

An essay on criticism



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An Essay on Criticism Alexander Pope engraved his name in history by proving that the pen is mightier than the sword. Due to him being a Roman Catholic, he was unable to attend University, vote, or hold office. To add on to that, Pope was plagued with poor health from birth, suffering from tuberculosis of the bone. Pope wouldn't let these barricades stop him from becoming the writer he knew he could be and was encouraged by his father to be. At the age of 23, Pope wrote his first striking poetic piece, An Essay on Criticism.

Intrigued by his essay, I wondered if what he had to say might hold true today, and whether Pope's words could/should play a part in how we judge things today. Pope's An Essay on Man is divided up into three parts. Of those three parts, two are in our textbook. Of those two parts, one is dedicated to describing how critic's criticism can be unjustified and harmful to the creator. The second part describes the birth of poor Judgment, naming pride and, from what I can tell, ignorance as the culprit parents of a poor critic. In Pope's time, the most commonly judged works were iterate.

Poems, plays, novels, and other readable sources were the mainstream source of entertainment back then. Today, we have a different type of visual media; we watch as oppose to read. TV shows, movies, and Internet videos are our main source of visual entertainment in these times. Musicis also another large source of entertainment and probably an even bigger platform for Judgment and criticism if you consider all the different genres and people's large variety of taste in music. In Lines 17-18, Pope says, " Authors are partial to their wit, 'its true, /But are not critics to heir Judgment too? I took this to mean that while authors may not always be putting out gold or

writing the next groundbreaking piece, critics aren't always the ones to say what the next groundbreaking piece is, or whether it is even good or not. Critics can have biased opinions by human nature and will not like some things no matter how good they are in their own respects. In Lines 21-22 Pope says, " Nature affords at least a glimmering light," meaning the author has some internal sense of direction with what they're doing. " The lines, though but touched faintly, are drawn right. I felt eke this meant that through informal skill and some ignorance, the creator has still managed to put out something worthwhile. Even if it IS bad, it could show some serious signs of potential. To the creator, it may be the best work they've ever done, but if allowed to continue creating, they may look back and wonder what the Hell made them think that was okay to call finished. I can personally relate to this because I'm in a terrible little band and I can remember writing songs that we thought were amazing, awesome, and would rock socks right off the feet of my audiences, but years later, we don't even play those songs anymore.

They are completely scrapped. We never really had any bad criticism, but along the way, we criticized ourselves decided to change direction. I'm not sure if I find criticism to be relevant today. Even back in Pope's day, a bad critic usually just found themselves satirized in one of Pope's works. I think criticism is especially ineffective today because I think it used to be a tool people used to find what they should bother paying attention to, but now we have an almost unlimited source of entertainment outlets we can turn to that we're bound to find something we like.

I think today criticism either hurts someone's feelings or they'll just curse you out in their head. I think it is more harmful than effective. Shelley Viscous, a life skills specialist and mind coach, says, "Hindsight is a wonderful thing but it is that, information we realize after something has already happened. We can then use that information for next time but we cannot change or alter what has happened. So criticism just rubs salt into the wounds," (Viscous).

I think this is true because my band never had anyone tell us what we were making as good or bad, we simply evolved after we saw what we were doing wasn't enough to make people interested in us. And we're still evolving. Right now we're writing songs we think are amazing, DJF vi, and I'm sure we'll once again look back and be borderline ashamed of what we're writing. I think criticism, good or bad, can tend to negatively affect humans psychologically. I'd be willing to bet that if the rankings for the King of the Beasts were dependent on psychological strength and not our ability to create and dominate, Mankind would be near the bottom.

Humans are an atheistically weak race when it comes to psychological strength. You don't ever see any lions or tigers with social anxiety disorders or monkeys that are introverted or cry when they get called a loser. The dark realm humans throw themselves in when faced with criticism is called cognitive distortions. "These negative thinking styles are within psychology known as cognitive distortions. These inaccurate thoughts may seem rational and accurate but in reality they only serve to reinforce negative thinking or emotions, keeping us from feeling good about ourselves," (Isakson).

I'm not going to act like I'm better than anyone. I know it sounds like I kind of am, but in the article Isakson lists four of the most common distortions, and I am certainly guilty on one of them. Polarize thinking is where, " you live in a universe where everything is either black-or-white, with no colors or shades of gray. You either look at yourself or others as perfect or as failures," (Isakson). I very much do this with myself. I'm either in a state of bliss where I'm walking on sunshine, or I'm the scum of the Earth, I'm not worth the dead carcass you pass on the highway, and everyone rightly hates me.

It's idiotic and one day I hope to look back on myself and wonder why I ever thought like this. All in all, I think criticism should be kept inside of people's heads. Think what you want to think, but keep it to yourself. Who are you to throw your opinion into someone's vision? That mostly goes to people who aren't professional critics. I think professional critics should have to read and re-read Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* because I feel like it does have some good insight on how to be mindful of when you're doing wrong. It's sort of like *The Prince* for criticism. I feel like that book fits into most situations.

As for people trying to create something out of a vision or dream they have, I think criticism should either be ignored or lightly acknowledged. Success shouldn't be based on the opinions of the few, it should be measured by all the people that want something to do with whatever it is you're making. There's a quote I heard online once and I couldn't find where it was originally said so I won't be able to cite a source, but director Robert Rodriguez once said, " I think that everyone has at least a dozen or so bad movies in them; the sooner you get them out the better. " I relate this back to songs.

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I know I have a lot of bad songs in me, so I'm trying to get them out so I can get to the good stuff. The best part about that is the songs are good to me right now, they don't become bad until I write something new. I'll know I'm where I want to be when I look back at my old songs and still want to practice them alongside my new ones, not when a critic tells me,