

Fernando Pessoa

Sensationism [a]

I

There is nothing, no reality, but sensation. Ideas are sensations, but of things not placed in space and sometimes not even in time.

Logic, the place of ideas, is another kind of space.

Dreams are sensations with only two dimensions. Ideas are sensations with only one dimension. A line is an idea.

Every sensation (of a solid thing) is a solid body bounded by planes, which are *inner images* (of the nature of dreams — two-dimensioned), bounded themselves by lines (which are ideas, of one dimension only). *Sensationism pretends, taking stock of this real reality, to realise in art a decomposition of reality into its psychic geometrical elements.*

The end of art is simply to increase human self-consciousness. Its criterion is general (or semi-general) acceptance, sooner or later, for that is the proof that it does tend to increase self-consciousness in men.

The more we decompose and analyse into their psychic elements our sensations, the more we increase our self-consciousness. Art has, then, the duty of becoming increasingly conscious. In the classic age, art developed consciousness on the level of the three-dimension sensation — that is, art applied itself to a perfect and clear visioning of reality considered as solid. Hence the Greek mental attitude, which seems so strange to us, of introducing concepts such as that of the sphere into the most abstract abstractions, as in the case of Parmenides, whose idealistic conception of a highly-abstract universe yet admits of a description of it as spherical.

Post-christian art has worked constantly towards the creating of a two-dimension art.

We must create a one-dimension art.

This seems a narrowing of art, and to a certain extent it is.

Cubism, futurism, and kindred schools, are wrong applications of intuitions which are fundamentally right. The wrong lies in the fact that they attempt to solve the problem they suspect on the lines of three-dimension art; their

fundamental error lies in that they attribute to sensations an exterior reality, which indeed they have, but not in the sense the futurists and others believe. The futurists are something absurd, like Greeks trying to be modern and analytic.

II

What is the process to be adopted to realise sensationism?

There are several processes — at least three clearly defined ones:

1) intersectionism: the sensationism that takes stock of the fact that every sensation is really several sensations mixed together.

2) (...)

3) (...)

How do these three processes realise sensationism? Intersectionism realised it by attempting to realise the deformation which every cubic sensation suffers by the deformation of its planes. Now every cube has six sides: these sides, looked at from the sensationist standpoint, are: the sensation of the exterior object as object, quâ object; the sensation of the exterior object quâ sensation; the objective ideas associated to this sensation of an object; the subjective ideas associated to this sensation — i.e., the «state of mind» through which the object is seen at the time; the temperament and fundamentally individual mental attitude of the observer; the abstract consciousness behind that individual temperament.

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