The Point of View

Stanley G. Weinbaum

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"I am too modest!" snapped the great Haskel van Manderpootz, pacing irritably about the limited area of his private laboratory, glaring at me the while. "That is the trouble. I undervalue my own achievements, and thereby permit petty imitators like Corveille to influence the committee and win the Morell prize."

"But," I said soothingly, "you've won the Morell physics award half a dozen times, professor. They can't very well give it to you every year."

"Why not, since it is plain that I deserve it?" bristled the professor. "Understand, Dixon, that I do not regret my modesty, even though it permits conceited fools like Corveille, who have infinitely less reason than I for conceit, to win awards that mean nothing save prizes for successful bragging. Bah! To grant an award for research along such obvious lines that I neglected to mention them, thinking that even a Morell judge would appreciate their obviousness! Research on the psychon, eh! Who discovered the psychon? Who but van Manderpootz?"

"Wasn't that what you got last year's award for?" I asked consolingly. "And after all, isn't this modesty, this lack of jealousy on your part, a symbol of greatness of character?"

"True—true!" said the great van Manderpootz, mollified. "Had such an affront been committed against a lesser man than myself, he would doubtless have entered a bitter complaint against the judges. But not I. Anyway, I know from experience that it wouldn't do any good. And besides, despite his greatness, van Manderpootz is as modest and shrinking as a violet." At this point he paused, and his broad red face tried to look violet-like.

I suppressed a smile. I knew the eccentric genius of old from the days when I had been Dixon Wells, undergraduate student of

engineering, and had taken a course in Newer Physics (that is, in Relativity) under the famous professor. For some unguessable reason, he had taken a fancy to me, and as a result, I had been involved in several of his experiments since graduation. There was the affair of the subjunctivisor, for instance, and also that of the idealizator; in the first of these episodes I had suffered the indignity of falling in love with a girl two weeks after she was apparently dead, and in the second, the equal or greater indignity of falling in love with a girl who didn't exist, never had existed, and never would exist—in other words, with an ideal. Perhaps I'm a little susceptible to feminine charms, or rather, perhaps I used to be, for since the disaster of the idealizator, I have grimly relegated such follies to the past, much to the disgust of various 'vision entertainers, singers, dancers, and the like.

So of late I had been spending my days very seriously trying wholeheartedly to get to the office on time just once, so that I could refer to it next time my father accused me of never getting anywhere on time. I hadn't succeeded yet, but fortunately the N. J. Wells Corporation was wealthy enough to survive even without the full-time services of Dixon Wells, or should I say even with them? Anyway, I'm sure my father preferred to have me late in the morning after an evening with van Manderpootz than after one with Tips Alva or Whimsy White, or one of the numerous others of the ladies of the 'vision screen. Even in the twenty-first century he retained a lot of old-fashioned ideas.

Van Manderpootz had ceased to remember that he was as modest and shrinking as a violet. "It has just occurred to me," he announced impressively, "that years have character much as humans have. This year, 2015, will be remembered in history as a very stupid year, in which the Morell prize was given to a nincompoop. Last year, on the other hand, was a very intelligent year, a jewel in the crown of civilization. Not only was the Morell prize given to van Manderpootz, but I announced my discrete field

theory in that year, and the University unveiled Gogli's statue of me as well." He sighed. "Yes, a very intelligent year! What do you think?"

"It depends on how you look at it," I responded glumly. "I didn't enjoy it so much, what with Joanna Caldwell and Denise d'Agrion, and your infernal experiments. It's all in the point of view."

The professor snorted. "Infernal experiments, eh! Point of view! Of course it's all in the point of view. Even Einstein's simple little synthesis was enough to prove that. If the whole world could adopt an intelligent and admirable point of view—that of van Manderpootz, for instance—all troubles would be over. If it were possible—" He paused, and an expression of amazed wonder spread over his ruddy face.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Matter? I am astonished! The astounding depths of genius awe me. I am overwhelmed with admiration at the incalculable mysteries of a great mind."

"I don't get the drift."

"Dixon," he said impressively, "you have been privileged to look upon an example of the workings of a genius. More than that, you have planted the seed from which perhaps shall grow the towering tree of thought. Incredible as it seems, you, Dixon Wells, have given van Manderpootz an idea! It is thus that genius seizes upon the small, the unimportant, the negligible, and turns it to its own grand purposes. I stand awe-struck!"

