

# Fernando Pessoa As Philosophers

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*Each of the more enduring personalities, lived by the author within himself, was given an expressive nature and made the author of one or more books whose ideas, emotions, and literary art have no relationship to the real author... Neither this work nor those to follow have anything to do with the man who writes them. He doesn't agree or disagree with what's in them. He writes as if he were being dictated to. And as if the person dictating were a friend (and for that reason could freely ask him to write down what he dictates), the writer finds the dictation interesting, perhaps just out of friendship.*

*The human author of these books has no personality of his own. Whenever he feels a personality well up inside, he quickly realizes that this new being, though similar, is distinct from him—an intellectual son, perhaps, with inherited characteristics, but also with differences that make him someone else.*

Fernando Pessoa,  
in a preface drafted for a never-published collection  
(*Selected Prose*, p. 2)

EMINENT in his contributions to Portuguese literature, Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935) also took no small interest in philosophy. True, his comments on the subject have been posthumously dubbed 'of little intrinsic (philosophical) interest' (Kotowicz, *Voices*, p. 86), and Pessoa himself 'no philosopher by any stretch of the term' (Zenith, *Drama and Dream*, p. 11); true, in an early fragment he styled himself 'a poet animated by philosophy, not a philosopher with poetic faculties' (*Pessoa & Co.*, p. 9). But then again, Alain Badiou suggested that philosophy had yet to become worthy of Pessoa (*Inaesthetics*, p. 36); and in any case this will not exactly be a discussion of Fernando Pessoa as philosopher. Other commentators, equipped to appraise Portuguese literature in the original, have made explorations of his writings as a source of philosophical ideas (e.g. Krabbenhoft, *Pessoa's Metaphysics*); and while I shall be pointing out some of the philosophical features of his oeuvre, I intend to emphasise method over ideas and to ask where Pessoa fits, and indeed whether he neatly fits at all, into our understanding of the ways in which philosophy is conducted. What I propose to explore are the implications for philosophical practice of a certain striking feature of Fernando Pessoa's life and art: for he wrote not only under many names, but under many styles and perspectives and pseudobiographies. Whereas Kierkegaard's pseudonyms existed strictly for the sake of their impact on the reader, as instruments in his project of 'indirect communication', Pessoa was stylistically and psychologically multiple: it was not so much that his 'heteronyms' were born for the sake of his writing as that writing was the medium in which they had their being.

2 Fair enough: but what we have are the writings, and Kierkegaard too was a multiple author; so for that matter was Plato, in a different fashion; so why should philosophers concern themselves with Pessoa's psychobiography? The reason is bound up with one of philosophy's longstanding uncertainties, that of what relation we should expect between a body of philosophical thought and the life and character of the philosopher behind it. Pessoa's heteronyms arouse metaphilosophical interest because of the doubt they cast both on any bracketing of the examined life as irrelevant to the validity and interest of the intellectual product, *and* on any vision of 'doing philosophy' as a life's vocation. In doing so they offer to illuminate the very question of what it means to be a philosopher.

### *Be what I think? But I think of so many things!*

Let's leave Pessoa in the wings for a moment longer, and sketch out the philosophical tendencies for which he is about to cause trouble. Cheerfully oversimplifying centuries of intellectual nuance, we might broadly identify two poles of thought.

The first demarcates the territory of philosophy by concerning itself sheerly with the formal properties of arguments (and perhaps with some ancillary concerns, such as their practical applicability); on such a view the personal qualities of the person advancing a philosophical viewpoint are at best of merely biographical diversion, and at worst are invitations to *ad hominem* fallacy. An outlook of this sort permits philosophers to quarrel with themselves, to be sure: doubt is allowable; changing one's mind is allowable. It merely denies that there is any philosophically interesting interflow between the import and value of what we say or write and how we actually live. As a thesis about philosophical texts, this is the view that biographical information is of purely exegetical use, and offers no critical illumination of a text that might help us evaluate its claims; such a view may well extend further, and prescribe that philosophers should 'try to make their writings as scientific-

looking as possible, in the hope of arriving at generally accepted propositions' (Passmore, *The End*, p. 7). As a thesis about philosophical practice, it divorces the product of philosophical reflection from its author: philosophy is an academic discipline, applying certain specific techniques to build up certain specific domains of knowledge, and when it is successful the arguments speak for themselves.

