

The Meaning of Meaning of I. A. Richards

When I teach my seminar on intimate communication, I always save the last thirty minutes of class for discussing ideas that aren't covered in the reading assignment. Halfway through the semester a student named Brenda asked a personal question that sparked everyone's interest: "When a guy says, 'I love you,' but wants me to 'prove' my affection physically, does he really love me?"

I was about to suggest to Brenda that a declaration of love paired with a demand that she "put out" physically sounded more like an expression of lust than one of love. But I caught myself and avoided the semantic trap that Cambridge University professor I. A. Richards labeled the "proper meaning superstition"—the mistaken belief that words have a precise definition. Instead, I responded to her question with one of my own: "What do you mean when you use the word *love*?"

If he were still alive, Richards might have smiled in approval at my response. For even though he was a poet, world-class mountain climber, literary critic, and the author of forty-nine books, Ivor Armstrong Richards was first and foremost a teacher. And the lesson he most wanted students to learn was that meanings don't reside in words; they reside in people.

THE NEW RHETORIC: A STUDY OF HOW WORDS WORK

Richards was a man born ahead of his time. When he was a young scholar in the early 1920s, communication education focused mainly on the study of rhetoric. And Richards made no secret of his disdain for the art of oratory. "So low has Rhetoric sunk that we would do better just to dismiss it to Limbo than to trouble ourselves with it."¹ He was impatient with rhetoric's exclusive focus on public persuasion, characterizing it as "sales-talk selling sales-talk."² As for the historical study of classical rhetoric, he once said that he "didn't think history ought to have happened" and therefore "didn't see why we should study it."³

Richards proposed a new rhetoric that would be the "study of misunderstanding and its remedies."⁴ The old rhetoric had offered general rules for

speakers who wanted to sway an audience. Richards thought it was more important to examine how much of a message we understand when we hear it. His new rhetoric focused on comprehension rather than persuasion.

Like Shannon and Weaver, who we looked at in Chapter 4, Richards believed that every conversation suffers from information loss. But instead of blaming channel noise for the leakage, Richards attributed the communication gap between source and destination to the nature of language itself. The goal of his new rhetoric was to put words under the microscope to see how they work. Since he regarded language as an extension of the human mind and sense organs, his study was rooted in the humanities rather than science.

WORDS AS SYMBOLS INTERPRETED IN CONTEXT

As is common in the field of semantics, Richards began his inquiry into the meaning of meaning by making a distinction between signs and symbols. A sign is something we directly encounter, yet at the same time it refers to something else. Thunder is a sign of rain. A punch in the nose is a sign of anger. An arrow is a sign of whatever it points toward.

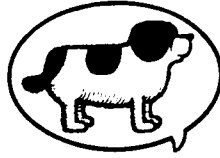
Words are also signs, but of a special kind. They are symbols. Unlike the examples cited above, most symbols have no natural connection with the things they describe. There's nothing in the sound of the word *kiss* or anything visual in the letters *h-u-g* that signifies an embrace. One could just as easily coin the term *snarf* or *clag* to symbolize a close encounter of the romantic kind.

Because words are arbitrary symbols, they have no inherent meaning. Like chameleons that take on the coloration of their environment, words, according to Richards, take on the meaning of the context in which a person encounters them. This suggests that "most words, as they pass from context to context, change their meanings."⁵ Context is the key to meaning.

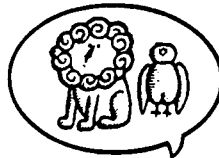
We have all had grammar teachers who drummed into us the importance of looking at context to understand an unfamiliar term. They convinced us that we can usually grasp the author's meaning by looking at the surrounding words in a sentence. But Richards used the term *context* to refer to much more than adjacent phrases. He defined context as the "cluster of events that occur together." This means that context is not just a sentence, or even the situation in which the word is spoken. Context is the whole field of experience that can be connected with an event—including thoughts of similar events. Let's examine Brenda's thought process as she used the word *love* to see how this works.

THINKING AS A SORTING OF EXPERIENCES

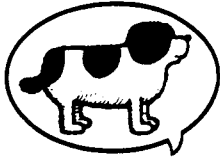
The immediate context of Brenda's question was a seminar discussion about a test designed to measure love within families. In the course of this discussion, Brenda began to make connections between the filial love of parents and her romantic relationship with the guy who said he loved her. When Brenda asked about true love, I had just told the class that the scale's creator defined *virtue* as



"I have a pet at home."