"But what—?"

"Wait," said van Manderpootz, still in rapt admiration of the majesty of his own mind. "When the tree bears fruit, you shall see it. Until then, be satisfied that you have played a part in its planting."

It was perhaps a month before I saw van Manderpootz again, but one bright spring evening his broad, rubicund face looked out of the phone-screen at me.

"It's ready," he announced impressively.

"What is?"

The professor looked pained at the thought that I could have forgotten. "The tree has borne fruit," he explained. "If you wish to drop over to my quarters, we'll proceed to the laboratory and try it out. I do not set a time, so that it will be utterly impossible for you to be late."

I ignored that last dig, but had a time been set, I would doubtless have been even later than usual, for it was with some misgivings that I induced myself to go at all. I still remembered the unpleasantness of my last two experiences with the inventions of van Manderpootz. However, at last we were seated in the small laboratory, while out in the larger one the professor's technical assistant, Carter, puttered over some device, and in the far corner his secretary, the plain and unattractive Miss Fitch, transcribed lecture notes, for van Manderpootz abhorred the thought that his golden utterances might be lost to posterity. On the table between the professor and myself lay a curious device, something that looked like a cross between a pair of nose-glasses and a miner's lamp.

"There it is," said van Manderpootz proudly. "There lies my attitudinizor, which may well become an epoch-making device."

"How? What does it do?"

"I will explain. The germ of the idea traces back to that remark of yours about everything depending on the point of view. A very obvious statement, of course, but genius seizes on the obvious and draws from it the obscure. Thus the thoughts of even the simplest mind can suggest to the man of genius his sublime conceptions, as is evident from the fact that I got this idea from you."

"What idea?"

"Be patient. There is much you must understand first. You must realize just how true is the statement that everything depends on the point of view. Einstein proved that motion, space, and time depend on the particular point of view of the observer, or as he expressed it, on the scale of reference used. I go farther than that, infinitely farther. I propound the theory that the observer is the point of view. I go even beyond that, I maintain that the world itself is merely the point of view!"

"Huh?"

"Look here," proceeded van Manderpootz. "It is obvious that the world I see is entirely different from the one in which you live. It is equally obvious that a strictly religious man occupies a different world than that of a materialist. The fortunate man lives in a happy world; the unfortunate man sees a world of misery. One man is happy with little, another is miserable with much. Each sees the world from his own point of view, which is the same as saying that each lives in his own world. Therefore there are as many worlds as there are points of view.

"But," I objected, "that theory is to disregard reality. Out of all the different points of view, there must be one that is right, and all the rest are wrong."

"One would think so," agreed the professor. "One would think that between the point of view of you, for instance, as contrasted with that of, say van Manderpootz, there would be small doubt as to which was correct. However, early in the twentieth century, Heisenberg enunciated his Principle of Uncertainty, which proved beyond argument that a completely accurate scientific picture of the world is quite impossible, that the law of cause and effect is merely a phase of the law of chance, that no infallible predictions can ever be made, and that what science used to call natural laws are really only descriptions of the way in which the human mind perceives nature. In other words, the character of the world depends entirely on the mind observing it, or, to return to my earlier statement—the point of view."

"But no one can ever really understand another person's point of view," I said. "It isn't fair to undermine the whole basis of science because you can't be sure that the color we both call red wouldn't look green to you if you could see it through my eyes."

"Ah!" said van Manderpootz triumphantly. "So we come now to my attitudinizor. Suppose that it were possible for me to see through your eyes, or you through mine. Do you see what a boon such an ability would be to humanity? Not only from the standpoint of science, but also because it would obviate all troubles due to misunderstandings. And even more." Shaking his finger, the professor recited oracularly, "'Oh, wad some pow'r the giftie gie us to see oursel's as ithers see us.' Van Manderpootz is that power, Dixon. Through my attitudinizor, one may at last adopt the viewpoint of another. The poet's plaint of more than two centuries ago is answered at last."

"How the devil do you see through somebody else's eyes?"

"Very simply. You will recall the idealizator. Now it is obvious that when I peered over your shoulder and perceived in the mirror

your conception of the ideal woman, I was, to a certain extent, adopting your point of view. In that case the psychons given off by your mind were converted into quanta of visible light, which could be seen. In the case of my attitudinizor, the process is exactly reversed. One flashes the beam of this light on the subject whose point of view is desired; the visible light is reflected back with a certain accompaniment of psychons, which are here intensified to a degree which will permit them to be, so to speak, appreciated?"