It is hard to bring to mind obvious cheerleaders for this general sort of view—though specific manifestations of the type are easier to name: Logical Positivism is the clearest example, perhaps because an extreme one. (The difficulty may arise partly from awkward controversies over whether philosophy has been productive of a body of knowledge at all; doubt concerning this point has been a sufficient source of embarrassment to see Gary Gutting's recent book *What Philosophers Know* published in the discipline's defence.) We can, however, broadly associate its characteristic impersonality with the subject of John Cottingham's recent warnings about an unhealthy dominance of the 'scientifically inspired model of philosophy' (*Humane Philosophy*, p. 237). Something as benign at first glance as the popularity of the author-date system of referencing may reflect 'a strong subconscious attraction for many people [in] that it makes a philosophy article look very like a piece of scientific research' (*ibid*, p. 233). 'Because of the way funding mechanisms are organized, we have all, almost without being aware of it, slipped into a mind-set where we think of ourselves as doing "research".' (*Ibid*, p. 234) There are no cheerleaders because the development was unplanned and unconscious; Cottingham does not seem to be specifically responding to overt enthusiasm for methodological naturalism. Yet the result of this dominance, he suggests, is a distortion of the humanities. The trappings of science connote the march of progress and steadily cumulative development in a manner alien to philosophy's critical entanglement with its own history: author-date may be useful in a demonstration of how a philosopher's thought has developed,<sup>1</sup> but as Cottingham points out, 'when the great canonical figures are referred to... [we see] an extraordinarily cavalier way of citing them... [in which] countless philosophy books appearing today will casually use references like "Kant (1962)"' (*ibid*).

The threats Cottingham sees are not limited to historical parochialism: in the field of moral philosophy, he says, the popularity of reflective equilibrium diminishes the space within which truly transformative thinking can thrive. 'Thinking of moral intuitions as a set of "data" disguises the fact that the great moral teachers in history have characteristically called for radical shifts in our moral perceptions and sensibilities. This casts serious doubt on the idea that the moral philosopher's job is to construct a "theory" that will account for prevailing intuition.' (*Ibid*, p. 243) The life of a philosopher whose ethics emerges from such 'data' may very well be expected to go along in lockstep with his theorising—but more so by default than by design.

The mirror which Cottingham holds up to modern (Anglophone) academic philosophy exhibits philosophical practice at its most impersonal, and at its most institutionalised. He sees signs of decline reflected; other philosophers may interpret the same as hallmarks of academic rigour. David Rosenthal has noted that if philosophical reflection aims at solving problems to produce truths, then it is unclear why philosophy should *not* progress more like the sciences than like the humanities; although he goes on to suggest that what we need is a revised understanding of what philosophy gains from the practice of historical interpretation (Rosenthal, *Teaching and History*).

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Colin Baker for this observation.

At the opposite pole are visions of philosophical practice as inescapably personal, or of the philosopher as properly devoted to a life of reflection. 'In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant cites approvingly what he took to be the practice of the ancients: no one was justified in calling himself a philosopher – a lover of wisdom – “unless he could show [philosophy’s] infallible effect on his own person as an example”.<sup>2</sup> Kant thinks we are justified in inquiring after the effect of philosophy on the philosopher, daunting as the prospect seems today.' (Langton, *Duty*, p. 498) So we think of Diogenes with his barrel and lantern, or of Socratic tranquillity in the face of death; we think of knowing thyself, and that the unexamined life is not worth living; we recall Wittgenstein’s philosophic therapy, or the enlightenment attained by the Buddha.

