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I. A. RICHARDS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF RHETORIC

When I. A. Richards died in the fall of 1979 at the age of 86, the encomiums did not include substantial appreciation of any books written in the last twenty-five years of his life. Of course, considerations of space had something to do with it. Giving even a bare account of that extraordinary career necessitated citing his work in the theory and practice of literary criticism; his efforts to make Basic English credible, if not as a world language then as an auxiliary instrument for interpretation and translation; his contributions to thinking about ways and means to facilitate the international exchange of ideas on which the survival of civilization depends. What room there was left went to an acknowledgment of the fact that he had taken up mountaineering in his youth and the writing of poetry when he was an old man.

But if the obituaries were disappointingly thin, they only echoed the curious kind of recognition IAR had during a lifetime as a scholar working in several fields. Stanley Edgar Hyman, in his review of the accomplishments of modern literary criticism (The Armed Vision, 1948), expressed sadness (and a little contempt) for the direction IAR had begun to take, away from textual criticism and rhetorical theory toward pedagogy. There was no rejoicing, however, when he got over into educationland. Recognized as an important figure "generally speaking," IAR was never welcomed vigorously by any one discipline claiming him as its own; indeed, it was sometimes the case that he was completely ignored. Linguists paid no attention whatsoever to his passionate but reasoned criticisms of all they were about. Seymour Chatman observed in a 1957 review in Language of Speculative Instruments that it was the first time that that journal, the official organ of the Linguistic Society of America, had noticed a book by I. A. Richards. (And the Society never let it happen again.) He wrote continually about matters of the most urgent concern to the teaching profession, but the teaching profession in its journals and conferences and conventions acted as if IAR did not exist. Nowadays, it is hard to find a graduate student or a young instructor who has any notion of the role IAR played in shaping modern criticism, to say nothing of the one he wanted to play in modern education. A professor at Princeton has told me that in a seminar on literary theory his students are fascinated with Lacan and Derrida but have never heard of The Meaning of Meaning or The Philosophy of Rhetoric.

Nevertheless, it is certainly true that IAR has had more influence than any other critic in formulating the principles of close reading which the New Critics took as their method, and, perhaps more importantly, in providing a rationale for the development of such a theory of reading in the first place.

Practical Criticism (1929), with its demonstration of the work of incompetent readers, shocked everybody into the recognition that it was foolhardy to assume that the primary aim of English studies was to improve taste, the ability to read for sense being a foregone conclusion. More than one generation of teachers learned from Practical Criticism how to teach close reading, and, to be sure, some of them did a poor job of it. One result has been the current devaluation of the New Criticism, but it should be noted that such a notion as "the words on the page," is the product of third-rate pedagogues and critics and should not be identified with IAR's philosophy of rhetoric.

In the following comment, I am suggesting that for those of us who want to learn to teach writing and to teach others how to do so, it will be illuminating to study those later books¹ ignored in the obituaries, as they have been for forty years by the confraternity of linguists and the professional educators. I will not review them here, but will instead attempt to explain the method which IAR continually develops and to characterize briefly the philosophy of language which steadfastly informs his philosophy of rhetoric.

In 1936 when IAR called for a "New Rhetoric" whose purpose was to investigate "how words work," he argued that metaphor provides the best focus for that study, and it was to that end that he invented the terms "tenor" and "vehicle," the chief thing that is remembered from The Philosophy of Rhetoric and probably more trouble than they're worth. Similarly, IAR came to see the classroom as a laboratory in which interpretation could be studied.² IAR was the first teacher to treat student writing as a text deserving (and repaying) close reading. What actually goes on in the classroom, in actual written responses and the careful study of those responses, provides occasions for learning to identify and evaluate ways and means of making meaning: interpretation in teaching was for IAR a model whereby one could understand interpretation as the central act of mind. Thus pedagogy had for IAR a profoundly philosophical interest, a point completely lost on Stanley Edgar Hyman in 1948 and, apparently, on others since.

