

Critical Thinking

A Poem by Ron Hornsby

Human behaviour defies all prediction
It often seems random, devoid of clear rules.
Yet under the surface there lies a conviction
That there are some values more precious than jewels.

Most of us have a covert ideology
That's buried so deep, we don't know that it's there.
It governs our lives; but without axiology,
Which of us knows that it's human welfare?

So all of our work should reside in directions
Of finding out ways of improving our lot,
Removing the causes of life's imperfections,
Because, after all, we are all that we've got.

The way to make progress is to be one's own critic
And never contented with things as they are;
Of seeing no change as being mentally arthritic
And self-satisfaction a thing to abhor.

To criticise means: compare with a standard
And label the differences: kin, good, or bad.
(And those who select the key features to measure
Ipso facto, distinguish the sane from the mad.)

Critical thinking consists of three phases.
When in the right order they form a technique
For use by a scientist each time he appraises
A new situation, to oust the mystique.

An Empirical search is the start of this process
With causal connections the scientist's aim;
Controlling raw nature's his route to real progress,
(With always some prospect of Nobel Prize fame).

When discoveries are made, Hermeneutics takes over,
With true understanding becoming the goal,
Relating the old and the new to each other,
And broadcasting findings without rigmarole.

A full understanding needs collaboration.
When millions of people are given their say
Confusion's dispelled by combined cerebration;
So publish discoveries, don't hide them away.

The third and last aspect is Emancipation
Whose influence is strong even when it's not seen.
It makes us aware of the world's deprivation
And fills us with shame if we won't intervene.

The goals it promotes are: political freedom
To form an opinion and speak without fear;
A deeply felt yearning to cultivate wisdom;
And a need to push outward the mind's own frontier.

Critical thinkers should help to establish
Political systems in which they can thrive:
—Participative, democratic, egalitarian, unselfish
—Whose plain social justice inspires everyone to strive.

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[Note: 'critical' as in critical social theory]