We can turn things the other way around, of course, and enquire after the effect of the philosopher on what he writes, perhaps without leaving ourselves wholly vulnerable to charges of *ad hominem* fallacy if our enquiries should 'provide fair grounds for... at least being suspicious of the views or opinions of a person' (Solomon, *Living*, pp. 26-7). 'For a psychologist,' wrote Nietzsche, 'there are few questions that are as attractive as that concerning the relation of health and philosophy... In some it is their deprivations that philosophize; in others, their riches and strengths.' (*Gay Science*, p. 33) Again, we can discover linked conceptions of how to read philosophy and how to do it: continuing with Nietzsche, we read that 'every great philosophy so far has been... the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir', in which even 'the abstrusest metaphysical claims' are best accounted for by asking at what morality their author aimed (*Beyond Good & Evil*, p. 203). 'In the philosopher,' unlike scholars of other kinds, 'there is nothing whatever that is impersonal' (*ibid*, p. 204)—and at that moment, in the cited edition, an editor’s footnote interjects to point out that 'Nietzsche is thinking of the “great” philosophers. Now that there are literally thousands of “philosophers”, these tend to be more akin to their colleagues in other departments than to the men discussed here.'

Perhaps so; though we should be helping ourselves to an excess of optimism if we thought that a piece of technical academic philosophy without 'a more comprehensive, stranger, richer world beneath the surface' (*ibid*, p. 419) must by virtue of its modesty be free of all psychological suspicions. On the other hand, it may well be excessively pessimistic to despair of ever being able *just* to offer a neat solution to some philosophical problem without inadvertently dousing the whole thing in subconscious moralism. What Nietzsche left to the 'philosophers of the future', however, is not only an exposé and a backstage guide to philosophical hermeneutics but a positive challenge as well: he does indeed say of the *great* philosophers that their philosophies are personal. There are philosophies symptomatic of sickness, he proclaims, and then there are philosophies of 'triumphant gratitude' (*Gay Science*, p. 34).

This then is the terrain, or a characterisation of it which will do for the moment: at one pole conceptions of philosophy as technical, productive, respectable, professional; at the other one visions of philosophy as vocational, personal, passionate, even transformative. I make no grandiose claims for the precision of this model, or that either pole must manifest in pure form within any single philosopher: taking for example the case of Spinoza, it is very easy to see the drive for demonstrative impersonality in the spare, geometrically-styled

<sup>2</sup> The quotation is from Pt. 1, Bk. II, Ch. 1. Langton employs the Beck translation; both Abbott and Gregor have *in* rather than *on*, perhaps emphasising less the personality of the individual philosopher and more the salutary effects of philosophy in general which he is supposed to exemplify.

writing of his *Ethics*, but altogether more difficult to judge the extent to which the image of the frugal lens-grinder which has come down to us indicates either a deliberate or a coincidental mirroring between his manner of living and his philosophy of emancipation. Perhaps Spinoza stands somewhere between the poles; what he does not obviously do is so combine them as to make us reconsider our grasp of the axis upon which they stand.

It is by now high time we met the man who might point us in the direction of a third option, of a way of going about doing philosophy which is neither impersonal office-work nor a strict and wholehearted unity of doctrine and life.

### *Fernando Pessoa, strictly speaking, doesn't exist.*

Pessoa's fragmentation of himself began, by his own account, at the age of six, when he started an epistolary relationship with himself under the *alter ego* persona of the "Chevalier de Pas" (Pessoa, letter to Monteiro, p. 255). (Let's keep things clear with a notation for writing about imaginary people: I'll name Kierkegaard's pseudonyms "like this", and Pessoa's heteronyms "like this".) The disorganised trunk of writings he left at his death contained the output of over seventy names, most of whom had never set their work before the public during Pessoa's lifetime. Some were not strongly developed, and in the hands of any other author would simply be called characters; they qualify as heteronyms only because of their place in Pessoa's universe. The hunchbacked "Maria José", for example, authored a single item and is of interest chiefly as the sole female heteronym.