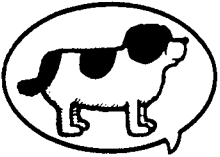
"Oh, what kind of pet?"



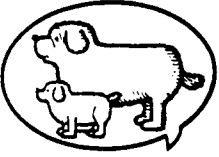
"It is a dog."



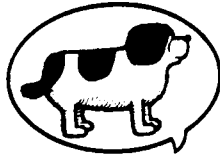
"What kind of dog?"



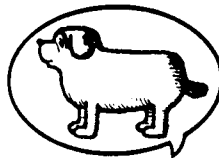
"It is a St. Bernard."



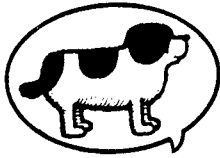
"Grown up or a puppy?"



"It is full grown."



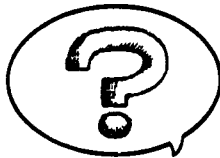
"What color is it?"



"It is brown and white."



"Why didn't you say you had a full-grown, brown and white St. Bernard as a pet in the first place?"



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“love which is directed toward furthering the welfare of another.”⁶ Brenda obviously saw a contrast between this definition of love and her boyfriend’s if-you-love-me-prove-it demand.

Richards described thinking as the process of sorting experience into various categories:

A perception is never just an *it*; perception takes whatever it perceives as a thing of a certain sort. All thinking from the lowest to highest—whatever else it may be—is sorting.⁷

His use of the term *sorting* makes me think of arranging a deck of cards according to the four suits—spades, clubs, diamonds, hearts. It’s as if Brenda’s mind were a card table, and after shuffling all her life experiences she pulled out the memory cards of love for family and romantic passion because they both had red hearts on the corners.

Further discussion in class revealed that Brenda tapped additional contexts for her understanding of the word *love*. She pictured walking hand in hand on an empty beach, hugging a cuddly kitten, giving a blanket to a homeless man on the street, and watching her future husband change their yet-to-be-conceived baby’s diaper. Is all this what the word *love* really means? It was for Brenda. Her boyfriend might have sorted his cards differently. That’s why I. A. Richards insisted that no dictionary could define the meaning of a word. Meaning is personal. Words don’t mean things; people do.

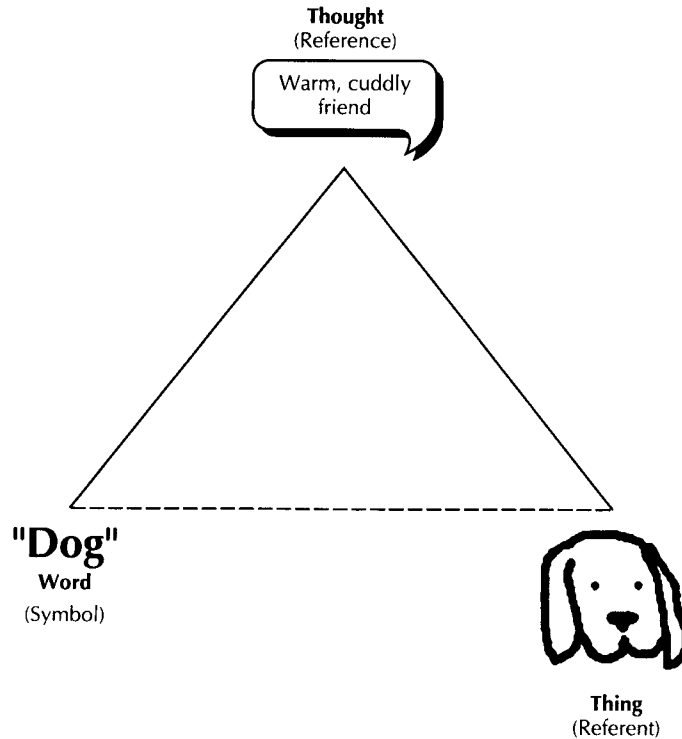
THE SEMANTIC TRIANGLE: PICTURING THE PROBLEM

Together with his British colleague, C. K. Ogden, Richards created his semantic triangle to show the indirect relationship between symbols and their supposed referents. Figure 5.1 illustrates the iffy link between the word *dog* and the actual hound that may consume the majority of your groceries.

