

Fernando Pessoa

## **It is necessary now that I should tell what manner of man I am.**

It is necessary now that I should tell what manner of man I am. My name, it matters not, nor any other outward detail particular to me. Of my character aught must be said.

The whole constitution of my spirit is one of hesitancy and of doubt. Nothing is or can be positive to me; all things oscillate round me, and I with them, an uncertainty unto myself. All for me is incoherence and change. All is mystery and all is meaning. All things are «unknown» symbolic of the Unknown. Consequently horror, mystery, over-intelligent fear.

By my own natural tendencies, by the surroundings of my earliest life, by the influence of studies undertaken under the impulse of them (these very tendencies), by all this I am of the internal species of character, self-centred, mute, not self-sufficing but self-lost. All my life has been one of passiveness and of dream. All my character consists in the hatred, in the horror of, in the incapacity pervading all that is me, physically and mentally, for decisive acts, for definite thoughts. I had never a resolution born of a self-command, never an external betraying of a conscious will. My writings were none of them finished; new thoughts intruded ever, extraordinary, ineluctable associations of ideas bearing infinity for term. I cannot prevent my thought's hatred of finish; about a single thing ten thousand thoughts, and tenthousand inter-associations of these ten thousand thoughts arise, and I have no will to eliminate or to arrest these, nor to gather them into one central thought, where their unimportant but associated details may be lost. They pass in me;

they are not my thoughts, but thoughts that pass through me. I do not ponder, I dream; I am not inspired, I rave. I can paint, but I have never painted; I can compose music, but I have never composed. Strange conceptions in three arts, lovely strokes of imagining caress my brain; but I let them slumber there till they die, for I have not power to give them their body, to make them things of the world outside.

My character of mind is such that I hate the beginnings and the ends of things, for they are definite points. The idea of a solution being found for problems the highest, the noblest, of science, of philosophy, afflicts me; that

ought might be determined of God or of the world horrorizes me. That things of most moment should be accomplished, that men should one day all be happy, that a solution might be found to the ills of society, even in its conception maddens me. Yet I am not evil nor cruel; I am mad and that as it is difficult to conceive.

Though I have been a reader voracious and ardent, yet I remember no book that I have read, so far were my reading states of my own mind, dreams of my own, nay, provocations of dreams. My very memory of events, of external things is vague, more than incoherent. I shudder to think how little I have in mind of what my past life has been. I, the man who holds that today is a dream, am less than a thing of today.

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