"Psychons?"

"Have you already forgotten my discovery of the unit particle of thought? Must I explain again how the cosmons, chronons, spations, psychons, and all other particles are interchangeable? And that," he continued abstractedly, "leads to certain interesting speculations. Suppose I were to convert, say, a ton of material protons and electrons into spations—that is, convert matter into space. I calculate that a ton of matter will produce approximately a cubic mile of space. Now the question is, where would we put it, since all the space we have is already occupied by space? Or if I manufactured an hour or two of time? It is obvious that we have no time to fit in an extra couple of hours, since all our time is already accounted for. Doubtless it will take a certain amount of thought for even van Manderpootz to solve these problems, but at the moment I am curious to watch the workings of the attitudinizor. Suppose you put it on, Dixon."

"I? Haven't you tried it out yet?"

"Of course not. In the first place, what has van Manderpootz to gain by studying the viewpoints of other people? The object of the device is to permit people to study nobler viewpoints than their own. And in the second place, I have asked myself whether it is fair to the world for van Manderpootz to be the first to try out a new and possibly untrustworthy device, and I reply, 'No!'"

"But I should try it out, eh? Well, every time I try out any of your inventions I find myself in some kind of trouble. I'd be a fool to go around looking for more difficulty, wouldn't I?"

"I assure you that my viewpoint will be much less apt to get you into trouble than your own," said van Manderpootz with dignity. "There will be no question of your becoming involved in some impossible love affair as long as you stick to that."

Nevertheless, despite the assurance of the great scientist, I was more than a little reluctant to don the device. Yet I was curious, as well; it seemed a fascinating prospect to be able to look at the world through other eyes, as fascinating as visiting a new world—which it was, according to the professor. So after a few moments of hesitation, I picked up the instrument, slipped it over my head so that the eyeglasses were in the proper position, and looked inquiringly at van Manderpootz.

"You must turn it on," he said, reaching over and clicking a switch on the frame. "Now flash the light to my face. That's the way; just center the circle of light on my face. And now what do you see?"

I didn't answer; what I saw was, for the moment, quite indescribable. I was completely dazed and bewildered, and it was only when some involuntary movement of my head at last flashed the light from the professor's face to the table top that a measure of sanity returned, which proves at least that tables do not possess any point of view.

"O-o-o-h!" I gasped.

Van Manderpootz beamed. "Of course you are overwhelmed. One could hardly expect to adopt the view of van Manderpootz

without some difficulties of adjustment. A second time will be easier."

I reached up and switched off the light. "A second time will not only be easier, but also impossible," I said crossly. "I'm not going to experience another dizzy spell like that for anybody."

"But of course you will, Dixon. I am certain that the dizziness will be negligible on the second trial. Naturally the unexpected heights affected yon, much as if you were to come without warning to the brink of a colossal precipice. But this time you will be prepared, and the effect will be much less."

Well, it was. After a few moments I was able to give my full attention to the phenomena of the attitudinizor, and queer phenomena they were, too. I scarcely know how to describe the sensation of looking at the world through the filter of another's mind. It is almost an indescribable experience, but so, in the ultimate analysis, is any other experience.

What I saw first was a kaleidoscopic array of colors and shapes, but the amazing, astounding, inconceivable thing about the scene was that there was no single color I could recognize! The eyes of van Manderpootz, or perhaps his brain, interpreted color in a fashion utterly alien to the way in which my own functioned, and the resultant spectrum was so bizarre that there is simply no way of describing any single tint in words. To say, as I did to the professor, that his conception of red looked to me like a shade between purple and green conveys absolutely no meaning, and the only way a third person could appreciate the meaning would be to examine my point of view through an attitudinizor while I was examining that of van Manderpootz. Thus he could apprehend my conception of van Manderpootz's reaction to the color red.

And shapes! It took me several minutes to identify the weird, angular, twisted, distorted appearance in the center of the room as the plain laboratory table.