Pedagogy, as IAR considered it, is method at work in the classroom; it is philosophy articulated, the nexus of theory and practice.³ For IAR, pedagogy was dialectical or it was nothing. He continually argued that as we determine what it is we are trying to do, we will learn how to do it. That does not mean that pedagogy is a matter of first deciding aims and goals and then setting the dials and letting the teaching proceed automatically; deciding what we are doing is not an exercise in problem-solving but problematizing, to use an ugly term associated with Paulo Freire. The how continually provides feedback so that we re-formulate the what by a process IAR calls "feedforward." Like Kenneth Burke, IAR knew that forming is dialectical, an act whereby questions are framed in accordance with expected answers, and he knew, of course, that because composing is forming, it too is dialectical:

Composition is the supplying at the right time and place of whatever the developing meaning then and there requires. It is the cooperation with the rest in preparing for what is to come and completing what has preceded. It is more than this, though; it is the exploration of what is to come and of how it should be prepared for, and it is the further examination of what has preceded and of how it may be amended and completed.⁴

IAR's pedagogical inventions are all conceived of as ways and means of placing the process of composing, of forming, in the control of the meaning-maker. By their means, IAR gave form to his passionate conviction that reading and writing are moral concerns and that what we do in teaching them, if it is to deserve the name of method, has important political dimensions. Control means the ability to exercise choice. Just as interpretation in the classroom is a model for all acts of mind, so learning to choose words and deciding the way we want them to work "can become an introduction to the theory of all choices."⁵ Gains in literacy are therefore gains in human freedom.

Method is the nexus of this moral concern with choice and enabling practice, those "assisted invitations" which IAR believed should be offered students to ascertain "what it is they are trying to do and thereby how to do it."⁶ Method is, like the pedagogy it serves, dialectical. The composer—the one who forms; the meaning-maker; the interpreter; the one who constructs and construes, writes and reads—poses questions in order to determine what the choices are, the choices of perspective and purpose, context and words, which will thus determine the meanings. The process is never stable or linear or "correct"; it is not, to repeat, a matter of solving problems but of posing them in the light of tentative solutions. IAR represents this necessary tentativeness in many formulations. Thinking, he remarks, is a matter of "arranging our techniques for arranging;" we seek to comprehend more comprehensively; as we think about thinking and write about writing, we are in one important sense, using language about language, the necessary procedure in all acts of mind. These circularities are annoying to some who feel dizzy in reading them, not instructed, but they are not verbal jokes. They are attempting to represent the conditions that make possible—the meaning of meaning. In other words, IAR's circular formulations are signs of a recognition of the character of language as not simply a medium but a means.

Even in the earliest days, at the time of his association with C. K. Ogden when he was dependent on certain positivist/behavioral conceptions, IAR never considered language merely a set of slots or molds into which we pour our incandescent meanings or a veil which must be torn asunder to reveal reality directly, without the distorting medium of form. (If the latter version sounds mystical, it's because if you scratch a positivist, you will find a mystic: neither can tolerate the idea of mediation.) "Poetry," IAR once remarked, "is the house we live in." But he did not mean a prison-house.

Positivist conceptions of language as an agency whereby intentions already formed are given expression presuppose that thought and language bear one another a sequential relationship. For IAR, as for Vygotsky, the "problem" of the relationship of language and thought is a misconception: the way to escape the chicken-egg dilemma is to begin with meaning.⁷ It would be instructive for teachers of composition to compare the account Vygotsky gives of concept formation as a "movement of thought . . . constantly alternating between the two directions, from the particular to the general, and from the general to the particular"⁸ with IAR's conception of dialectic as "the continuing audit of meaning."⁹ To begin, as Vygotsky has it, with "the unit of meaning," generates questions of great interest to both the psychologist seeking to understand the mind's powers and to the teacher who wants to guide them. When the emphasis is on "the continuing audit of meaning," there is every chance to exercise and to learn control of the reflexive capacities of language; for IAR there never was any danger that this would become, as it has in certain circles today, a narrow, spirit-killing interest in language about language, with never a concern shown for purposing. Beginning with meaning entails recognition of the fact that we cannot get under the net of language, but it also is the means of our discovering the heuristic powers of language.

For IAR, the chief barrier to that possibility is the misuse of Communication (or Information) Theory. An engineering diagram represents how the "signal" is "coded" so that "information"—defined as absence of "noise" in the "channel"—can be assured a safe passage until it is "decoded." But that is not the same thing as representing how a message is conceived or understood; signal and message are continually confused by rhetoricians deploying the terms of Communication Theory. The Morse Code, IAR remarked, is not of a kind with a code of behavior, but that differentiation is lost on rhetoricians who depend on Roman Jakobson's model of the Communication Situation. Like all positivist models, it begs the question of what exactly is being represented. A model is a form by which we represent to ourselves how a process takes place, how something operates; positivist models cannot represent unquantifiable processes like the making of meaning or the composing process because their designers reject the very concepts at issue or re-name them so that they appear manipulable; e.g. language becomes "verbal behavior." The confusions and inadequacies of current rhetorical theory stem from the fact that positivist models are employed to explain functions which have not been conceptualized, if indeed they have been recognized. What we are most frequently offered is really an up-to-date version of the ancient view of language as the garment of thought. IAR named it the "Vulgar Packaging View" and had this to say about it:

