

Fernando Pessoa

Professional improbity and inefficiency are perhaps the distinctive. . .

Professional improbity and inefficiency are perhaps the distinctive characteristics of our age. The old artificer had to do work; the present workman has to make a machine work. He is a mere slave-driver of metals; he becomes as coarse-grained as a driver of slaves, but less interesting, because he cannot even be called a tyrant.

As the slave-driver becomes a slave to slave-driving and so gets the mind of a slave, though of a luckier slave, so the machine-driver becomes a mere biotic lever, a sort of starting arrangement tagged on to an engine. Taking part in mass production may leave a man a decent human being; it really is so low a thing that he need not be affected by it. But taking part in mass production does not leave a man a decent human workman.

Efficiency is less complex to-day. Inefficiency can therefore easily pass as efficiency, and be, indeed, efficient.

The only arts and crafts in which we see some striving after perfection or achievement are the absence of arts and crafts — that is to say, those activities which are called sports and games and used to be considered, not as things in which to strive for something, but things in which to rest from striving. It is futile to cite the Greeks. The Greeks strove to be perfect in everything they did — in sports and games because also in poetry and reasoning. Our poets write poetry anyhow; our reasoners think anyhow. Only our runners really run, because they are running nowhere. The Greeks lusted for fame in sports because they lusted for fame in everything; we lust for fame in sports and hobbies because we can lust for fame in nothing else. The exuberant activity of a child has no resemblance to the exuberant activity of acute mania.

Speed dopers, film cardboarders. . .

We do not even admire beauty: we admire but the translation of it. Every street has several girls not less beautiful than the film face-girls. Any office throws out at lunch time young men as good-looking as the film hollow men.

Stupid as a Mary Pickford or a Rudolph Valentino.

No joke ever came out of Hollywood.

That poor fool Segrave. . .

They do not fall in some silly corner of duty, but in the sillier open spaces of vanity. They have no status above the dandy and the swaggerer except the bad taste of the daring and the height of the swagger (vanity, impudence). They lose their lives not like heroes but like animals; as these blunder into danger, those blunder into chance. Cowardice only seems a virtue when courage is hidden under these. (thus defiled)

Except the Germans and the Russians, no one has as yet been able to put anything like art into the cinema. The circle cannot be squared there.

s. d.

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