The top of the triangle shows some thoughts that you might have when observing the Hush Puppy pictured at the lower right. Once you perceive the actual animal, thoughts of warmth and faithful friendship fill your mind. Since there is a direct or causal relationship between the referent and the reference, Richards connected the two with a solid line.

Your thoughts are also directly linked with the dog symbol at the lower left of the triangle. Given the way you sort through your perceptions, using the word *dog* to symbolize your thoughts is almost a foregone conclusion. Richards diagrammed this causal relationship with a solid line as well.

But the connection between the word *dog* and the actual animal is tenuous at best. Richards represented it with a dotted line. Two people could use that identical word to stand for completely different beasts. When you say *dog*, you might mean a slow-moving, gentle pet who is very fond of children. When I use the word, I might mean a carnivorous canine who bites anyone—and is very fond of children. (Note the slippery use of the term *fond* in this example.) Unless we both understand that ambiguity is an inevitable condition of lan-

**FIGURE 5.1**

The Semantic Triangle (Adapted from Ogden and Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*.)

guage, you and I are liable to carry on a conversation about dogs without ever realizing we aren't talking about the same thing.

Lest you think the identification of a word with its referent is a trivial problem, consider references to acquired immune deficiency syndrome. Unfortunately, just the word *AIDS* has a chilling effect on many who hear it. Ponder the plight of the manufacturer of a dietetic candy called "Ayds." Because the name of the candy sounds like the medical condition, sales fell 50 percent and the manufacturer was forced to change the name of the product.

Richards believed that his semantic triangle applies to all words—the descriptive terms of science, the emotive terms of poetry, and the vast majority of words that fall somewhere in between. But he didn't regard words as equal-opportunity puzzlers. He saw emotive language as the chief source of linguistic confusion. As Brenda and the rest of us in the intimacy seminar discovered, words like *love* can produce great misunderstanding. The greater the discrepancy in the life experiences of two people, the greater the probability that words meant to describe feelings and attitudes will create semantic chaos.

LINGUISTIC REMEDIES FOR MISUNDERSTANDING

Late in his career, I. A. Richards borrowed Shannon and Weaver's information theory model (see page 49) and altered it to show the necessity of common experience for the effective communication of meaning. Figure 5.2 shows his addition of comparison fields. The downward-pointing arrows stand for past comments made in specific situations. Clusters of arrows represent similar statements made in similar situations. The sum total of these "utterances in situations" forms the context that guides the speaker's selection of language or the listener's interpretation of those words.

According to Richards, two people in a conversation could fully understand what each other meant if they had a lifetime of identical experiences. Of course, that's not possible. Even identical twins have comparison fields that grow increasingly diverse as they grow older. But communication is best when both parties have a "long and varied acquaintanceship, close familiarity, lives whose circumstances have often corresponded, in short an exceptional fund of common experience."⁸

Since long-term interconnectedness is rare and not easy to attain, Richards suggested a variety of linguistic ways that people may create a greater region of shared experiences and thus avoid talking past each other. These include the

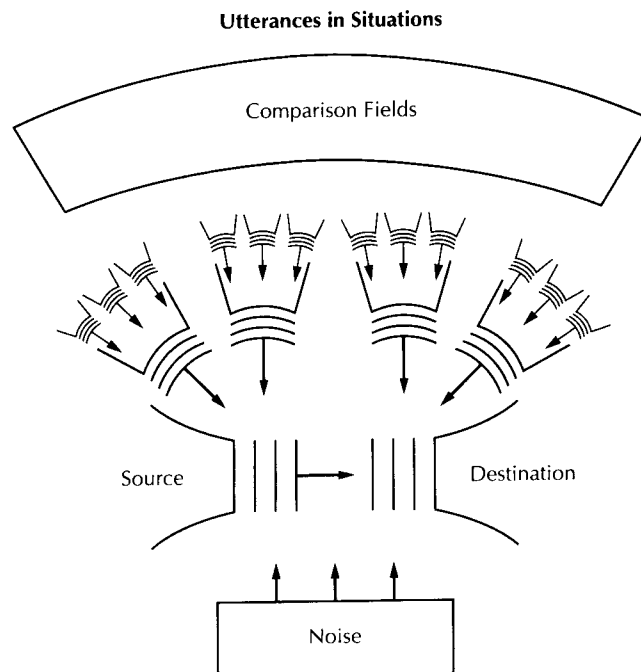


FIGURE 5.2
Utterances in Situations (From Richards, *Speculative Instruments*.)

use of definition, metaphor, feedforward, and Basic English. The rest of the chapter will examine these four remedies for misunderstanding.

