

Fernando Pessoa

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Thus any mysterious thing, while it fed in me the passion for analysis and for mystery, shook and thrilled me with fear.

A word written on the wall of my room which perchance I had not perceived before, made me rush out of the room.

For moral philosophy, for all philosophy besides metaphysics, philosophia prima, I cared nothing except in so far, and that was little, as it gave room for the subtleties I adored.

Thus I wrote down aimlessly and carelessly anything. Immediately after I wrote I trembled with fear and wondering what might be the hidden meaning of the very words I had written.

Otherwise, I believe I was normal. I was not less courageous, I believe than any normal boy. I was not given to timidity in society. My one horror was the unknown; my one fear was that which is without name.

Yet though I had in my character a love of mystery and of mystification, a love of obscurity and of (...) Yet nevertheless let it not be believed that I was a lover of falsehood. No, all these being as they were, I was yet a sincere lover of truth, a sincere (...)

Yet was my ardent philosophic desire that truth should ever be striven for and should never be found. I was a sceptic. Never a materialist for materialism lives not with doubt.

My ardent love of mystery, of unreality, of dream united with my love of truth to make me [?] conceive a truth and by essence a thing beyond this world entirely, something all essence in which essence and attribute (...) Yet as soon as I conceived it [...] But I believed this world to be a revelation, a manifestation, and truth to be that passage of Dionysius of God: that all thing rev[eled] him to us (...) And I pondered also on those words of Boaventura.

A hasty spirit and one fond of superficial paradoxes (which are traits of a similar spirit), might think a right assertion that the fear I drew from the perusal

of those extraordinary words [?] was a pleasant fear. But this I, a more severe analyst, never shall assert. No fear at all is pleasant; there is no trick of mind that can make a similitude of contraries out of such things as a pleasure and a fear.

It may be said that there is no need to say this, since it seems that no man is prone to confound a pleasure and a pain. Yet my reason for saying this is that my own first impulse was to write that I felt a pleasant fear upon doing this. Yet the error is in confounding and in making one two different coexistent things such as a fear and a pleasure. These coexist, yet they are not the same. But there was in me an impulse to say I felt a pleasant fear, because there was in me, at the same time, a fear and a pleasure. Nay more, these — fear and pleasure — were the effects of one cause upon 2 parts, two faculties in my character. The union and coexistence of these in *one* subject i.e. in myself, gave rise to the peculiar delusion of a pleasant pain. It is in the same way [thus] that the schoolboy escaped from bounds feels, as Gray described, a «fearful joy». Yet what he feels is joy at being free, fear at the possibility of being caught. Both his fear and his pleasure are by his freedom of the will, yet one is the affection of his sentiment of fear and another the stirring of his sensation of liberty.

I found soon that my constitution was thus: that I was afraid that any truth might be found — any metaphysical truth. Why this fear; I was astounded there at the philosophies of the scholastics I loved.

For instance in the philosophy of the schools this question is somewhere propounded: «if a prostitute can regain her virginity by the power of the grace of God?» This question which is extraordinary, it is opined, and absurd, when it is caused.

I could never make to myself sufficiently ridiculous or sufficiently mad. I was ever unable to regard it absolutely, before general truth. I always looked upon it relatively, in regard to the time (though I had nothing in me of a historian). It always appeared to me in this way conditioned. Given as true the Grace of God, the power of it upon earth, all the themes of the Church, in fine, then the question has relation to this.

And I, who believed neither in God nor in his grace, pondered deeply over this question.

For what reason then was it? I did not live in the time of the later sophists and I had not the *spirit* of Protagoras.

What was the world to me?

Nothing, a zero; yet a zero full of mystery. A nothingness, yet a nothingness without a name. The world appearing to me thus, I was all desire to make it appear uncertain, to make human science appear impossible. Did I not love dearly Heraclitus, was I not thrilled by a great joy when first I read that things were not, but eternally *became*? I did. Yet I relished as deeply and as truly the refutation of this in the Thaeætetus of Plato.

I loved, I delighted in proofs or arguments that were against human reason, which showed its weakness and its impotence before truth. Why did I wish this? was it to exalt a God? was it to make man feel unworthy? was it to make him desirous of another and of a better life? No it was cut from this?

s. d.

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