But by far the strangest part of his point of view had nothing to do with the outlook upon the physical world, but with the more fundamental elements—with his attitudes. Most of his thoughts, on that first occasion, were beyond me, because I had not yet learned to interpret the personal symbolism in which he thought. But I did understand his attitudes. There was Carter, for instance, toiling away out in the large laboratory; I saw at once what a plodding, unintelligent drudge he seemed to van Manderpootz. And there was Miss Fitch; I confess that she had always seemed unattractive to me, but my impression of her was Venus herself beside that of the professor! She hardly seemed human to him and I am sure that he never thought of her as a woman, but merely as a piece of convenient but unimportant laboratory equipment.

At this point I caught a glimpse of myself through the eyes of van Manderpootz. Ouch! Perhaps I'm not a genius, but I'm dead certain that I'm not the grinning ape I appeared to be in his eyes. And perhaps I'm not exactly the handsomest man in the world either, but if I thought I looked like that—! And then, to cap the climax, I apprehended van Manderpootz's conception of himself!

"That's enough!" I yelled. "I won't stay around here just to be insulted. I'm through!"

I tore the attitudinizor from my head and tossed it to the table, feeling suddenly a little foolish at the sight of the grin on the face of the professor.

"That is hardly the spirit which has led science to its great achievements, Dixon," he observed amiably. "Suppose you describe the nature of the insults, and if possible, something about

the workings of the attitudinizor as well. After all, that is what you were supposed to be observing."

I flushed, grumbled a little, and complied. Van Manderpootz listened with great interest to my description of the difference in our physical worlds, especially the variations in our perceptions of form and color.

"What a field for an artist!" he ejaculated at last. "Unfortunately, it is a field that must remain forever untapped, because even though an artist examined a thousand viewpoints and learned innumerable new colors, his pigments would continue to impress his audience with the same old colors each of them had always known." He sighed thoughtfully, and then proceeded. "However, the device is apparently quite safe to use. I shall therefore try it briefly, bringing to the investigation a calm, scientific mind which refuses to be troubled by the trifles that seem to bother you."

He donned the attitudinizor, and I must confess that he stood the shock of the first trial somewhat better than I did. After a surprised "Oof!" he settled down to a complacent analysis of my point of view, while I sat somewhat self-consciously under his calm appraisal. Calm, that is, for about three minutes.

Suddenly he leaped to his feet, tearing the device from a face whose normal ruddiness had deepened to a choleric angry color. "Get out!" he roared. "So that's the way van Manderpootz looks to you! Moron! Idiot! Imbecile! Get out!"

It was a week or ten days later that I happened to be passing the University on my way from somewhere to somewhere else, and I fell to wondering whether the professor had yet forgiven me. There was a light in the window of his laboratory over in the Physics Building, so I dropped in, making my way past the desk where Carter labored, and the corner where Miss Fitch sat in dull primness at her endless task of transcribing lecture notes.

Van Manderpootz greeted me cordially enough, but with a curious assumption of melancholy in his manner. "Ah, Dixon," he began, "I am glad to see you. Since our last meeting, I have learned much of the stupidity of the world, and it appears to me now that you are actually one of the more intelligent contemporary minds."

This from van Manderpootz! "Why—thank you," I said.

"It is true. For some days I have sat at the window overlooking the street there, and have observed the viewpoints of the passersby. Would you believe"—his voice lowered—"would you believe that only seven and four-tenths percent are even aware of the existence of van Manderpootz? And doubtless many of the few that are, come from among the students in the neighborhood. I knew that the average level of intelligence was low, but it had not occurred to me that it was as low as that."

"After all," I said consolingly, "you must remember that the achievements of van Manderpootz are such as to attract the attention of the intelligent few rather than of the many."

"A very silly paradox!" he snapped. "On the basis of that theory, since the higher one goes in the scale of intelligence, the fewer individuals one finds, the greatest achievement of all is one that nobody has heard of. By that test you would be greater than van Manderpootz, an obvious reductio ad absurdum."

He glared his reproof that I should even have thought of the point, then something in the outer laboratory caught his ever-observant eye.

"Carter!" he roared. "Is that a synobasical interphasometer in the positronic flow? Fool! What sort of measurements do you expect to make when your measuring instrument itself is part of the experiment? Take it out and start over!"

He rushed away toward the unfortunate technician. I settled idly back in my chair and stared about the small laboratory, whose walls had seen so many marvels. The latest, the attitudinizor, lay carelessly on the table, dropped there by the professor after his analysis of the mass viewpoint of the pedestrians in the street below.