1. Definition

Richards regarded definitions as symbol substitutions. They are words used in place of another word to explain the thought in a person's mind. Consistent with the links between words (symbols), thoughts (references), and things (referents) diagrammed in his semantic triangle, Richards emphasized that definitions always describe the ideas in our heads rather than the static reality of something "out there." Therefore, we should always begin a definition by saying, "When I use this word, I mean . . ." or something similar.

Definitions are like maps. They can guide us where we want to go only if we know where we are. We need a starting point—a place on the map where we can point and state with confidence, "I am here." Richards suggested a number of starting points that are liable to be within the comparison fields of our listeners. I'll again use the word *love* in a romantic context to illustrate some of these definitional routes. I've heard each of the following statements voiced by different people:

Symbolization "That's what I mean by love." (Spoken while pointing at a couple exchanging their wedding vows.)

Similarity "As I interpret the word, love is like a lifetime commitment."

Spatial relations "I consider love to be sexual intercourse, nothing more, nothing less."

Temporal relations "As I see it, individuals can love others only after they like themselves."

Causation "I believe love inevitably leads to self-sacrifice."

Object of a mental state "Love to me is desiring the best for another person."

Legal relations "I judge a couple to be in a state of love when they have entered into a joint property agreement."

No one of these routes to understanding may provide an adequate way for Brenda to define what she means when she uses the word *love*. Richards recognized that some usage might require more than one starting point to adequately convey how a person interprets a word. But even with that option available, we shouldn't be surprised if Brenda and her boyfriend end up in different places when they speak of love. As Richards concluded:

We ought to regard communication as a difficult matter, and close correspondence of reference for different thinkers as a comparatively rare event. It is never safe to assume that it has been secured unless both the starting-points and the routes of definition . . . are known.⁹

2. Metaphor

Richards introduced his discussion of metaphor by confronting the idea that the use of metaphor is a special gift belonging to poets alone.¹⁰ He looked upon language as naturally metaphoric, and considered it impossible to speak more than a few sentences without using a figure of speech. Metaphors aren't just "a happy extra trick with words." They are the very stuff of language. That's because we think in metaphors.

Richards referred to the mind as a "connecting organ" that continually combines separate ideas, creating new thoughts in the process.

When we use a metaphor, we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction.¹¹

For Richards, then, the crucial function of metaphor is not to embellish, but to clarify. We can use Brenda's question about the meaning of *love* to illustrate how metaphors can reduce misunderstanding.

As Brenda discovered, the concept of love is so fluid that people use the word to refer to almost anything. ("Love is a feeling you feel you're feeling when you feel you're feeling a feeling.") When combined with the concept of *blindness*, however, the idea of love becomes more specific. The "love is blind" metaphor connects romance with the lack of ability to see. The product of this union is a new thought—foolish or irrational love, which is not inherent in either concept standing alone.

Even if we've never idealized the characteristics of a romantic partner, the love-is-blind metaphor works because we've all experienced total darkness. Thus Richards saw the intentional use of metaphor as a way to create common experience.

What is needed for the wholeness of an experience is not always naturally present, and metaphor supplies an excuse by which what is needed may be smuggled in.¹²

Richards would point out that love doesn't borrow all of the characteristics of blindness. The metaphor appropriates none of the studied movement or deliberate response that we often associate with people who can't see. Those qualities are picked up in the "justice of blind" metaphor that is embodied in the statue of the blindfolded Greek goddess, Themis, holding the scales of justice.¹³ Blind justice doesn't play favorites; blind love does. Both metaphors convey a precision that's missing in simple references to *love* or *justice*. According to Richards, we should seek to employ clarifying metaphors such as these.

Richards doesn't offer step-by-step instructions on how to create powerful metaphors. Using one of his own metaphors, however, he notes that the discrepancy between paired ideas is like the tension in a tightly drawn bow. The greater the apparent contradiction, the faster the arrow or metaphor will fly when released. But if the metaphor isn't apt and misses the target, all that explanatory power is wasted. The listener must be able to see the point of contact between the two ideas.

