

I. **THE NEED TO INTERPRET.**

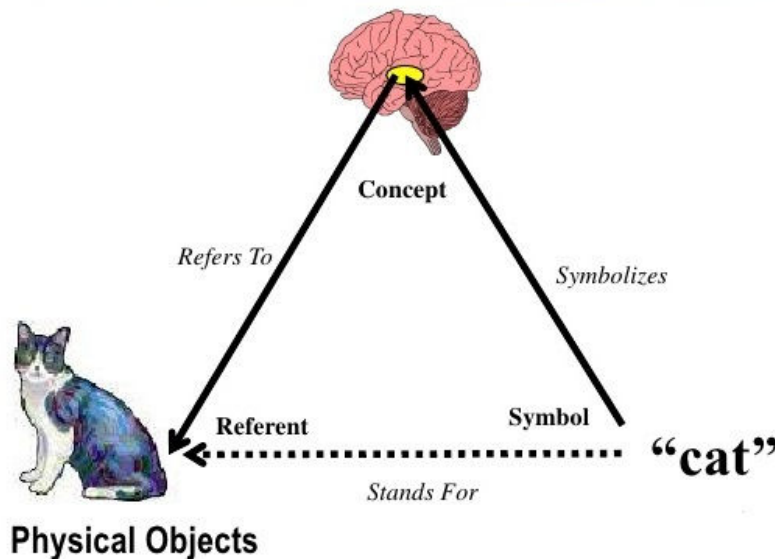
- A. The first reason one needs to learn how to interpret is that, whether one likes it or not, every reader is at the same time an interpreter.
- B. Remember our theme verse (Neh. 8:8).
[They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.](#)
- C. **The Nature of Scripture.**
1. Because the Bible is God's Word it has eternal relevance; it speaks to all mankind, in every age and in every culture. Because it is God's Word, we must listen--and obey. But because God chose to speak His word through human words in history, every book in the Bible also has historical particularity; each document is conditioned by the language, time, and culture in which it was originally written. Interpretation of the Bible is demanded by the "tension" that exists between its eternal relevance and its historical particularity.
 2. The Bible, however, is not a series of propositions and imperatives; it is not simply a collection of "Sayings from Chairman God" as though He looked down at us from heaven and said: "Hey you down there, learn these truths. Number 1, etc."
 3. Thus the task of interpreting involves the student/reader at two levels:
 - a. One has to hear the Word they heard; he or she must try to understand what was said to the original readers back then and there.
 - b. One must learn to hear that same Word in the here and now.
 4. To interpret properly the "then and there" of the biblical texts, one must not only know some general rules that apply to all the words of the Bible, but one needs to learn the special rules that apply to each of these literary forms (genres).
- D. **The Value of Semantics.**
1. Semantics is the study of the meanings of words and phrases. It respects the meanings of words and phrases in a particular context.
 2. Denotative meaning: The dictionary or literal definition of a word.
 3. Connotative meaning: The secondary, emotional, pragmatic meaning of a word.

II. **THE TRIANGLE OF MEANING.**

- A. Short biography of I.A. Richards:
1. "Iver Armstrong Richards was born February 26, 1893, in Cheshire, England. He was educated at Clifton College and at Magdalene College, Cambridge, where he took a First in Moral Sciences" (Castronovo, 1988, p. 69,70). He was a Harvard professor in 1944, and was professor emeritus in 1963. Richards was an English critic, poet, teacher, and linguist who had a profound effect on other critics such as William Empson and Kenneth Burke.
 2. "I.A. Richards became a leader in the attempt to make literary criticism scientific in Principles of Literary Criticism (1924), Science and Poetry (1925), Practical Criticism (1929), and The Philosophy of Rhetoric (1936)" (Baker, 1988, p. 333).
 3. His most famous work co-authored with C.A. Ogden is called "The Meaning of Meaning."
- B. There are three parts to Richards' triangle of meaning.
1. In one corner is the referent which is the actual object itself that is in the mind of the speaker.
 2. The speaker then chooses a symbol (the second corner of the triangle) to best express to the listener(s) the referent. This selection is arbitrary as compared to the object it described. Richards showed this perceived connection with a broken line connecting the referent with the symbol.

3. If the communication process is successful the listener(s) will receive the symbol and come up with a reference (the third corner of the triangle) in their mind that is identical to the referent.
- C. When it comes to the Bible the triangle works as follows:
1. God has His will in His mind which is the referent.
 2. The Bible is the symbol by which God inspired its writers to express His thoughts.
 3. The reference is man's understanding of the symbol in such a way as God intended.
- D. The power and practicality of the semantic triangle is in the fact that it assumes the user knows that meanings reside in people and not in the symbols themselves. People may use a particular word but have very different meanings for that word. It is then by context and past experience that the receiver determines the meaning the sender intends.
- E. Thought becomes metaphor, a kind of sorting, borrowing and contrasting. And because our thought processes work in this way it is of supreme importance to know how metaphoric uses of language impact our communication. Metaphors borrow meanings from one context and place them in another to enhance understanding. As effective as this might be, it is also the beginning of misunderstanding. It is by the particular understanding of how language works that we open "Pandora's box" in how misunderstanding occurs. To know how misunderstandings occur is the beginning of how to remedy them, which brings us full circle in the comprehending of rhetoric according to I.A. Richards.