I picked up the device and fell to examining its construction. Of course this was utterly beyond me, for no ordinary engineer can hope to grasp the intricacies of a van Manderpootz concept. So, after a puzzled but admiring survey of its infinitely delicate wires and grids and lenses, I made the obvious move. I put it on.

My first thought was the street, but since the evening was well along, the walk below the window was deserted. Back in my chair again, I sat musing idly when a faint sound that was not the rumbling of the professor's voice attracted my attention. I identified it shortly as the buzzing of a heavy fly, butting its head stupidly against the pane of glass that separated the small laboratory from the large room beyond. I wondered casually what the viewpoint of a fly was like, and ended by flashing the light on the creature.

For some moments I saw nothing other than I had been seeing right along from my own personal point of view, because, as van Manderpootz explained later, the psychons from the miserable brain of a fly are too few to produce any but the vaguest of

impressions. But gradually I became aware of a picture, a queer and indescribable scene.

Flies are color-blind. That was my first impression, for the world was a dull panorama of greys and whites and blacks. Flies are extremely nearsighted; when I had finally identified the scene as the interior of the familiar room, I discovered that it seemed enormous to the insect, whose vision did not extend more than six feet, though it did take in almost a complete sphere, so that the creature could see practically in all directions at once. But perhaps the most astonishing thing, though I did not think of it until later, was that the compound eye of the insect, did not convey to it the impression of a vast number of separate pictures, such as the eye produces when a microphotograph is taken through it. The fly sees one picture just as we do; in the same way as our brain rights the upside-down image cast on our retina, the fly's brain reduces the compound image to one. And beyond these impressions were a wild hodgepodge of smell-sensations, and a strange desire to burst through the invisible glass barrier into the brighter light beyond. But I had no time to analyze these sensations, for suddenly there was a flash of something infinitely clearer than the dim cerebrations of a fly.

For half a minute or longer I was unable to guess what that momentary flash had been. I knew that I had seen something incredibly lovely, that I had tapped a viewpoint that looked upon something whose very presence caused ecstacy, but whose viewpoint it was, or what that flicker of beauty had been, were questions beyond my ability to answer.

I slipped off the attitudinizor and sat staring perplexedly at the buzzing fly on the pane of glass. Out in the other room van Manderpootz continued his harangue to the repentant Carter, and off in a corner invisible from my position I could bear the rustle of papers as Miss Fitch transcribed endless notes. I puzzled vainly

over the problem of what had happened, and then the solution dawned on me.

The fly must have buzzed between me and one of the occupants of the outer laboratory. I had been following its flight with the faintly visible beam of the attitudinizor's light, and that beam must have flickered momentarily on the head of one of the three beyond the glass. But which? Van Manderpootz himself? It must have been either the professor or Carter, since the secretary was quite beyond range of the light.

It seemed improbable that the cold and brilliant mind of van Manderpootz could be the agency of the sort of emotional ecstacy I had sensed. It must therefore, have been the head of the mild and inoffensive little Carter that the beam had tapped. With a feeling of curiosity I slipped the device back on my own head and sent the beam sweeping dimly into the larger room.

It did not at the time occur to me that such a procedure was quite as discreditable as eavesdropping, or even more dishonorable, if you come right down to it, because it meant the theft of far more personal information than one could ever convey by the spoken word. But all I considered at the moment was my own curiosity; I wanted to learn what sort of viewpoint could produce that strange, instantaneous flash of beauty. If the proceeding was unethical—well, Heaven knows I was punished for it.

So I turned the attitudinizor on Carter. At the moment, he was listening respectfully to van Manderpootz, and I sensed clearly his respect for the great man, a respect that had in it a distinct element of fear. I could bear Carter's impression of the booming voice of the professor, sounding somewhat like the modulated thunder of a god, which was not far from the little man's actual opinion of his master. I perceived Carter's opinion of himself, and his self-picture was an even more mouselike portrayal than my own impression of him.

When, for an instant, he glanced my way, I sensed his impression of me, and while I'm sure that Dixon Wells is not the imbecile he appears to van Manderpootz, I'm equally sure that he's not the debonair man of the world be seemed to Carter. All in all, Carter's point of view seemed that of a timid, inoffensive, retiring, servile little man, and I wondered all the more what could have caused that vanished flash of beauty in a mind like his.

