

Fernando Pessoa

PREFACE

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Neither is it absurd that the god of war should be taken for the god of impartiality. Impartiality is more positively a state of warfare (an attitude of warfare) than any sectarian position is. To be impartial is to have at least two enemies, to have as many enemies as there are sectarian opinions. It is beside the point, at present, that impartiality is not possible. The intention is possible, and it is the intention that constitutes the attitude.

The popular idea of war is vitiated radically by the abrupt vision of war as something opposed to peace. Really, there is never any peace: *polemos mater pantôn*. The thing called war is only a form of war — the more primitive form. Antagonism grows stronger and stronger till it reaches that depth where it must be physical, like the enmity of two men which passes from antipathy to discussion and from discussion subsides into blows.

This may seem trite; but it is trite things that are ever overlooked, in the real sense that people look over them at something else that does not matter.

This concept once really present in our minds, it will be clear that the terms in which any war is to be conceived, that, above all, the notion of its causes and of its consequences, is to be a far different thing from the sterile discussion of diplomatic documents and imperialistic ambitions which has hitherto been the chief basis of misunderstanding the War now current.

It is as a nation representative of the modern tendency to anti-individualism that Germany is essentially the Enemy. It is as a representative of a force which is as really within England as within Germany itself that Germany is dangerous. Germany is warring on the European world long since, and even now, from within nations outside Germany, from, above all, the very nations now most interestedly involved in war with the Empire of the Hohenzollerns.

The invasion of France by Germany began long before 1914, that of England, not realised save by a few airships, began long ago. Not, perhaps, since the

philosophers and the romanticists, who cannot be said to have done harm to other nations — because Germany was then another —, but really since them, because they did indubitably prepare the ground for the reception of Germany ideas, they did indubitably give European weight to German influences. But from the time that German state-methods and the German philosophy based on such methods, invaded the sphere of theorists (political theorists) and political triflers with society did Germany begin its great attack on civilization. That such an attack on civilization should culminate in an armed attack is in the logic and expectedness of things.

The vast spread of theories proclaiming as necessary or as beneficent, or as in any way a thing to be desired, the intervention of the state or of any form of the community or collectivity in the life of the individual, is the first invasion of Germany into the territories of the older-cultured European nations. The enactment of laws gradually more and more mothering the individual, more and more regulating his actions is another act of submission to that influence, to that current, which has culminated in the invasion of Belgium, in submarine warfare and in the deportations from invaded territories.

Wherever the liberty of the individual is interfered with, Germany has an outpost.

This does not mean that all those theories are German which produce the statesmen who produce them. (...) But this does mean that the modern current which tends to suppress the individual from independent value has its chief representative in Germany, its most frank expression in German methods of organisation, in peace or war, its most radical hold on the mind of the peoples forming the German Empire. Of this there can be no doubt, nor any objection possible to it.

No victory shall have been won if the victory is not over the German spirit. How can any nation hope to defeat Germany if it accepts that spirit of action and policy which Germany essentially represents? How can any nation hope to defeat Germany if it does all it can to maintain Germany as what it is to-day and whence it draws its force — the country most representative of the tendencies of present-day civilization? How can a nation be defeated if it is placed on a throne? if it is made representative above all other nations?

The moral victory of Germany is already complete. The fact that France has been knocked into a revival of conservative and reactionary influences owing to the war, the fact that England has been forced to establish military Conscription, the numerous and diverse interferences with the individual, in all ways and

matters, which the war has absolutely necessitated, are tributes to the triumph of the Kaiser's people.

It is easy to object that these are necessities of the moment, which, the war once past, will pass also. Like all easy objections it is false through and through. To believe that these measures are mere passing acts we have to ignore the fact that they are in accordance with all the spirit of law-making which preceded the war, and are therefore in agreement with the spirit and direction of the times; the fact that this war will leave war behind, in one way or another, and that these war measures will still be war-measures in the twilight peace to succeed this physical struggle; that the example of organisation, of strength, given by the German Empire will inevitably stamp itself, as it is already doing, upon the intentions of statesmen and upon the theories of the leaders of what low people call opinion.

These measures are absolutely necessitated by conditions of modern life and social organisation? This may be admitted. But that does not make them salutary or just. Making a virtue of necessity never meant that necessity was a virtue, before it was made one. If these measures are absolutely necessary, and if they are, at the same time, bad, the conclusion is a simple one — our civilization is in decay. The man who can live only by virtue of drugs, or walk only by artifices is evidently senile or decrepit. There is no other conclusion.

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«O Templo de Jano».