What's chiefly wrong with it? This. It stands squarely in the way of our practical understanding and command of language. It hides from us both how we may learn to speak (and write) better, and how we may learn to comprehend more comprehensively. Managing the variable connections between words and what they mean: what they might mean, can't mean, and should mean—that—not as a theoretical study only or chiefly, but as a matter of actual control—that is the technique of poetry. If anyone is led into a way of thinking—a way of proceeding, rather—as though composing were a sort of catching a nonverbal butterfly in a verbal butterfly net, as though comprehending were a releasing of the said butterfly from the net, then he is deprived of the very thing that could help him: exercise in comparing the various equivalencies of different words and phrases, their interdependencies, in varying situations.

If rhetoricians read such essays as "The Future of Poetry," from which this passage comes (in So Much Nearer) and "Poetry as an Instrument of Research" (in Speculative Instruments), they would find reasons both for resisting the seductions of psycholinguistics with its scientific lingo and its fraudulent "models" and for returning to what they might know about the interanimation of words from their study of literature.

IAR patiently and wittily demolished Roman Jakobson's wiring diagram, reassembling it to show how it could be made to represent context fields, since "messages are generated by contexts."¹⁰ In other diagrams and models, IAR tried to show how purposing is at the center of all meaning-making; how sentences function in situations (sens/sits); how spokens and meants and writtens are related.¹¹ None of these concerns can be represented in the most popular of all positivist diagrams, the ubiquitous "triangle of discourse," which has helped to institutionalize confusion. The logic of the three points—encoder/writer, message/text, decoder/audience—is obscure because there is no way of representing the dialectical relationships of the three points, nor is any place found for intention or meaning or interpretation. Most "innovative strategies" and new "paradigms" are created by finding new names for the points of this triangle, new ways of differentiating them, though with respect to what is not always clear. And that is the point: the "triangle of discourse" is a triangle without triadicity.

The triangle current rhetorical theory needs is to be found in the first chapter of The Meaning of Meaning. Thoughts or Reference is at the apex; the side lines connect it to Symbol and Referent, but between those two there is only a dotted line. The concept represented here is mediation, or, as C. S. Peirce called it, Thirdness. Ogden and Richards' triangle is based on Peirce to whom they devoted twelve pages of an appendix (on some modern semioticians) in a futile attempt to make his views of the meaning of meaning accessible to their readers. They knew that Saussurian linguistics is dyadic, that Saussure's

conception of the sign (made up of the signifier and the signified) leaves out of account, as Walker Percy puts it, "the act of knowing."¹² What they did not foresee was that rhetoricians could ingeniously make a triangle represent a dyadic relationship!

What the symbol stands for--the referent--is known in terms of the reference. This is what Peirce meant in declaring that "a sign stands for something to the idea which it produces or modifies." The three elements of the Peircean signs are as follows: the representamen ("something that stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity"); the interpretant ("an equivalent sign it creates in the mind of the person addressed"); and the object ("what the sign stands for").¹³ Each of them is analyzed so carefully and the interactions and shifting relationships so tirelessly identified that Peirce found himself differentiating over sixty-five kinds of sign relationships. What we need is, for the time being, not that refinement but simply the basic concept of mediation. We need a familiarity with ways of representing mediation, and until we have it, no number of allegedly new "paradigms"--variants all, of the "triangle of discourses"--will have very much pedagogical import; there will be no way to draw out the methodological implications from representations of discourse which omit mediation--the means of making meaning.

I want now to suggest what triadicity, as the informing principle of IAR's philosophy of rhetoric, entails and to describe the methodological consequences for interpretation in teaching.

We know all that we know in terms of one or another form. Those forms are perceptual and conceptual and we cannot dispense with them; indeed, they are enabling since they are the means whereby we make meaning: form finds form. There are three consequences:

1. Since we can have no immediate, direct knowledge of the world, we cannot claim absolute truth for our statements; we must therefore cultivate what Peirce called "a contrite fallibilism." This consequence IAR continually recognizes in his insistence on dialectic rather than debate, of which he had a very low opinion.