The naval engineer "Álvaro de Campos", conversely, not only published literary works with Pessoa's help but took an interest in Portuguese politics and at one point was sending letters to Pessoa's girlfriend, advising her to break up with him; in his spare time he sparred with "Ricardo Reis", another poetic heteronym whose existence Pessoa made public, and whose Horatian leanings set him at aesthetic odds with the Whitmanesque "Campos". Both were disciples of the bucolic pagan poet "Alberto Caeiro", whom even Pessoa acknowledged as the Master, but each set off in a somewhat different direction. For "Caeiro", things simply exist; it would be tempting to call him a naïve realist if his repudiation of metaphysics were less thoroughgoing, but in fact his outlook was one of just looking without letting thoughts arise ("Crosse", *Translator's Preface*, p. 52),

Because the light of the sun is truer than the thoughts  
Of all philosophers and all poets.  
...  
...  
Metaphysics? What metaphysics do these trees have?  
Only that of being green and lush and of having branches  
Which bear fruit in their season, and we think nothing of it.  
(“Caeiro”, *Keeper* No. 5, p. 49)

His reaction on having Kant's ideas explained to him was to reply, 'I don't have theories. I don't have philosophy. I see but know nothing.' ("Campos", *Notes*, p. 45) Since the fate of the *soi-disant* antiphilosopher is to be philosophically pigeonholed, there has been some debate over the possibility of affinities with Zen in "Caeiro's" poetry (Zenith, *Zen Heteronym*).

·Ricardo Reis· took his Master's paganism into more overtly classical terrain: in his eyes, not only stones and trees but also the gods and Fate exist. His outlook was tinged with Epicurean and Stoic elements, and he sought a reclusive tranquillity in exile overseas. 'We should try to give ourselves the illusion of freedom, happiness, and peace, all of which are unattainable.' (·Frederico Reis·, *On Ricardo Reis*, p. 57) Meanwhile, ·Álvaro de Campos· manifested yet another sort of paganism, a sheer 'sensationism' that cares less for whether stones and trees exist than

To feel everything in every way,  
To live everything from all sides,  
To be the same thing in all ways possible at the same time,  
To realize in oneself all humanity at all moments  
In one scattered, extravagant, complete, and aloof moment.  
(*Time's Passage*, p. 146).

·Campos· was the only heteronym to change noticeably as he grew older, the loudmouthed exuberance of his early poems giving increasing way to ennui and despondency. ·Reis· at least could affect aloof and philosophic calm:

Let the gods  
Take from me  
By their high and secretly wrought will  
All glory, love and wealth.

All I ask  
Is that they leave  
My lucid and solemn consciousness  
Of beings and of things.

... ..

Its glory is  
The supreme certainty  
Of solemnly and clearly possessing  
The forms of objects.

Other things pass  
And fear death,  
But the clear and useless vision of the Universe  
Fears and suffers nothing.

(*Let the Gods*, p. 109)

·António Mora· 'was a shadow with philosophical pretensions' (·Campos·, *Notes*, p. 49) before he encountered ·Caeiro·, and remained a philosopher after entering his discipleship. He was supposed to be the author of two great treatises which developed a pagan philosophy in a systematic fashion, *The Return of the Gods* and a *Prolegomena to a Reformation of Paganism*, but Pessoa's inability to develop ideas into systematic and final forms ensured

that these were never fully composed. The fifth member of the pagans' circle was an 'orthonym' named 'Fernando Pessoa', under no circumstances to be confused with Fernando Pessoa; some commentators refer to this 'Pessoa' as 'Pessoa-himself' or 'Fernando Pessoa as himself'.

