

---

**T. S. Eliot's *The Function of Criticism* (1888-1965): A Study**

---

**Dr. P. Anandan**, Associate Professor of English, Department of Science  
& Humanities, Tagore Engineering College, Chennai-600 127.

---

Paper Received on 28-07-2024, Accepted on 26-08-2024  
Published on 28-08-24; DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2024.9.3.429

---

**Abstract**

Literature is an organic whole in relation to individual works of literature of their own significance. The artist owes allegiance to something outside of himself to earn the unique position. A common inheritance and common cause unite these true artists, mostly unconsciously. The end of criticism appears to be the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste: both appear clearly as cutout judgments on performance, what is useful and what is not. They expect cooperative labor from a critic whose endeavors are to discipline his personal prejudices and compare his differences with those of his fellow critics in the common pursuit of true judgment. As Eliot rightly says, comparison and analysis are the chief tools of a critic, and they must be handled with care. The research article attempts to study *T. S. Eliot's The Function of Criticism*, a seminal essay on literary criticism.

**Keywords:** Organic Whole, Works of Literature, The Literary Artist, Elucidation of Arts, Correction of Taste, The Function of Criticism, Comparison and Analysis, and Tools of Trust.

**Introduction:**

T.S. Eliot is a famous critic of English Literature. If there was no Eliot, nobody could fill the gap in literary criticism. I shall adhere to the view I formulated several years ago on the subject of the relation of the new to the old in art that the existing ideal order is modified by the introduction of the new work of art and that for order to persist thereafter, the whole existing order must be altered . . . this is conformity but the old and new. The past is altered by the present as much as the present is altered by the past.

I was then dealing with the artist and the sense of tradition he should have; generally, it was the problem of order; the function of criticism seems to be essentially a problem of order, too. I thought of literature then as an organic whole in relation to

---

which individual works of literature art have their significance. The artist owes allegiance to something outside of him to earn his unique position. A common inheritance and common cause unite (true) artists, mostly unconsciously; we conclude we can bring out this union conscious and of purpose. The second-rate artists, who chiefly assert all lifting differences that distinguish them, cannot afford to surrender themselves to any common action. Only he who has so much to give that he can forget himself in his work can do so.

The end of criticism roughly appears to be the elucidation of works of art, and the correction of taste-tosh appears clearly cutout judgment on performance, what is useful and what is not easy affection reveals criticism not so simple and orderly a field of beneficial activity as we thing from which importers can be reading ejected. We expect (presuppose) cooperative labor and the critic's endeavor to discipline his personal prejudices and compare his differences with his fellow in the common pursuit of true Judgement. But when we find that quite the contrary prevails, we are tempted to excel the lot.

After such eviction we must admit these remain curtain, books, essays, sentences, men who have been 'useful' to us. Next step is to classify these and to find out whether we establish any principles for deciding what kinds of book should be preserved and what aims and methods of criticism should be allowed.

A person holding such view about art must told similar views about criticism too—by criticism I mean the written words. No exponent of criticism has been assumed criticism to be an artistic activity. Art function best when it trains different to ends beyond itself.

One new aspect of the relationship between individual works of art literature and criticism of the whole seemed to me natural and self-evident. I am indebted to Mr. Middleton Murray for my perception that the problem is continuous and that there is a definite and final choice involved.

Mr. Murray is not one of those who pretend that the only difference between them and others is that they are nice men and the others of any doubtful repute. He is aware that there are definite positions to be taken. He does not hold that Romanticism and Classicism are one and the same thing; I cannot agree with Mr. Murray's formulation of Classicism and Romanticism; to the present scholar, the different seems the different between the complete and the stranger, the adult, and the unnatural, the orderly and the cloth. He shows there are at least two attitudes toward everything, and his attitude implies that the other has no standing in England.

Mr. Murray says that the principle of classicism in literature is the same as the Catholic principle of unquestioned supreme authority outside the individual, which is an unimpeachable definition. Those who support what Mr. Murray calls Classicism brim that men cannot set on without sinning allegiance to something outside themselves. Then, a man interested in politics must be powerless and have an

## Research Journal Of English (RJOE)

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal Impact Factor: 8.16(SJIF)Vol-9, Issue-3,2024  
Indexed in: International Citation Indexing (ICI), Cite factor, International Scientific Indexing (ISI),  
Directory of Research Journal Indexing (DRJI) Google Scholar, Cosmos and Internet Archives.

---

allegiance to principles, a form of government, or a monarch; in religion to church; in literature to the whole existing order of literature. However, Mr. Murray has expressed an alternative. The writer, divine, and statesman inherit no rules from their forbears, but only a sense that in the last resort, they must depend upon the miner's voice—indication to Mr. Eloyol George—But why in the last resort—To me, those who passed this miner voice seen ready enough to hearken to it and will hear no other. The miner voice in feet sounds like (the old principle of) doing what one likes. Ordinary football with Uri arts possess their miner voice (whose breath is often unwholesome)

Mr. Murray may call this a willful misrepresentation. He says that if they (that writer, divine, and statement) seek self-knowledge, will come upon a universal self within them. Catholic acolytes such self-knowledge, but does not identify man's self with God. Mr. Murray says that the man who truly interrogated himself will alternately hear the voice of God. In theory misleads to a form of Pantheism Classicism which is not European, first as Mr. Murray maintains Classicism is not English.