2. Since all import is mediated, we must explore contexts and perspectives, situations and purposes. Sound interpretation depends on carefully considering the relationships represented by the lines forming the (triadic) triangle's sides. For IAR, a "contextual theorem of meaning" would provide the guidance for the study of "how words work."

3. Since nothing in meaning relationships is stable, we must learn to take advantage of that fact. IAR spoke of ambiguities as "the hinges of thought," but recognizing the sinister implication of the term--not least because of what certain followers of Empson had done with it--he also spoke of the resourcefulness of words. It is a way of recognizing that language is itself the great heuristic.

A contrite fallibilism, the continuing audit of how purposes and contexts work together to control meaning, and the deliberate exploitation of ambiguity: these constitute IAR's method in its theoretical aspect; the practical aspect is worked out by means of various techniques which help define choices and thus control meanings. Only if we are convinced that the making of meaning cannot be represented by positivist models of the communication system can we spare the intellectual energy it takes to see the point of these curious, sometimes perplexing, sometimes maddening, tricks and ploys and gimmicks. We must, I think, be continually alert to what it means to begin with the unit of meaning. Here is a passage which helps on that score:

No one will deny that there are meanings (or call them that: virtualities, dispositional conspiracies) which are active before they embody themselves. The process of writing a poem in many instances consists in cajoling an unembodied something into its incarnation. . . . Before it has found itself in its words by finding the words for itself, that something else has as little overt character, is as indescribable, as a name that we are failing to recall.¹⁴

Of IAR's pedagogical innovations, the protocol is best known: it is the record of the reader's response to a carefully selected passage or poem. IAR developed this technique as early as 1929 with Practical Criticism and depended on it on later occasions.¹⁵ It was treated as a text, but also as a tentative record, the account of a process of arriving at saying what was meant. No one is likely to improve upon the following caveat issued in Interpretation in Teaching on the matter of interpreting protocols:

. . . These scraps of scribble are no more than faint and imperfect indications—distant and distorted rumors—of the fleeting processes of interpretation we are trying to study. They are never to be read by the letter (another of the tired pedagogue's besetting sins); they do not tell their own story; they are mere clues for us to place and interpret in our turn. What they indicate are phrases, moments, slices or sections—abstractly registered and perpetuated for our inspection—of processes which were on their way before the pen walked on paper, processes which went on in semi-independence while it walked and afterwards. We have to remember, unless we are to forget all that we have to teach, that what the writer meant is not to be simply equated with what he wrote.¹⁶

The technique of Multiple Definition derives from his interpretation of protocols and from the theory of translation IAR developed in the course of his study of the Chinese sages.¹⁷ The chief aim of Multiple Definition is, of course, to reconceive the "problem" of authorial intention, which is tirelessly addressed in the classroom with the question "What is the author trying to say?" Multiple definitions are generated by asking, rather, such questions as: how does it change the meaning if we

put it this way? What difference does it make if we reverse these lines? These assertions? If we read A as a noun, doesn't that bring B into sharper focus? If we construe X in this way, can we then hold onto the earlier reading of Y? Multiple Definition proceeds by reduction as well as by expansion. Both are brilliantly deployed by William Empson, but rhetoricians interested in the pedagogical uses of interpretive paraphrase should watch his master at work with a series of texts from Mencius to Nelson Goodman, from graduate students of education to Alfred North Whitehead. Their best hope for teaching that construing and constructing are fundamentally related as acts of mind, that interpretation is the point of reading and writing, may be to adapt the technique of Multiple Definition for both.¹⁸ In other words, Multiple Definition used as a way of reviewing and revising protocols could remind us that pedagogy, not research as it's presently conceived, is the actual juncture of theory and practice.

For IAR, the essential point about Multiple Definition is that it provides a way for us "to use logical apparatus tentatively," as he puts it in Mencius on the Mind in a discussion of the dangers of trying to fit Mencius' distinctions into a Western framework. He goes on:

In practice this ability is only gained through the cultivation of a certain habit--the habit of multiple definition, of accompanying any definition or distinction we make use of with a set of rival definitions in the background of the mind. . . . It is not enough simply to resolve that we will regard our logical schema as hypothetical. By itself this is only a rechristening of tradition. New hypothesis is but old dogma writ large. Unless we actually and constantly sketch out alternative definitions using different logical machinery we shall not gain the ability to experiment in interpretation which comparative studies require (p. 90).