There was no trace of it now. His attention was completely taken up by the voice of van Manderpootz, who had passed from a personal appraisal of Carter's stupidity to a general lecture on the fallacies of the unified field theory as presented by his rivals Corveille and Shrimski. Carter was listening with an almost worshipful regard, and I could feel his surges of indignation against the villains who dared to disagree with the authority of van Manderpootz.

I sat there intent on the strange double vision of the attitudinizor, which was in some respects like a Horsten psychomat—that is, one is able to see both through his own eyes and through the eyes of his subject. Thus I could see van Manderpootz and Carter quite clearly, but at the same time I could see or sense what Carter saw and sensed. Thus I perceived suddenly through my own eyes that the professor had ceased talking to Carter, and had turned at the approach of somebody as yet invisible to me, while at the same time, through Carter's eyes, I saw that vision of ecstacy which had flashed for a moment in his mind. I saw—description is utterly impossible, but I saw a woman who, except possibly for the woman of the idealizator screen, was the most beautiful creature I had ever seen.

I say description is impossible. That is the literal truth for her coloring, her expression, her figure, as seen through Carter's eyes, were completely unlike anything expressible by words, was fascinated, I could do nothing but watch, and I felt a wild surge of

jealousy as I caught the adoration in the attitude of the humble Carter. She was glorious, magnificent, indescribable. It was with an effort that I untangled myself from the web of fascination enough to catch Carter's thought of her name. "Lisa," he was thinking. "Lisa."

What she said to van Manderpootz was in tones too low for me to hear, and apparently too low for Carter's ears as well else I should have heard her words through the attitudinizor.

But both of us heard van Manderpootz's bellow in answer.

"I don't care bow the dictionary pronounces the word!" he roared. "The way van Manderpootz pronounces a word is right!"

The glorious Lisa turned silently and vanished. For a few moments I watched her through Carter's eyes, but as she neared the laboratory door, he turned his attention again to van Manderpootz, and she was lost to my view.

And as I saw the professor close his dissertation and approach me, I slipped the attitudinizor from my head and forced myself to a measure of calm.

"Who is she?" I demanded. "I've got to meet her!"

He looked blankly at me. "Who's who?"

"Lisa! Who's Lisa?"

There was not a flicker in the cool blue eyes of van Manderpootz. "I don't know any Lisa," he said indifferently.

"But you were just talking to her! Right out there!"

Van Manderpootz stared curiously at me; then little by little a shrewd suspicion seemed to dawn in his broad, intelligent features. "Hah!" he said. "Have you, by any chance, been using the attitudinizor?"

I nodded, chill apprehension gripping me.

"And is it also true that you chose to investigate the viewpoint of Carter out there?" At my nod, be stepped to the door that joined the two rooms, and closed it. When he faced me again, it was with features working into lines of amusement that suddenly found utterance in booming laughter. "Haw!" he roared. "Do you know who beautiful Lisa is? She's Fitch!"

"Fitch? You're mad! She's glorious, and Fitch is plain and scrawny and ugly. Do you think I'm a fool?"'

"You ask an embarrassing question," chuckled the professor. "Listen to me, Dixon. The woman you saw was my secretary, Miss Fitch seen through the eyes of Carter. Don't you understand? The idiot Carter's in love with her!"

I suppose I walked the upper levels half the night, oblivious alike of the narrow strip of stars that showed between the towering walls of twenty-first century New York, and the intermittent war of traffic from the freight levels. Certainly this was the worst predicament of all those into which the fiendish contraptions of the great van Manderpootz had thrust me.

In love with a point of view! In love with a woman who had no existence apart from the beglamoured eyes of Carter. It wasn't Lisa Fitch I loved; indeed, I rather hated her angular ugliness. What I had fallen in love with was the way she looked to Carter, for there is nothing in the world quite as beautiful as a lover's conception of his sweetheart.

This predicament was far worse than my former ones. When I had fallen in love with a girl already dead, I could console myself with the thought of what might have been. When I had fallen in love with my own ideal—well, at least she was mine, even if I couldn't have her. But to fall in love with another man's conception! The only way that conception could even continue to exist was for Carter to remain in love with Lisa Fitch, which rather effectually left me outside the picture altogether. She was absolutely unattainable to me, for Heaven knows I didn't want the real Lisa Fitch—"real" meaning, of course, the one who was real to me. I suppose in the end Carter's Lisa Fitch was as real as the skinny scarecrow my eyes saw.

