you accomplish so easily. There is nothing else quite like language in action, in the universe as we know it.

With language which is actually in use among its users, doing its continuing work for them, we students and teachers of language, of course, are no more and no less involved than anyone else is, no closer to our language and no farther away. We too have our definite things and actions we can point to, and those of you in other fields no more than we can come to your most significant meanings apart from, away from, your language.⁴¹

³⁷Richards, *So Much Nearer*, p. 172.

³⁸*Ibid.* He is talking here specifically of poetry, but the process is essentially the same for all composition that deals with anything beyond that which we can point to. His statement about butterflies and nets, p. 3, above, is another way of making the same point.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 165. See also *Interpretation in Teaching*, pp. 275-277, which discusses these problems in relation to doctrines of usage which would limit expression.

⁴¹Though you may of course depend on other symbol systems also.

When any experience can be quantified, when any observation can be sufficiently simplified or controlled so that the focus can be kept on one thing at a time, however complicated the sequences and total patterns, then symbol systems more “pure,” more manageable than language can operate very effectively.

When we move from observation, direct sensation, to relationships, meanings, interpretations, comprehensions, no one can go far in any field without language: “Words are the meeting points at which regions of experience which can never combine in sensation or intuition come together.”⁴²

If people in the humanities have any advantage in this matter—and I am not sure they do, though one would think their situation *ought* to give them some—it is that they know that in language is their meaning, that language is where whatever they are or have or do, is. That is why, whatever else we do, we believe that we must continue to give close attention to interpreting the text—that is what we have to work with. Others, it seems to us, sometimes think they, in contrast, are working with real things, rather than merely verbalizing: and they therefore either function unselfconsciously in their language situations—which functioning is all to the good so long as it works, which is most of the time in our routine situations, even when our routine situations are highly specialized and complex—or when they do experience a problem, think that it is lack of a skill in something separable and that by seeking out a coach or someone to hold them upright while they point and pedal, they can restore their feel for riding their bicycle of language which they seem to have lost for the moment, though they of course know perfectly well what it is they want to put down for the record, if they can just find the words that will fit whatever it is that they already know.

If it is a riddle how he functions with it, man’s language is no jesting matter, but an essential source of whatever glory he has. There is not something wrong but something right with man that he cannot reduce himself, his experiences, his meanings, his significances, to that which can be symbolized in a binary number system. Language is his means of developing his human responses:

⁴²*So Much Nearer*, p. 171, Richards quoting a passage he had written earlier in *Philosophy of Rhetoric*.

Bad taste and crude responses are not mere flaws in an otherwise admirable person. They are actually a root evil from which other defects follow. No life can be excellent in which the elementary responses are disorganized and confused.⁴³

An improvement of response is the only benefit which anyone can receive, and the degradation, the lowering of a response, is the only calamity.⁴⁴

Developing one's language is not a quick, easy, or simple process, though the extent of the young child's miraculous first mastery sometimes causes us to take further development for granted. Our language must grow if the rest of us is to continue to do so, and the process is neither easy, automatic, nor rapid. "An original poem, as much as a new branch of mathematics, compels the mind which receives it to grow, and this takes time."⁴⁵

It may be true that there are those "who, having never been troubled by thought, have never found any difficulty in expressing it,"⁴⁶ but we need to understand for ourselves, and to help our students to see for themselves, that to have trouble with an expression may well indicate that we really are thinking newly, instead of merely reviewing.

Whenever difficulties arise in a real language situation, so close is language to us that we tend to take the whole matter personally, and say either that there is something wrong with us, as some students, unfortunately, tend to do after a little unsuccessful wrestling with a new comprehending, or that there is something wrong—useless, uninteresting, etc.—with the utterance, or the utterer; or we otherwise slide away from the difficulties. Even when we wholeheartedly accept the challenge, it seems as if the learning difficulties are with the material, or the vocabulary (in the sense of simply learning new word lists) or with our lack of previous experience; and human development may be concerned with all of these. But always, as a total process, the concern finally must be with the development of

⁴³Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 62.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 291.

⁴⁶Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, p. 242.

ourselves and our control of our thought, through the development within us of our language.

Regarding metaphor, and its overwhelming importance in its influence on how we look at things, it will be important over the next several years, if not forever, to particularly cherish our organic, growth metaphors: to continue to have branches of learning and not just compartments of knowledge; to get at the root of a matter, not just down to the nitty-gritty; to create new insights, and not just take a look at what it all adds up to; to nourish the mind so it will grow, and not just program it so it will retrieve.

No matter how one defines man, as rational animal or child of God, as a little superior to the beasts or a little lower than the angels, he to an extent still unplumbed by any of us and undreamed-of by most of us, is what his language has made of him and what he has made of his language. His speech createth as well as betrayeth him.

Language in action takes us right down into whatever it is we are, where we both lose ourselves and meet ourselves coming around every corner we try to turn. It is not, finally, anything separable from us. Language is not a code: it is an organ—the supreme organ of the mind's self-ordering growth.

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I'M CALLING you a

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FIRE
FIRE
FIRE
FIRE
FIRE
FIRE
FIRE
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Plimmed
PROLOSHAR
Evantified

APPRECIATED
PREMATURE
Canonical

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Transcendental sensualist

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Plimmed
PROLOSHAR
Evantified

APPRECIATED
PREMATURE
Canonical

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Transcendental sensualist

DARKLY WISE
RUDELY GREAT
ABUS'D, OR Disabus'd
GREAT LORD
PREY to all