Actually doing what our theory prescribes; actually bearing in mind alternative hypotheses, variant readings, different choices as we go about interpreting: this methodological principle informs virtually everything IAR went on to write.

A concern for actual practice provides the context in which we can understand what seems otherwise an obsessive concern on IAR's part with Basic English. I would suggest that it is from Peirce that he learned the importance of bringing theory to the test. (This is the real meaning of pragmatism which Peirce re-named pragmaticism, to differentiate his idea from what William James had made of it.) Critics have almost universally derided IAR's continual setting forth of Basic English, which they have called "barbaric" or foolish or simply a delusion. They have generally not considered what IAR was urging: Basic English is a "technique for language control"¹⁹; it is a means of reducing and expanding texts in the interest of generating multiple definitions. By experimenting with Basic English in

the classroom, rhetoricians could discover what some reading experts and ESL teachers have long known, that Basic English is a technique to assist in the making of meaning by activating choice.

If Basic English has met with scorn, IAR's "specialized quotation marks" have been received in an embarrassed silence. They made their first appearance in How To Read a Page in a note appended to a chapter in which IAR had carried out a critical examination of critical assertions about critical matters. Of course he delights in this circularity and foregrounds it by little marks placed around one and another word or phrase, signalling the sense in which the word is to be taken. They play an important role in the centerpiece of Speculative Instruments, "Toward a Theory of Comprehending," where he comments as follows:

Once we recognize to what an extent thinking is a taking of account of the conduct of our words, the need for a notation with which to study and control their resourcefulness becomes obvious (p. 30).

If impatience can be contained, if the reader is willing to slow down the rate of reading in order to study the process of interpretation, these little shrieks and queries and labels can be as instructive as page-long commentaries. William Empson, in The Structure of Complex Words, warned that "if you jam the literary criticism and the linguistics together, you interfere with the normal processes of judgment." IAR apparently believed that in teaching critical reading, that concatenation is precisely what can help develop those processes. He is concerned to follow as closely as possible the dynamics of concept formation and that requires some way of signalling shifts from the particular to the general, from the general to the particular. Thus, the chief use of the specialized quotation marks is to demonstrate the full significance of Peirce's differentiation of type and token, to illuminate the consequences that differentiation has in developing an understanding of "how words work."

As I have been claiming, a positivist philosophy of language cannot guide such an understanding nor can positivist models, such as the "Ladder of Abstraction" by which the General Semanticists represent their view of abstraction as the opposite of reality, or "what is happening."²⁰ Since G. S. made popular the use of conventional quotation marks to signal the fact that the words "apple pie" cannot be eaten, it may be that IAR developed his system of notation—How to Read a Page appeared when G. S. was in its heyday—as a way of reminding us that the differentiations to be made between language, thought, and reality are somewhat more complex than Count Alfred Korsybski preached was the case. Nowadays, for rhetoricians to practice using this system in analyzing studies being presented as "research" would be salutary.

The specialized quotation marks appear again as a preface to So Much Nearer in 1960; the preface reappears thirteen years

later in Beyond, this time headed, "Meta-semantic Markers." I take this as a joke, IAR deploying what he called "lingo" to make the point that what he had been doing for thirty years could be re-christened and perhaps found more acceptable as an Innovative Strategy. Some critics have spoken of how IAR came under the influence of Communication Theory. It would be an interesting experiment to comment on the word "influence," subjecting it to Multiple Definition with the help of meta-semantic markers! There are other interpretations of IAR's frequent use of the terminology of audio-visual technology, cybernetics, computer programming and Communication Theory, as well as of psycholinguistics and every other known variety. In the spirit of Multiple Definition, I offer two that I know of.

1. Kathleen Raine writes in her autobiography as follows:
Ivor is a critic who, falling in love with the texts he studied, took to poetry; a splendid example to set against those poets who, led astray by the magpie criticism, became critics. I remember a lecture he gave . . . on the "Ode to the West Wind," ingeniously illustrated . . . with little drawings on the black-board of electric wires and switches and boxes, meant to represent 'communication' from, as he said, an unknown source, to an unknown recipient: a process beginning and ending in mystery. Shakespeare would have done it with airy sprites, Blake with angels. The little diagrams were the vestiges of a style by whose disguise, in the twenties, it was necessary at least to appear to be 'scientific.' But the thought was metaphysical and Platonic.²¹
2. Professor John Ramage has written in a paper in progress of a certain similarity between Soren Kierkegaard and IAR:
[SK's rhetorical strategies] are consciously employed to an end higher than self interest and are carried out so that he can sacrifice his ego without succumbing to the crowd. Using the 'caustic of negativity' and the indirection of irony he destroys the illusion of pure being in his readers and clears a space where the pseudonymous author, who is and is not SK, may meet a man who is and is not 'the crowd' and they can begin to reform each other. . . . IAR engages in a bit of Kierkegaardian subterfuge: out of the information theorists' . . . models, he creates his own, quite singular, baroque gizmo, dizzy with swirling lines and bristling with initials.

