

I. I. Crosse

CAEIRO AND THE PAGAN REACTION

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The first qualification for a critic of science or of art, that is to say, of an intellectual production which strives for an absolute value (truth or beauty) is that he should be able to distinguish between relative and absolute values. When a work of art pleases him, when he feels it is beautiful, his first intellectual movement, after that movement of sensibility, should be to ask himself: Do I find this beautiful as a man, or as a man of my time, or as a man of my country? Does this appeal, really, to the man in me, or to the modern man in me, or the English, or French or Italian that I am?

Very few are able to undertake such self-analysis, but we are optimistic enough about mankind to believe that the greater number of clever men, are not able to undertake it because they have never been taught that they ought to undertake it.

If this principle of self-criticism before criticism of others, of analysis of impressions before analysis of the results of impressions, were more commonly put into practice, we would have been spared many follies. [. . .]

I have ever held it necessary to take this mental attitude. So when I first read Alberto Caieiro, I felt the enthusiasm of (. . .)

Here at last — said I to myself — is a work that appeals to me not as a man of today (no work could be further removed from every known current of contemporary art), not as an Englishman (no work could be less English), but indeed as a man of mankind.

The more I analysed my feelings, the more I came to accept this conclusion of mine as true.

I am not so bold of my real opinion of Caieiro's works, as to tell the reader frankly how much I think of him.

The great discovery of Caieiro — the mysticism of objectivity. As mystics see meaning in all things, Caieiro sees lack of meaning in all things, in his own words.

See it and I love myself because to be a thing is to mean nothing.

s. d.

Pessoa por Conhecer — Textos para um Novo Mapa . Teresa Rita Lopes. Lisboa: Estampa, 1990: 192.