Mr. Murray seems to head a foot which holds that the representatives of the classical genius are not the sole expression of English character in England, which remains at the bottom obstinately humorous and nonconformist, which they attribute to the unreclaim Teutonic element in us Mr. Murray or the other voice is either too tolerant and the first question is not what comes natural or what comes easy to us, but what is right. Attitude is better than the other, or else it is indifferent, and such a voice cannot be indifferent.

Those who obey the miner's voice will not be interested in finding any common principle for the pursuit of criticism, and if there are enough of these, you should also be converted. They will not be concerned with literary perfection, for that search would be a sign of pettiness, and they will not be interested in fact and art. The principle of classical leadership is that obeisance is made to the office or to the tradition, not to the man, and they want men, not principles (Mr. et al., the law of art, is all case law). Such a voice I may be called wiggery.

To comment upon the use of the terms critical and creative by one who conforms to tradition and the accumulated wisdom of time.

The critics distinguish too bluntly and overlook the capital importance of criticism in the work of creation itself. The larger part of the labor of an author's campaign and his work is critical work, something combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, and testing; it is as critical as a creature. I even maintain that a writs criticism of his own work is the most vital and highest kind and that some creative writers are superior to others solely because their critical faculty is superior. There is a tender to decry this critical toil of the artist and to decline that the artist is an unconscious artist through his work. Those who are jammer Deaf Mutes are,

## Research Journal Of English (RJOE)

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal Impact Factor: 8.16(SJIF)Vol-9, Issue-3,2024  
Indexed in: International Citation Indexing (ICI), Cite factor, International Scientific Indexing (ISI),  
Directory of Research Journal Indexing (DRJI) Google Scholar, Cosmos and Internet Archives.

---

however, counseled by a humble conscience to make our work as free from defects as possible and make us waste a good deal of time. They are also aware that such critical discrimination has flushed in the very heart of creation to move men, and we do not assume that the apparent absence of critical labor is real; but. . . if so large a part of creation is really a criticism, is not a larger part of critical writing really creative? So, is there no creative criticism? The answer is there is no equation. A creation, a work of art, is autotelic criticism about something other than itself. Hence, you cannot fuse creation with criticism, but you can fuse criticism with creation. The critical timely finds its highest time fulfillment in a kind of union with creation in the labor of the artist.

But no writer is completely self-sufficient and many creative writers have a critical activity which is not all discharged into their work. There is some seen to be merely exercising for the real work and some need to enhance by commenting upon their completed work. There is no general useful to other writers and to those who were not writers.

Once, I took an extreme position that the only worthy critics were those who practiced the art they wrote well. But I had to stretch this frame to be more inclusive.

. .

A Critic has a very highly developed sense of fact, a trifling or frequent gift—a sense very slow to develop, and its complete drop means the very pinnacle of civilization. The practitioner has clarified and reduced to a state of fact all the feelings that the ordinary reader can only enjoy in the most nebulous form. The dry technique implies the thrill, too. Hence, the value of the practitioner's criticism. He is dealing with his facts and can help us to do the same.

A large part of critical writing consists of interpreting an author's work. Occasionally, a person may obtain a truly illuminating understanding of a creative author. It is difficult to confirm the interpretation by internal evidence. Instead of insight, you often get fiction. Your test is applied again and again to the original with your view of the original to guide you. But there is no one to guarantee your competence.

We must decide what is useful to us and what is not. It is likely we are not competent to decide. However, it is certain that interpretation is legitimate only when there is no interpretation at all, merely putting the reader in possession of facts that he should otherwise have missed.

Comparison and analysis are the chief tools of the critic—to be handled with care. Many contemporary writers have failed in using them. You must know what to compare and what to analyze—Prof. Kev successful.

Comparison and analysis need only the cadaver, but interpretation always surprises us by producing parts of the body and fixing them in place, and any piece that produces a fact clever of the lowest order about a work of art is worthy; we must

## Research Journal Of English (RJOE)

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal Impact Factor: 8.16(SJIF)Vol-9, Issue-3,2024  
Indexed in: International Citation Indexing (ICI), Cite factor, International Scientific Indexing (ISI),  
Directory of Research Journal Indexing (DRJI) Google Scholar, Cosmos and Internet Archives.

---

reserve final judgment futility of research that has discovered it, for some genius in future may find a use of it. Scholarship, even in its humblest form, has its rights, and in arrival, we know how to use it and how to neglect it. Of course, the multiplication of critical works may create a vicious taste for reading about creative works of art instead of reading real works. It may supply opinion instead of educating taste. But fact cannot taste—it may at the work and reality one taste under the illusion that it is assisting another. The real corrupters are those who supply opinion or fancy, and Goethe and Col are not sniffers.

### References:

- Eliot, T.S. *The Function of Criticism*. London: Fortnightly Review daily.1865. **Print.**  
----*Homage to John Dryden: Three Essays on Poetry of the Seventeenth Century*. London: L.And Virginia Woolf, 1927. **Print.**  
-----*Poetry and Poets*. London: Faber and Faber, 1957. **Print.**  
-----*The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*. London: Methuen, 1950. **Print.**  
-----*Selected Essays*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950. **Print.**  
-----*The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*. Ed. Ronald Schuchard. London: Faber and Faber, 1993. **Print.**  
Krieger, Murray. *The Theory of Criticism: A Tradition and Its System*. America: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019, **Print.**

#### How to cite this article?

**Dr. P. Anandan,**“ T. S. Eliot’s *The Function of Criticism* (1888-1965): A Study” Research Journal Of English (RJOE)9(3),PP:425-429,2024, DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2024.9.3.429