She was unattainable—or was she? Suddenly an echo of a long-forgotten psychology course recurred to me. Attitudes are habits. Viewpoints are attitudes. Therefore viewpoints are habits. And habits can be learned!

There was the solution! All I had to do was to learn, or to acquire by practice, the viewpoint of Carter. What I had to do was literally to put myself in his place, to look at things in his way, to

see his viewpoint. For once I learned to do that, I could see in Lisa Fitch the very things he saw, and the vision would become reality to me as well as to him.

I planned carefully. I did not care to face the sarcasm of the great van Manderpootz; therefore I would work in secret. I would visit his laboratory at such times as he had classes or lectures, and I would use the attitudinizor to study the view point of Carter, and to, as it were, practice that viewpoint. Thus I would have the means at hand of testing my progress, for all I had to do was glance at Miss Fitch without the attitudinizor. As soon as I began to perceive in her what Carter saw, I would know that success was imminent.

Those next two weeks were a strange interval of time. I haunted the laboratory of van Manderpootz at odd hours, having learned from the University office what periods he devoted to his courses. When one day I found the attitudinizor missing, I prevailed on Carter to show me where it was kept, and he, influenced doubtless by my friendship for the man he practically worshipped, indicated the place without question. But later I suspect that he began to doubt his wisdom in this, for I know he thought it very strange for me to sit for long periods staring at him; I caught all sorts of puzzled questions in his mind, though as I have said, these were hard for me to decipher until I began to learn Carter's personal system of symbolism by which he thought. But at least one man was pleased—my father, who took my absences from the office and neglect of business as signs of good health and spirits, and congratulated me warmly on the improvement.

But the experiment was beginning to work, I found myself sympathizing with Carter's viewpoint, and little by little the mad world in which he lived was becoming as logical as my own. I learned to recognize colors through his eyes; I learned to understand form and shape; most fundamental of all, I learned his values, his attitudes, his tastes. And these last were a little

inconvenient at times, for on the several occasions when I supplemented my daily calls with visits to van Manderpootz in the evening, I found some difficulty in separating my own respectful regard for the great man from Carter's unreasoning worship, with the result that I was on the verge of blurting out the whole thing to him several times. And perhaps it was a guilty conscience, but I kept thinking that the shrewd blue eyes of the professor rested on me with a curiously suspicious expression all evening.

The thing was approaching its culmination. Now and then, when I looked at the angular ugliness of Miss Fitch, I began to catch glimpses of the same miraculous beauty that Carter found in her—glimpses only, but harbingers of success. Each day I arrived at the laboratory with increasing eagerness, for each day brought me nearer to the achievement I sought. That is, my eagerness increased until one day I arrived to find neither Carter nor Miss Fitch present, but van Manderpootz, who should have been delivering a lecture on indeterminism, very much in evidence.

"Uh—hello," I said weakly.

"Ump!" he responded, glaring at me. "So Carter was right, I see. Dixon, the abysmal stupidity of the human race continually astounds me with new evidence of its astronomical depths, but I believe this escapade of yours plumbs the uttermost regions of imbecility."

"M—my escapade?"

"Do you think you can escape the piercing eye of van Manderpootz? As soon as Carter told me you had been here in my

absence, my mind leaped nimbly to the truth. But Carter's information was not even necessary, for half an eye was enough to detect the change in your attitude on these last few evening visits. So you've been trying to adopt Carter's viewpoint, eh? No doubt with the idea of ultimately depriving him of the charming Miss Fitch!"

"W—why."

"Listen to me, Dixon. We will disregard the ethics of the thing and look at it from a purely rational viewpoint, if a rational viewpoint is possible to anybody but van Manderpootz. Don't you realize that in order to attain Carter's attitude toward Fitch, you would have to adopt his entire viewpoint? Not," he added tersely, "that I think his point of view is greatly inferior to yours, but I happen to prefer the viewpoint of a donkey to that of a mouse. Your particular brand of stupidity is more agreeable to me than Carter's timid, weak, and subservient nature, and some day you will thank me for this. Was his impression of Fitch worth the sacrifice of your own personality?"

"I—I don't know."

"Well, whether it was or not, van Manderpootz has decided the matter in the wisest way. For it's too late now, Dixon. I have given them both a month's leave and sent them away—on a honeymoon. They left this morning."