

Concerning Points of View

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A critical point of view is taken only when we feel more or less negative toward someone or something, or when we at least want to express very strong reservations. If, for instance, we say we are taking a critical point of view toward something, everybody knows that either we feel extremely doubtful about that thing or else we want to change it completely. We don't assume a critical point of view in order to state, after mature consideration, that a thing is good, but so that we can discover at least one reason for criticizing it and then retire in triumph. It's the same as when we say we have a critical attitude toward something or someone. In either of these phrases the word "critical" is fully and tacitly understood to be only that which is, insofar as possible, against; whereas being utterly and forthrightly for something is somehow being uncritical. A critical point of view doesn't indicate concern for what a thing actually is, but rather a display of suspicion that can be appeased only when some fault is discovered. And it always is, whenever we assume a critical point of view.

From an ethical point of view, things are accepted or rejected without considering it necessary to investigate further into what these things really are. On the contrary, the less we know about the thing in question, the more absolute and authoritative our ethical point of view. A man might corrupt his ethical point of view if he began investigating further into what, for ethical reasons, he has already accepted or rejected.

A personal point of view doesn't command quite the same respect as an ethical point of view. I say "my personal point of view is thus and so" with a certain modesty and reserve; and when we don't want to say to someone's face that he is spouting nonsense and that we refuse to argue with him about anything so self-evident, we get around it by the polite pronouncement that that is his