

Four Kinds of Meaning

I A Richards

Introduction

- Richards – 20th century New Critic
- In his *Principles of Literary Criticism*, Richards gave criticism a scientific precision and objectivity contradictory to a chaos of critical theories
- Differentiated-referential & emotive language
- Communication –emotive (function of the author
- Comprehension-referential-(function of the reader)

Practical Criticism-Four Kinds of Meaning

- Difficulties of documentation-labyrinth
- Analysis of anonymous poems-hundred verdicts from a hundred readers
- Difficulties-interdependent on each other like a cluster of monkeys
- The original difficulty of reading-the problem of making out the meaning

- For a Proper understanding of a poem, the following questions have to be answered:
- What is a meaning?
- What are we doing when we endeavour to make out?
- What is it we are making out?

- For the study of Literature, there are several kinds of meanings
- Combination of different contributory meanings-total meaning
- Language performs several functions- difference to be noted
- Richards divides language functions into four types-Four types of meaning

Four Kinds of Meaning

- Four different points of views of an articulate speech are:

Sense

Feeling

Tone

Intention

1. Sense

- Plain literal meaning from the point of view of the speaker, listener
- Speaker wants attention of the listeners to something (e.g. Meaning of a poem or a word)
- Speaker wants to give some thoughts to the listeners (Sense -idea conceived from speaker)

2. Feeling

- Refers to emotions, emotional attitudes, will, desire, pleasure, displeasure and so on.
- When we say something, we have feeling about it, “an attitude towards it; some special direction, bias or accentuation of interest in it, some personal flavour or colouring.” We use words to express these feelings and these nuance of interest. (it may happen consciously or unconsciously) –(eg. anger, excitement, sympathy etc.,) exceptional cases-Mathematics- no feelings

3. Tone

- Basically the speaker has an attitude to his listener
- Choice and arrangement of the words according to the kind of audience
- Tone of utterance adopted according to the relationship of the listener-exceptional-pretentious tone gets exposed at times
- (e.g.- hypocritical speech or egoistical speech)

4. Intention

- **Sense**-what one says, **Feeling**-what one talks about—
Tone -one's attitude to the listener
- **Intention**-conscious or unconscious
- He speaks for a purpose-purpose modifies his speech
- To understand the meaning-understand the intention also
- His success can be measured if only we understand his intentions (e.g. Sales promotion)

- 1. intention will be to express the thoughts of the author (facts)
- 2. express his feeling about what he is thinking (eg. Hurrah! Damn!)
- 3. To express his attitude to the listener (feeling of love or hatred)
- The author's intention has influence upon the language he uses
- Richards' observation- analysis of poems-failure of one or other function

Application of Functions

- Failure of all the four-Reader garbles sense, distorts the feelings, mistakes the tone, disregards the intention
- Partial collapse-failure of one function will imply mistake in the others
- In the uses of language-one or the other functions may become predominant

Application of functions in scientific document

Scientific document

- 1. **Sense** – important
- 2. **Feelings**-subordinated
- 3. **Tone** -suit the academic convention
- 4. **Intention**- bring sense-clear and adequate statement

Popular science book

- **Sense**- sacrifice precision and adequate statement for general intelligibility
- **Feelings**- display of feelings to evoke readers interest
- **Tone**-Variety in tone-jokes and illustrations, persuasion admissible
- **Intention**-relationship between the subject and his lay audience-difficult task

Shift of functions

Political Speeches

- **Intention** becomes the main function
- **Feelings** and **Tones** are the two tools used
- **Sense** gets the least importance
- Facts get the least priority in political speeches losing sincerity
- If **tone** and **feeling** is proper the effect is good in political speeches

Conversations/Social Language

- **Intention** dominate others
- **Feelings** and **Tone** express themselves through **Sense** (eg. Language used by the diplomatic attitude – making English polite using modal verbs)
- Social Language – (eg. Thank you so much, Pleased to meet you)

Language functions in Poetry

- **Feeling** and **Tone** become dominant and reject **sense** in such ways:
 - 1. **Feeling & Tone** dominate the statement just for the sake of their impact upon feelings and not for their own sake
 - 2. If the 'truth value' of the statements are challenged and the seriousness of the statements are questioned, it is equal to mistaking their function
- Statements in poetry-manipulation, expression of feelings and attitudes-do not contribute to any doctrine or knowledge

- **Narrative poetry**-no danger in mistaking statements for facts
- **Philosophical or meditative poetry**-confusion:
 - 1. take statements in poetry seriously and find silly (eg.) “My soul is a ship in full sail” –profitless- it appears absurd, but common
 - 2. Many of them swallow the statement, “Beauty is truth, truth beauty” as the essential aesthetic philosophy
According to Richards it is the expression of certain feelings.
If taken seriously-lead to confusion

- Poets suppress **Sense** in many ways to express **feeling** or adjust **tone**.
- Distort statements-nothing to do with the subject-logically irrelevant, trivial or silly-justify, if they succeed in their other aim

Conclusion

- Richards-criticism is an art
- Statements-disguised forms-indirect expressions of Feeling, Tone and Intention
- Dr. Bradley remarks-Poetry is not concrete
- One cannot get the clear statement of what is read not merely having the sense, but the different type of understanding. If we understand that a poem is a blend of tone, intention, feeling and sense, we will misunderstand it.