

# Why Do Some People Lose Their S\*\*T Over Bad 'Star Wars' Reviews?

93% of reviewers on *Rotten Tomatoes* have given the new *Star Wars* movie a positive review.

Those few reviewers out there who gave a negative review? Holy Crap... They experienced impassioned wrath from commenters of all different backgrounds. Andrew O'Hehir received ["a barrage of hatemail"](#) over his negative review. Some critics were even told to die.

Over the years, I've noticed similar vitriol accompany negative feedback to other cultural phenomena. A lot of people take it very personally when you criticize activities they engage in "for fun," whether it be reading the *Harry Potter* books, watching football, building with Legos, or shooting guns.

If the above phenomena fall into the category of leisure, the message seems to be: Don't mess with people's leisure.

Why is this? Well, if philosopher Josef Pieper is right, the fact that people take criticism of these things so personally might have something to do with the fact that leisure is tied to the intensely personal activity of worship.

In his wonderful book *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* he writes:

*"It could be said that the heart of leisure consists in 'festival'... But if celebration and festival is the heart of leisure, then leisure would derive its innermost possibility and justification from the very source whence festival and celebration derive theirs. And this is worship... A festival that does not get its life from worship, even though the*

*connection in human consciousness be ever so small, is not to be found."*

He goes on:

*"What does 'rest from work' signify for the Bible or for ancient Greece and Rome? The meaning of a rest from labor is cultic: definite days and times were designated to the exclusive possession of the gods."*

It may be difficult for some to buy that leisure is intimately connected with worship, and I wouldn't go so far as to say that *most* people are "worshipping" the things named above. But in a way, we perhaps already affirm their connection with worship in our vocabulary: we refer to *Star Wars* as having a "cult following," people as being members of the "gun culture", and many football fans as "fanatics."

Also, similar to the communal function religious worship aims at, these activities are some of the great uniters in our society, where people of different racial backgrounds, economic levels, and political affiliations can come together, attempt to take a break from the workaday week, and share ecstatic moments of enjoyment.

Again, Pieper's thinking on this may be tough for many of you to buy, and I'm probably going to be accused of "overthinking" the issue. After all, our popular expression for leisurely activities, that they're "just for fun," is intended to imply that they occupy some sort of neutral space. But maybe, just maybe, what we do for fun isn't as neutral as we assume.