

Fernando Pessoa

## **It is a common occurrence in the life of religions...**

It is a common occurrence in the life of religions that gods are often born out of an interpretation of the figured presences of other gods. Thus a god presented with arrows, being no more than Apolle, whose shafts of life pursue the rolling earth, may by a far tribe, to whose eyes a statue might come, be taken for a god of the chase, or a god of war, the symbolic arrows becoming actual in the new interpretation of them.

It is my spontaneous intention to use this attitude of primitive ingenuousness with a purely literary art, and to make the god Janus bear, for my personal purpose, a meaning to be drawn, no ways out of his divineness but rather out of the effigies thereof.

The god Janus faces two ways and this, which the ancients no doubt meant should be the image and presentation of the severing and scission that war is, I shall recompose to a meaning personal to my purpose. I shall use that fanciful meaning in this work and take the two faces of the god to be a symbol of that impartiality with which I hope, before the Gods, to approach the subject of these essays.

It will be claimed that no two things so much differ as the divine meaning of the God and the literary intention I read in his figuring; but that is no matter, for if that thing I claim to have, and in the name of which I image the god thus, is a reality in these pages, justification shall be ample to all of the slight damage done to the antique purity of the fable, and to the human logic of the divine nature.

I intend to examine the present war with entirely neutral eyes, looking on the events and the workings that are showed on this visible plane with a heart foregiven to no side, a mind sold to no compassion nor to no admiration, single and simple in that pursuit of truth in which alone, in these evil Christian and humanitarian ages, there can be salvation for that inner discipline which was the pride of the classics and the heritage of the ancient world.

In throwing open, therefore, the doors of my Temple of Janus, I do but declare war upon prejudice and passion, setting upon the two horizons of the hour to the double vision of the impartial god.

s. d.

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«O Templo de Jano».