

13th January 2021

Approval

“Fools admire, but [people] of sense approve.”

Alexander Pope, Essay on Criticism

Now that three Coronavirus vaccines have been approved for use in the UK, the word “approval” is commonplace. There’s a system for the approval for all medicines, through which regulators rigorously examine the research data from clinical trials so that vaccines, and the like, are safe for us to use. It’s important to know that approval is properly granted.

We look for approval in other ways too. *TripAdvisor*, for example, encourages us to offer approval, for a café or entertainment venue, a visitor attraction or historic monument, even a view or natural feature. It’s a matter of opinion, of course, but we can rate things from one star to five and give a negative or positive review, so that others’ decisions can be based on a cumulative approval rating. It’s the same with *Amazon* purchases. No sooner have we bought something than we’re invited to review it, to give it our approval – or not, as the case may be. Buying and selling on *eBay* is the same. We look for “sellers” with high approval figures, or we’ll steer clear. And which of us hasn’t looked at “customer reviews” before booking a holiday or investing in a major purchase?

But how do we measure our approval of each other? And why should anyway have to wait, or ask, for *our* approval of this or that? There are societal “norms”, of course, to indicate which behaviour is acceptable and which isn’t. And there are laws when we step out of line. But shouldn’t we think about offering approval which *doesn’t* have a score, a rating, a star-system, a percentage, reviews, or a regulator? We know what it feels like when someone says “thank you” or “well done” to us without condition. So why not give people the approval they deserve for something you like about them today. I’m *certain* they would approve of that.

A prayer for today

May God give us ...

*For every storm a rainbow, for every tear a smile,
for every care a promise and a blessing in each trial;
for every problem life sends, a faithful friend to share;
for every sigh a sweet song and answer for each prayer.*

An old Irish prayer

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