I.A. Richards (1893-1979)

* Ivor Armstrong Richards was an influential English [literary critic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_critic) and [rhetorician](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhetoric). Cambridge professor. Studied philosophy but was instrumental in the establishment of the discipline of English literature studies.
* His notable works -- [*The Meaning of Meaning*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Meaning_of_Meaning), *Principles of Literary Criticism*, *Practical Criticism*, and *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* etc.

**Major concepts:**

* Practical Criticism
* Psychological Criticism

**Practical Criticism:**

* He gave his students in Cambridge poems to read and analyze, without telling them anything about the author or the context.
* Here, the students were supposed to do “a close reading” of the actual texts without being burdened by historical-biographical factors or other considerations.
* Through this process, he was stressing upon the “autonomy of the text” as a literary/artistic work. (Independence from the author and context)
* He was going against the contemporary practice of attaching too much importance to historical, biographical and contextual factors.
* But unlike aestheticists, his approach stressed the autonomy of the text (the actual words on the page) and not the autonomy of the art/artist.
* This is an approach he shares with the New Critics who wrote around the same time. They were influenced by him.
* Many literary historians credit him with initiating the New Critical movement through close reading, stressing the autonomy of the text etc.
* William Empson, his student, carried forward his ideas and methods, contributing greatly to the establishment of New Criticism.
* He influenced FR Leavis, Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom et al.

**Psychological Criticism:**

* He was also much concerned about the effect of a work of art on the mind of the reader.
* Here, he gives importance to the reader (and the reception of the text) and not to the writer and the production of a text. (The Romantics gave centrality to the writer and the mental processes of the writer.)
* His critical approach has been called ‘psychological criticism’ for this reason.

\*\*\* (BJ’s classnotes; typed by Nimidha James; 25/02/2016) \*\*\*