3. Feedforward

When Richards was 75 years old, the *Saturday Review* asked him to write an article for their “What I Have Learned” series. Instead of writing about the false assumption that words have inherent meaning, the importance of similar experience, or the function of metaphors, Richards chose the concept of “feedforward” as his most important insight.

We saw in the previous chapter on information theory that feedback is the effect of the receiver on the source. Feedforward works in the opposite direction. It is the anticipatory process of acting as our own first receiver so that we can pretest the impact of our words on an audience. If we don’t like what we hear, we can always reframe the message to have a better effect.

As I write this chapter, I imagine myself reading my words sitting at a desk, sprawled on a bed, or riding on a bus. I picture a frown on my face while I try to sort out the difference between symbol, reference, and referent; a far-away look in my eyes as I remember a discussion about the meaning of love with a girl named Ann; a brief smile as I glance at the dog cartoon on page 59. I picture myself picking up a yellow marker to highlight the summary statement, “Words don’t mean things; people do.” I also say the words I’ve written out loud to hear how they sound. Do they make sense, or are they just paragraphs of gobbledegook?

The role-play process I’ve just described illustrates Richards’ concept of feedforward. It’s a humbling experience. I don’t always like the response I imagine, so I stay at the word processor to see whether I can get it right. Feedback from students and instructors will soon let me know. But as with definition and metaphor—Richards’ other remedies for misunderstanding—feedforward forces me to consider the experience of the other person.

According to Richards, communicators who avoid feedforward tend to be dogmatic. (“Don’t confuse me with the facts; my mind’s made up.”) By contrast, those who try to anticipate the effect of their words are often more open-minded. They entertain doubts about whether or not they’ve made things clear and even question the rightness of their ideas. Richards applauded this tentative approach to truth. His commitment to feedforward is reflected in his book *Speculative Instruments*, which is listed in “A Second Look” at the end of the chapter. The title suggests an ongoing willingness to change what he says.

4. Basic English

While working together on their book *The Meaning of Meaning*, C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards discussed their desire to develop a basic form of their mother tongue that would make teaching English as a second language simpler. They later selected 850 words that new speakers may quickly learn. Ogden and Richards had no doubt that any person who knows this group of words will be able to clearly discuss complex ideas.

Richards went to China for two years to field-test Basic English. He discovered that his belief in the system was right. Armed with these basic words and

a working knowledge of the rules of language, a complete stranger to the English language was able to talk about almost anything.

Even though Harvard University gave Richards money to move forward with books, motion pictures, and other teaching helps, most English educators laughed at his attempt to make learning the language quick and simple. They thought it was a sad waste that this great man of arts and letters no longer seemed to care about beautiful prose. But Richards did not give up hope. As we saw from his picture of comparison fields, he was certain that common experience helped people make sense of what they were hearing. And common language produces common experience.

What is your reaction to Richards' design for language learning? Are 850 words enough to represent all the ideas and feelings in a person's mind? One thought for you before making your decision—every word that I have used in this discussion of Basic English has been taken from Richards' list. Note that the writing may be a bit rough and the word selection limited, but does a clear sense come through? Maybe Richards' idea is not so strange after all.

CRITIQUE: FINDING THE PROBLEM IS EASIER THAN FIXING IT

Despite the sheer volume of his writings and the scope of his enterprise, few modern-day semanticists, rhetoricians, or literary critics discuss the work of I. A. Richards. That's too bad. Richards was willing to plunge into the question of meaning—a semantic swamp that scares off most linguists and rhetoricians. His microscopic look at how words work provides the valuable insight that the symbols we use don't have a direct relationship with the things we want to describe.

Since *The Meaning of Meaning* first appeared in 1923, many scholars have independently reached similar conclusions. For example, the field of general semantics claims that words are attempts to map reality, but that a verbal map is not the territory, nor can it ever depict all of the territory.¹⁴ Present-day post-modernist critics share Richards' distrust of history and contend that interpretation is the only reality we can communicate.¹⁵ But I. A. Richards had these insights first.