Yes: gizmos--and tricks, ploys, and gimmicks. But IAR's protocols and his techniques for Multiple Definition; the reductions and expansions of interpretive paraphrase and "translation" into Basic and Everyman's; the meta-semantic markers and the fantastic diagrams are all ways to bring theory to the test. They help us define context; ascertain field and range of reference; establish perspectives; keep ourselves alert to that mysterious process

whereby meanings are formed and transformed. It is, I believe, a contrite fallibism which is the motive power of IAR's ingenious, elaborate and inspiring contrivances, which are all deployed in the service of dialectic, the "continuing audit of meaning." IAR's pedagogical inventions are, in short, "aids to reflection."

The phrase is Coleridge's, of course, and one that IAR especially liked. Coleridge was the single greatest influence on his thinking, affecting his views of language and society, of the mind of the poet and of the common reader. I have, chosen to stress Peirce's triadicity, which I see as fundamental to IAR's philosophy of rhetoric, but that great logical and psychological principle is consonant in all respects with Coleridge's conception of imagination. To read in sequence, as they were written, Mencius on the Mind and Coleridge on the Imagination is to have affirmed the idea that triadicity and imagination are sources of the "speculative instruments" we need in order to think about mediation.

Let me conclude now with a few observations on "speculative instruments."²² IAR noted that he had originally taken the phrase from Coleridge but that he hadn't been able to find it again. This mystic motif of the lost source is charming to contemplate, but my guess is that he couldn't find it because it isn't there. In the Cratylus, Socrates says:

Then a name is an instrument of teaching and of distinguishing natures, as the shuttle is of distinguishing the threads of the web, . . . And the shuttle is the instrument of the weaver?²³

What the weaver makes provides the radical metaphor of text: our instruments are the names by which we differentiate; with those differentiations, those sortings, we weave the fabric of discourse. On the other hand, a shuttle is not speculative; IAR needed some way to supplement the metaphor of weaving, which suggests the constraints of lexical meaning and syntactical structures, however tentative they might be, with the idea of knowing as vision; speculation, which combines seeing and knowing, gave him his metaphor. Speculative instruments is, I think, IAR's amalgam of Plato and Coleridge.

The wonderful metaphor bespeaks his Coleridgean/Platonic sense of the heuristic powers of language. Language is not primarily toolish, yet it is instrumental; it is not a single-purpose facilitator but an enabling means of exploration. Its generative power derives from the fact that it provides the means of discrimination and thus of choice. Heuristic, which has of late been trivialized by being identified with one or another algorithmic procedure (including "creative" problem-solving), means whatever enables us to know, viz., those speculative instruments which are the sortings by means of which we can gather. IAR not only invented the protocol and certain techniques of critical reading, but also the rationale for the study of "how words work" in all disciplines. The best motto for those of us concerned to make the case for "writing across the curriculum" is IAR's observation that "all studies are language studies, concerned with the speculative instruments they employ."²⁴

And IAR's metaphor bespeaks his faith in the imagination as "the prime agent of all human perception." Throughout his writings, IAR explores the implications; e.g., when he talks about audio-visual aids, he is reminding us of the ancient wisdom that seeing is a way of knowing. He understood that in those acts of mind which constitute perception there is to be found the model for all thought: imagining is abstraction and it is analogous in every way to that "primordial abstractness"²⁵ inherent in perception. All knowledge is mediated; triadicty is there from the first. Visual experiments were for IAR the best means of raising consciousness of consciousness, the mind in action. He found in studies of perception a dozen ways to make the case that a critical method allows us to "raise our implicit recognitions into explicit distinctions."²⁶ All his teaching was aimed at showing how differences make a difference. Theories are based on them; practice requires them. "Seeing what varies with what" he defined as the essence of scientific method.²⁷ Speculative instruments is thus both an emblem of the ancient wisdom that seeing is a form of knowing and a reminder of the fact that science, which would be impossible without instruments, is knowledge, in the root sense.

