

I. A. Richards' (Ivor Armstrong Richards)  
Psychological Theory of Value

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- I.A. Richards' is considered as the most influential psychological critic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- He is the poet, dramatist, philosopher, semanticist, psychologist is among the first of the 20<sup>th</sup> century critics to bring to English criticism a scientific precision and objectivity.

He is often referred to as the critical consciousness of the modern age.

In the field of New Criticism he is esteemed as the pioneer.

- He along with T. S. Eliot is the most prominent critic in the 20th century Anglo-American criticism.
- He was the first critic to realize the mutual league between human beings and psychology and made an in-depth study of psychological implication on human beings.
- He is always remembered as a critic who has formulated a systematic and comprehensive theory of literary art.

His reputation as a critic with deep insights lies in his critical works which render a new direction to modern criticism.

- His first critical book “ The Foundation of Aesthetics” (1922) is a collaborative work, written in collaboration with his two friends- C. K. Ogden and James Wood. In this book the critic has elaborated the sense of aesthetics and its effects on readers.
- In his second book “ The Meaning of Meaning” written in joint venture with Ogden and throws light on the two uses of language.
- The first one is scientific or referential use of language and the second is the emotive or connotative use of language.

In his third book “ The Principles of Literary Criticism” (1924) he elaborates his psychological theory of value and highlights the emotive language of poetry. In this book he contemplates on nature and value of poetry.

- Richards’ next book “ Practical Criticism” is based on his experiments conducted in Cambridge in which he distributed poems without any evidence of authorship and period to his students and asked them to comment on them. He further analyzed the factors responsible for misreading of poems.
- The objective of practical criticism was to encourage students to concentrate on “ the words on the page” rather than rely on the preconceived notions about a text.

He came to the conclusion that the critical reading of poetry is an arduous discipline.

- Psychological Theory of Value of Art : while discussing the theory of Value, he is not interested in physical theory of value rather he emphasizes the psychological theory of value.
- He closely examines the working of human mind and describes human mind as a system of impulses.
- Impulse in term of Psychology may be defined as a wish or urge particularly a sudden one. It can be considered as a normal and fundamental part of human thought process.

## What is value ?

Value may be defined as capacity for satisfying feeling and desire in various intricate ways.

- Impulses can be categorized into two broad categories: appetencies and aversions.
- Appetencies may refer to those impulses or desires which we would like to fulfill or seeking after.
- Aversions stand for those impulses or desires which we would like to avoid or suppress or do away with.
- It is easy to satisfy the conscious desires but it becomes problematic when desires are unconscious but perturbs the human mind consistently and create a chaotic state.

- Human mind is in a state of constant war because of the irresistible pulls of desires from different directions. Appetencies are mostly unconscious in nature.
- Human mind in order to achieve a poise try to satisfy the appetency which is more important than others.
- Some impulses must be satisfied in order that others may be possible e.g.; eat, drink, sleep, breathe, protect oneself are conditions for any further activities.
- The impulses take precedence over others which are indispensable for the survival of human being and his healthy state of mind.
- The systematization of impulses is a complicated task.
- But the principle of human mind is to maintain a growing order and to coordinate.

The fact is no individual can live even fractions of a second without a very intricate and perfect coordination of impulses.

- The mind experiences a state of poise only when impulses are organized to follow a common course. But with each new experience the entire system is disturbed and the human mind has to readjust and reorganize the impulses in a new way to achieve the desired system or poise. Some impulses are satisfied and some give way to others and are frustrated.
- The ideal state will be achieved when all the impulses are fully satisfied but that seem to be rare.

The best possible state is when maximum number of impulses are satisfied and the minimum are frustrated.

- The value of art or poetry is that it enables the mind to achieve the poise or balance more quickly or completely than it could do otherwise.
- In poetry there is an art of resolution and balancing of impulses.
- Poetry is a representation of this uniquely ordered state of mind in which the impulses respond to a stimulus in such a way that the mind has a life's experiences.
- Poetry thus proves to be a means by which human beings get emotional balance, mental equilibrium, peace and rest.

Poetry organizes our impulses and gives our mind a certain order, renders us happy and makes our mind healthy.

- What is applicable to individual is equally applicable to society. A society in which arts are freely cultivated reflects better mental and emotional tranquility compared to the societies in which arts have no significance at all.
- It is the working of the human mind where lies the moral value of art.