

Fernando Pessoa

Except when it is the product of chance,

Except when it is the product of chance, or of such purety external circumstances as may be put under the name of chance, celebrity is the result of the application of some sort of special skill, or of intelligence, and of the recognition by others of the special skill or the intelligence which is applied. By special skill anything is here meant which distinguishes the individual from his natural peers: great daring, great violence, great subtlety are special skills in this particular sense, and there is no more essential honour in being a hero than in being a genius, the act or acts which prove the hero or the genius being equally a product of temperament, which is inborn, of education and environment, which no man gives himself, of opportunity and occasion, which very few men can choose or create, if indeed any man does choose or create as an efficient cause.

Men may be divided into three portions or lots; and the division may fitly follow the traditional division of the mind — intellect, emotion or feeling, and will. There are men of pure intellect, and these are philosophers and scientists; there are men of pure feeling, and these are mystics and prophets, the passive founders of religions or the mediums of received religious systems; there are men of pure will, and these are statesmen and warriors, leaders of industry as such or of commerce as nothing but commerce. There are three mixed types: men of intellect and feeling, and these are the artists of all kinds; men of intellect and will, and these are the higher statesmen and empire and nation builders; men of feeling and will, and these are the active founders and disseminators of religions (spiritual or material), the believers in the Woman Clothed with the Sun and the believers in democracy.

Intelligence presents three high forms, which we can conveniently call genius, talent and wit, taking the last word in the broader sense of bright and active intelligence, of the kind though not of the degree of common intelligence, and not in the particular sense of the capacity for making jokes.

These three types of intelligence are not continuous with one another; they are not grades or degrees of one single faculty or function. Genius is abstract intelligence individualised — the concrete embodiment, temperamental and

(..), of an abstract faculty. Talent is concrete intelligence made abstract; it is not bound, like genius, to the individual, except in so far as everything that happens in the individual is bound to him because his. Wit is concrete intelligence individualised, has the show and the gestures of genius. That is why it is so easy to mistake great wit for positive genius. Talent, on the other hand, is between both and opposed by nature to both.

s. d.

“Erostratus”. in Páginas de Estética e de Teoria Literárias. Fernando Pessoa. (Textos estabelecidos e prefaciados por Georg Rudolf Lind e Jacinto do Prado Coelho.) Lisboa: Ática, 1966: 182.