Reading IAR can provide the best imaginable practice in seeing "how words work." He is an incomparably interesting guide in the search for speculative instruments, or means of making meaning in all investigations, philosophical and otherwise, right up to "the endless arch-inquiry: What are we and what are we trying to become?"²⁸ If IAR is difficult to read, it is because he seldom forgets the arch-inquiry, even when engaged in the most delicate interpretive operations. He is, in my opinion, not a great essayist. His eyes are on too many issues; digression is the most typical feature of his style; his refusal to sneak under the net with absolute assertions or mystical pronouncements, his energetic enjoyment of the circularity of all knowledge exhaust us. But IAR is a master of the paragraph and of the paragraph sequence, the episode. And he is a superb aphorist; can anyone rival the brilliance of his quotations? IAR won't let us off the hook: he never tires of asking what in order to explore how. And he never is uninterested in why and how come and wherefore. His method insistently keeps the processes of articulation in the foreground because "clear consciousness of what we are doing is our best means of control."²⁹ He recognized the hazards, of course, and illustrated what can happen with "too sudden an extension of consciousness" by quoting the rhyme about the centipede:

The centipede was happy-quite!
 Until the toad in fun
 Said, 'Pray, which leg moves after which?'
 This raised her doubts to such a pitch
 She fell exhausted in the ditch
 Not knowing how to run!

Characteristically, he then observes: "But there could hardly be any advantages if there were no accompanying dangers." The poet speaks—and the mountain climber.

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Notes

¹Interpretation in Teaching (1938, rpt. N.Y.: Humanities Press, 1973); How to Read a Page (1942, rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1959); Speculative Instruments (N.Y.: Harcourt, 1955); So Much Nearer: Essays Toward a World English (N.Y.: Harcourt, 1960); Design for Escape (N.Y.: Harcourt, 1968); Beyond (N.Y.: Harcourt, 1973); Techniques for Language Control, with Christine Gibson (Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, 1974). There are others, but these are of central importance for rhetoricians.

²"The field for such experimentation [with techniques of analysis] is, of course, the classroom, which has not yet, in spite of Plato, received due recognition as the philosophic laboratory (SI, p. 104)."

³I see no evidence that current researchers are alert to this idea of method. A notable exception is Professor Sondra Perl who has observed (ADE Bulletin, February, 1980) that what is needed to guide the interpretation of the data being amassed is a theory of meaning. One of the chief benefits of studying IAR might be to show what we are losing in the current rage for "research." The concern for identifying variables, for defining measures of validity (especially if the kind of validity in question is noted) could be a healthy sign of a philosophical interest in the nature of learning and language, but research is, generally speaking, guided by the positivist doctrine that theory and practice should be isolated from one another. That is why IAR justifiably called research "that intellectual treadmill offered us as the next step—step, step step; step, step, step STEP IT UP THERE!"

⁴SMN, p., pp. 119–20.

⁵PR, p. 86. To IAR's claims for the power of education, Hyman had only a sneering comment about "panaceas." The response is familiar to anyone used to arguing the case for nuclear disarmament: the defense of Defense generally disregards the case that's been made and concentrates on the unrealistic nature of the plea. It would be an interesting study in shifting attitudes to compare IAR's naively behaviorist views about the therapeutic value of poetry (The Principles of Literary Criticism, 1924) with the tough-minded hopefulness he spoke with in such books as So Much Nearer (1960) and Design for Escape (1968).

⁶DFE, p. 111. I have used the phrase "assisted invitations" to name the exercises in my textbook, Forming/Thinking/Writing: The Composing Imagination (Rochelle Park: Hayden, 1978).

⁷The chief reason for the disdain linguists have had for IAR is precisely in response to his emphasis on meaning. As he observed in 1960: "Only two decades ago any reference to meaning in a linguistic description was widely treated as 'mentalistic' incompetence" (SMN, p., p. 67).

⁸Thought and Language (Ed. and tr. Eugenia Hanfman and Gertrude Vakar; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962), p. 80.

⁹See HTRAP, p. 240 and SI, p. 109.

¹⁰"Functions of and Factors in Language," in Poetries: Their Media and Ends (The Hague: Mouton, 1974).

¹¹See especially "Towards a Theory of Comprehending," in Speculative Instruments and the essays collected in Design for Escape.

¹²The Message in the Bottle (N.Y.: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), p. 72. There are interesting disquisitions on triadicity throughout this volume of collected essays.

