

Fernando Pessoa

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The celebrity of nations is, in a certain sense, similar to the celebrity of men. There are nations which are geniuses; there are nations which are talents, and there are nations which are wits.

In that civilisation to which we belong, there are three nations which are geniuses — the three nations which have built up the modern world. Their direct greatness has differed, but their recognition by the world has been almost equal in not having been immediate.

Modern civilisation is based, back of itself, on three principles — Greek Culture, Roman Order and Christian Morals. Greek Culture means individualistic rationalism, and every time that a European nation has departed from this fundamental element, it has fallen or lost. Roman Order means the concept of the State as Empire, and every time a European nation has lost its sense of this, it has fallen or taken meanness. (...).

After this, modern civilisation is based on three elements: nationality, which was created by Italy; universality, which was created by Portugal; and liberty, which was created by England.

These elements, which the genius of three nations created, were spread by the talent of three other nations. Germany, by converting the renaissance into the reformation; Spain, by (...), and France, by universalising the English Revolution.

s. d.

“Erostratus”. in Páginas de Estética e de Teoria Literárias. Fernando Pessoa. (Textos estabelecidos e prefaciados por Georg Rudolf Lind e Jacinto do Prado Coelho.) Lisboa: Ática, 1966: 190.