Semantic Triangle

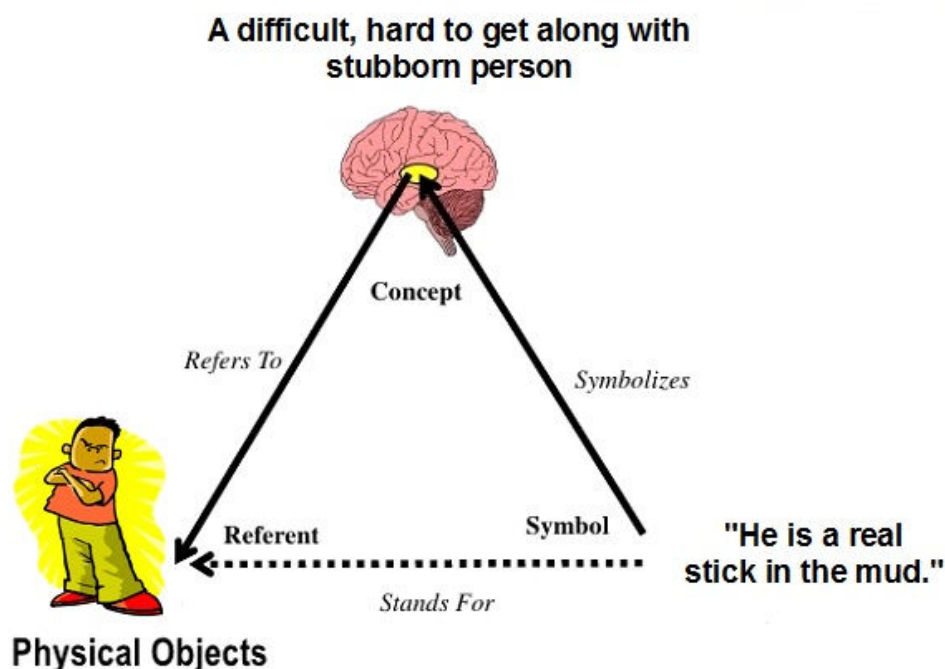


Ogden, C. K., & Richards, I. A. (1923) *The Meaning of Meaning*

- F. To explain how metaphor works within the triangle, Richards speaks of the two parts of metaphor called the tenor and vehicle. The tenor is the idea or principle subject, which the vehicle (the symbol or figure) means. As applied to the triangle, the tenor would be the referent and the vehicle the symbol. The difficulty arises in that the vehicle is not literally in agreement with the referent it is associated with. This can cause two things: either the meaning is completely lost or it is great expanded and deepened. When metaphor is used correctly the latter is the result. For the purposes

of this study, the focus is on various figures of speech (metaphors) used in the Bible that greatly expand and deepen the meaning intended by the authors. A review of these metaphor in light of the triangle of meaning shows the Bible to be an outstanding literary and rhetorical document dully deserving attention and careful study.

Semantic Triangle



III. FOUR ATTRIBUTES OF HUMAN UTTERANCE.

A. Richards authored many books and article in his career. Those that have application to our study are Practical Criticism (1960) and So Much Nearer (1968). In Practical Criticism (1960, p. 181,182), Richards indicates the following about meaning.

It is plain that most human utterances and nearly all articulate speech can be profitably regarded from four points of view. Four aspects can be easily distinguished. Let us call them Sense, Feeling, Tone, and Intention.

1. **Sense.**

We speak to say something and when we listen we expect something to be said...

2. **Feeling.**

But we also, as a rule, have some feelings about these items, about the state of affairs we are referring to. We have an attitude towards it, some special direction, bias, or accentuation of interest towards it, some personal flavor or coloring of feeling; we use language to express these feelings, this nuance of interest.

3. **Tone.**

Furthermore, the speaker has ordinarily an attitude to his listener. He chooses or arranges his words differently as his audience varies, in automatic or deliberate recognition of his relation to them. The tone of his utterance reflects his awareness of this relation, his sense of how he stands towards those he is addressing.

4. **Intention.**

Finally, apart from what he says (Sense), his attitude to what he is talking about (Feeling), and his attitude to his listener (Tone), there is the speaker's intention, his aim, conscious or unconscious, the effect he is endeavoring to promote. Ordinarily he speaks for a purpose, and his purpose modifies his speech. The understanding of it is part of the whole business of apprehending his meaning. Unless we know what he is trying to do, we can hardly estimate the measure of his success.

B. These four things are completely applicable in studying the rhetoric of Jesus as found in the gospels:

1. Jesus had **Sense** when He spoke.

He spoke as one with authority (Mt. 7:29).

for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

The people did not always agree with what Jesus said, but they realized He had something to say, more so than the other scribes and rabbis.

2. Jesus had **Feeling** when He spoke.

He did not like the transgressions of the Law of Moses of the Jews of His day. He implored them to return to God by obeying the Law, and believing that He was the fulfillment of it (Mt. 5:17-20).

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

3. Jesus had **Tone** when He spoke.

His attitude was one of compassion and love (Mt. 9:36-38; 23:27).

(Mt 9:36-38) Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. 38 Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

Yet, on one occasion His words must be understood through the emotion of anger and/or disgust (see Mt. 23:13-33).

4. Jesus had **Intention** when He spoke.

His purpose was to convince everyone that He was the promised Messiah, the Lamb of God who could save them from their sins (Jn. 14:1-6).

“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way where I am going.” 5 Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

C. What Sense, Feeling, Tone, and Intention requires of a teacher is three-fold.

1. First, the teacher must “run the class reasonably and profitably.”

2. Second, “design and effectively present the lesson.”

3. Third, diagnose, prescribe and administer appropriate treatment for the learner’s difficulties (Richards, 1960, p. 36).