¹³The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce (six volumes, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931-35), 1.339, 2.228.

¹⁴SMN, pp. 171-72. Professor T. Y. Booth drew my attention to this particular circularity, a poem itself. Professor Booth has thought more deeply than anyone I know about the importance IAR has for the teaching of English.

¹⁵In his Humanities courses at Harvard, IAR used as texts passages typically as pungent, gnomic, and rhetorically complex as the epigraphs which begin virtually every chapter in every one of his books. And, of course, he used poems. I have heard accounts of how amazed and distressed people were at Bryn Mawr College where IAR gave the Flexner Lectures (published as The Philosophy of Rhetoric). The audience had gathered expecting appreciations of literature or at least learned disquisitions on philological, philosophical, or rhetorical topics. Imagine the consternation when the lights were dimmed and actual texts were thrown on a screen which had often served to body forth the sites of Bryn Mawr's famous archaeologists but never yet an actual poem! Many were dismayed, perplexed if not offended, to learn that they were being invited not to appreciate but to construe. The ancient and honorable association of rhetoric and pedagogy has never been more dramatically represented than by Dr. I. A. Richards. I don't

suppose that people were asked to turn in their protocols, but it seems that IAR thought of a lecture as a workshop, as today presenters tend to lecture in workshops.

¹⁶IT., p. 29.

¹⁷Mencius on the Mind (1932)—the subtitle is "Experiments in Multiple Definition"—is filled with premonitory rumbles announcing the marvelous sequence of Coleridge on Imagination (1935) and The Philosophy of Rhetoric (1936). All subsequent books could be gathered, edited, and re-presented as Plato on the Soul.

¹⁸One way is to have students keep a journal of multiple definitions, observing their observations in a dialectical notebook, becoming conscious of the control they are learning to exercise by means of reductions and expansions. (I have described such procedures in Forming/Thinking/Writing, pp. 12-13, 218-22, 234-40.) Learning control of language is tantamount to learning how to learn and that is the topic of topics for research. Every teacher of English in the country from the grades through graduate school can be a researcher in the ways and means of teaching literacy: There is no other way to address this problem than by seeing how a theory of making meaning is to be put into practice methodically. Our field of rhetoric will gain maturity not by institutionalizing the bifurcation of theory and practice (as may be happening now in the development of rhetoric programs apart from Freshman English, as has happened forever in the relegation of "method" to the educationists); not by fatuously declaring the worth of theory for theory's sake, but by defining the ways that the what and the how might be brought together.

¹⁹Techniques for Language Control is the title of IAR's last book, written with Christine Gibson. With its unfortunate echo of "thought control" (a prime candidate for the Multiple Definition treatment), the title is off-putting, but the text provides some extremely interesting demonstrations of the uses of "Everyman's English," a variant of Basic developed by the authors. Teachers using this technique of monolingual translation could begin the pedagogical revolution which a proper assessment of literacy needs would require.

²⁰The fact that current rhetorical theory manifests few signs of an understanding of abstraction as a matter of making meaning must be correlated, I have often thought, with the fact that though it is defunct elsewhere, General Semantics is alive and well in any assembly of rhetoricians.

²¹The Land Unknown (New York: George Braziller, 1975), p. 37.

²²Francis M. Sibley has written an instructive interpretation of the concept of "speculative instruments" in "How to Read I. A. Richards," The American Scholar (42) 1973, 318-328. He sees the recurrence of the idea, as well as the wonderful phrase, as a sign of an "epistemological unity" in IAR's work.

²³Cratylus, 388. See also Phaedrus, 265: Socrates: I am myself a great lover of these processes of division and generalization; they help me to speak and think. And if I find any man who is able to see a One and Many in nature, him I follow, and walk in his footsteps as if he were a god. And those who have this art, I have hitherto been in the habit of calling dialecticians; but God knows whether the name is right or not.

²⁴SI., pp. 15-16.

²⁵PR., p. 36.

²⁶PR., pp. 94-95. In this instance, IAR is discussing the sources for an improved theory of metaphor, but there is nothing narrow about that: he goes on to say that "a command of metaphor . . . is a command of life."

²⁷"Structure and Communication," in Structure and Art in Science, ed. G. Kepes (New York: George Braziller, 1965), p. 133.

²⁸SI., p. 152.

²⁹This and the quotations following come from Mencius on the Mind (London: Kegan Paul, 1932), pp. 128-29.