



The Rise Of Historical Criticism (Unabridged)

Oscar Wilde

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The Rise of Historical Criticism, published in complete form in 1908, is a mature essay by Oscar Wilde, evaluating the history and current state of criticism. The writer goes back in history and tries to remould the art of criticism with allusions to various critics, genres, and periods. Filled with wit and sublimity, the essay is a comprehensive piece of writing that enlightens the ordinary sense through innovative spirit.

Historical criticism nowhere occurs as an isolated fact in the civilisation or literature of any people. It is part of that complex working towards freedom which may be described as the revolt against authority. It is merely one facet of that speculative spirit of an innovation, which in the sphere of action produces democracy and revolution, and in that of thought is the parent of philosophy and physical science; and its importance as a factor of progress is based not so much on the results it attains, as on the tone of thought which it represents, and the method by which it works.

A gifted poet, playwright and wit, Oscar Wilde (1854 – 1900) was a phenomenon in 19th-century England. He was illustrious for preaching the importance of style in life and art, and of attacking Victorian narrow-mindedness. Wilde is immortalized through his works, and the stories he wrote for children, such as "The Happy Prince" and "The Selfish Giant", are still vibrant in the imagination of the public, especially "The Picture of Dorian Gray", the story of a young handsome man who sells his soul to a picture to have eternal youth and beauty, only to face the hideousness of his own portrait as it ages, which entails his evil nature and degradation.

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