Richards did a better job of explaining why misunderstanding occurs than he did in offering effective remedies to avoid the problem. His discussions of definition, metaphor, and feedforward are limited to a few chapters, and after introducing each topic, he failed to develop it further. As part of a theory of comprehension, he offered seven "speculative instruments" for probing the meaning of a word. But ironically, his theory of comprehension strikes me as incomprehensible, and I find his speculative instruments of no practical help when trying to understand what another person means. That's why I've omitted these instruments from this chapter.

Richards provoked a storm of protest over his teaching design for Basic English. Although he candidly admitted that part of his intent was to plant "mental and moral seed" within the illiterate peoples of the world, cultural imperialism was not what riled up his critics. They simply couldn't understand

why a wordsmith of Richards' caliber would abandon a love for words that could express subtle nuances of thought. Perhaps the point is moot, because Basic English never caught on. But to me, Basic English is quite in line with Richards' primary assumption about verbal symbols. If words have no intrinsic meaning, it seems perfectly reasonable to express an idea by stringing together four or five common words instead of relying on a single esoteric term that could easily be misinterpreted.

So how can I. A. Richards' semantic theory benefit Brenda and her boyfriend? Because both of them bring different romantic experiences to their relationship, Richards' new rhetoric suggests that the couple will probably not reach agreement on a single meaning for the word *love*. But a knowledge of his main ideas would alert both parties to the fact that each of them interprets the word differently and would start them on a journey to discover how the other person is using the term. Even though they'll never completely succeed, the joint venture itself could draw them closer together.

QUESTIONS TO SHARPEN YOUR FOCUS

1. Richards claims that the *proper meaning superstition* is at the root of verbal misunderstanding. Using his *semantic triangle*, how would you explain this concept to a friend?
2. How does Richards' *new rhetoric* differ from the neo-Aristotelian rhetoric you read about in Chapter 2?
3. Can you think of a *metaphor* that would effectively communicate your concept of love to someone of the opposite sex?
4. What is the connection between Richards' concept of *comparison fields* and his hope for *Basic English*?

A SECOND LOOK

Recommended resource: I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Oxford University, London, 1936.

Overview of theory: Sonja Foss, Karen Foss, and Robert Trapp, *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric*, 2d ed., Waveland Press, Prospect Heights, Ill., 1991, pp. 27–53.

Overview of theory: Daniel Fogarty, "I. A. Richards," in *Essays on the Rhetoric of the Western World*, Edward P. J. Corbett, James L. Golden, and Goodwin F. Berquist (eds.), Kendall/Hunt, Dubuque, Iowa, 1990, pp. 304–320.

New rhetoric: Marie Hochmuth Nichols, "I. A. Richards and the 'New Rhetoric,'" *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Vol. 44, 1958, pp. 1–16.

Semantic triangle: C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1946, pp. 1–23.

Metaphor: I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Oxford University, London, 1936, pp. 85–138.

Definition: C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1946, pp. 109–138.

Communication model: I. A. Richards, "Toward a Theory of Comprehending," in *Speculative Instruments*, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1955, pp. 17–38.

Feedforward: I. A. Richards, "The Secret of 'Feedforward,'" *Saturday Review*, February 3, 1968, pp. 14–17.

Basic English: I. A. Richards, *Basic English and Its Uses*, W. W. Norton, New York, 1943.

Collection of essays: Ann E. Berthoff (ed.), *Richards on Rhetoric*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1991.

Chapter 5: Meaning of Meaning

- 1 I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Oxford University Press, London, 1936, p. 3.
- 2 I. A. Richards, *Speculative Instruments*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1955, p. 166.
- 3 Sonja Foss, Karen Foss, and Robert Trapp, *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric*, 2d ed., Waveland Press, Prospect Heights, Ill., 1991, p. 28.
- 4 Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 3.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 5, 7, 23.
- 6 Vincent Jeffries, "Virtue and Attraction: Validation of a Measure of Love," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, Vol. 10, 1993, pp. 99–117.
- 7 Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 30.
- 8 I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, Keagan Paul, Trench, Trubner, New York, 1924, p. 178.
- 9 C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1946, p. 123.
- 10 Aristotle, *The Poetics*, Section XXII, Leon Golden (trans.), Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., p. 41.
- 11 Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 93.
- 12 Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 240.
- 13 See Thomas Bulfinch, *Mythology: The Age of Fable*, Grosset & Dunlap, New York, 1918, p. 15n.
- 14 For an overview of general semantics, see Richard Budd, "General Semantics: An Approach to Human Communication," in *Approaches to Human Communication*, Richard Budd and Brent Ruben (eds.), Spartan Books, New York, 1972, pp. 97–119.
- 15 John Stewart, "A Postmodern Look at Traditional Communication Postulates," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, Vol. 55, 1991, pp. 354–379.

Chapter 6: Coordinated Management of Meaning

- 1 Giles Gunn, *Thinking Across the American Grain: Ideology, Intellect and the New Pragmatism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, p. 16.
- 2 Barnett Pearce, *Interpersonal Communication: Making Social Worlds*, HarperCollins, New York, 1994, p. 366.
- 3 Rom Harré, *Personal Being*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1984.
- 4 Pearce, *Interpersonal Communication*, p. 19.
- 5 Jonathan Shailor, *Empowerment in Dispute Mediation: A Critical Analysis of Communication*, Praeger, Westport, Conn., 1994, p. 127.
- 6 Pearce, *Interpersonal Communication*, p. 71.
- 7 The classic work on negotiation strategy is Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes*, Penguin, New York, 1983.
- 8 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G.E.M. Anscombe, trans., Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1953, (para. 155), p. 61.
- 9 John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, Dover, New York, 1925/1958, p. 179.
- 10 Pearce, *Interpersonal Communication*, p. 75.
- 11 Wittgenstein calls them "frames of life." See *Philosophical Investigations*, (paras. 9, 23, 241), pp. 5–6, 11, 88.
- 12 Shailor, p. 2.
- 13 W. Barnett Pearce, *Communication and the Human Con-*

- dition*, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill., 1989, pp. 32–33.
- 14 Vernon Cronen, "Coordinated Management of Meaning: The Consequentiality of Communication and the Recapturing of Experience," in *The Consequentiality of Communication*, Stuart Sigman (ed.), Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, N.J., 1995, p. 22.
- 15 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (para. 122), p. 49.
- 16 Stephen Littlejohn, Jonathan Shailor, Barnett Pearce, "The Deep Structure of Reality in Mediation," in *New Directions in Mediation*, Joseph Folger and Tricia Jones (eds.), Sage, Thousand Oaks, Calif., 1994, pp. 67–83.
- 17 Pearce, *Communication and the Human Condition*, p. 77.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 84.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- 20 Pearce, *Interpersonal Communication*, p. 31.
- 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 341–343. The juggling metaphor is suggested by Barnett Pearce.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 123. Pearce credits communication theorist John Shotter for this strategy.
- 23 Vernon Cronen, "Coordinated Management of Meaning: The Consequentiality of Communication and the Recapturing of Experience," p. 38.
- 24 Shailor, p. 34.
- 25 W. Barnett Pearce, "Achieving Dialogue with 'the Other' in the Postmodern World," in *Beyond Agendas: New Directions in Communication Research*, Philip Gaunt (ed.), Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn., 1993, pp. 59–74.
- 26 Certification of mediators is a hotly debated issue in the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR). Requirements vary greatly around the United States. Shailor's in-depth critique of mediation practices is based on three case studies, each co-mediated. By my reading of the text, at least five of the six mediators were unsafe, only two showed competency, and none were artistic. Many of the problems Shailor perceives as inherent to the mediation process could alternatively be ascribed to poorly selected and/or poorly trained volunteers in a single program.
- 27 See Gerry Philipsen, "The Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory of Pearce, Cronen and Associates," in *Watershed Research Traditions in Human Communication Theory*, Donald Cushman and Branislav Kovačić (eds.), State University of New York, 1995, pp. 13–43.
- 28 W. Barnett Pearce, "A Sailing Guide for Social Constructionists," in *Social Approaches to Communication*, Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz (ed.), Guilford, New York, 1995, p. 88.
- 29 Vernon E. Cronen, "Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory and Postenlightenment Ethics," in *Conversation on Communication Ethics*, Karen Joy Greenberg (ed.), Ablex, Norwood, N.J., 1991, p. 49.

Chapter 7: Symbolic Interactionism

- 1 *Nell*, 1994, Egg Pictures, Twentieth-Century Fox.
- 2 The three premises are found in Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1969, p. 2. I have paraphrased the principles for stylistic consistency and to avoid gender-specific language.