'Bernardo Soares', we are told (Pessoa, letter to Monteiro, pp. 258-9), was a semiheteronym, his character and in particular the style of his writing (Pessoa, *Degrees*, pp. 228-9) not wholly distinct from Pessoa's own but 'mutilated' through the excision of certain elements. This humourless assistant bookkeeper kept something too fragmented to be called a diary or an autobiography, a chaotic collection of melancholic reflections which Pessoa always meant to edit into a coherent volume but was eternally unable to. 'Soares' 'is not a philosopher in the strict sense, busying himself solving some problems; it is more the stance from which he looks' (Kotowicz, *Voices*, p. 80). The semiheteronym is a relentless analyst of his own (or Pessoa's?) sorrows:

Tedium, yes, is boredom with the world... But tedium, even more than all that, is a boredom with other worlds, whether real or imaginary; the discomfort of having to keep living, albeit as someone else, in some other way, in some other world... (*Disquiet*, p. 316)

Some of his introspections into a futilely escapist mind, unable not to be aware of his tedium ('a person, the incarnate fiction of [his] own company' (*ibid*, p. 317)) as lucidly as of 'the pointless and worthless daydreams that constitute a large part of [his] inner life' (*ibid*, p. 17), would look scarcely out of place in a piece of existential phenomenology—if 'Senhor Soares' could be bothered to take such a thing seriously. 'Let's develop theories,' he suggests, 'patiently and honestly thinking them out, in order to promptly act against them—acting and justifying our actions with new theories that condemn them.' (*Ibid*, p. 27) Another thinly disguised heteronym who received the short end of Pessoa's unhappier thoughts was the 'Baron of Teive', who left behind a single, desultory manuscript partly on 'the impossibility of producing superior art' when he shot himself in resolute despair ('Athayde', *Education*).

These and many other names appear, with varying frequency, in Pessoa's heteronymic universe, 'which besides poetry included fiction and drama, philosophy, social and literary criticism, political commentary, translations, linguistic theory, horoscopes, and assorted other texts on the strangest topics imaginable' (Zenith, *Drama and Dream*, p. 7). Certainly, there are some repeated themes: 'Caeiro's' disavowal of metaphysical thinking finds clear echoes in 'Soares', who writes that metaphysics 'has always struck [him] as a prolonged form of latent insanity. If we knew the truth, we'd see it; everything else is systems and approximations.' (*Disquiet*, p. 83) Likewise in 'the Baron', who proclaimed his 'radical renunciation of all metaphysical speculation and [a] moral disgust at all attempts to systematize the unknown' ('Athayde', *Education*, p. 16). Yet one must be struck by the pluralities nonetheless. The younger 'Campos' could hurl insults at everybody who was anybody in Europe, swear at you in large bold type and sketch out a manifesto for a 'Superphilosophy... with the greatest philosopher being the one who can contain the greatest number of other people's personal philosophies' (*Ultimatum*, p. 83)—all within a single text; while 'Soares', quite unlike him in temperament, would mutter, 'I'm suffering from a headache and the universe.' (*Disquiet*, p. 279) Nietzsche wrote about 'perspectivism', and may perhaps have struck one authorial pose or another to suit different intended

readerships (Millgram, *Genealogist*), but nowhere in Nietzsche is there such a cultivation of contrasting voices. The drive 'to other oneself' (Pessoa, *Degrees*, p. 229), which has sometimes seen Pessoa identified as the first and most practical deconstructor of the self, gave rise to a sort of laboratory of lived doctrines—in the reflective imagination of a man who hardly ever left Lisbon in all his adult life.

It is this thoroughgoing and wilful fragmentation of himself that takes Pessoa's oeuvre into territory not even Kierkegaard noticeably visited. One may fairly observe, of course, that the views of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms were often clearly not his own.<sup>3</sup> Pessoa wrote:

It is fruitless to search in [the poems of 'Caeiro', 'Reis' or 'Campos'] for ideas or sentiments of mine, since many of them express ideas which I do not accept, feelings which I have never experienced. They ought simply to be read as they are, which in any case is how one ought to read. (Pessoa, *Degrees*, pp. 230-31)

Switch in, say, 'Johannes' the seducer, the self-satisfied 'Judge Wilhelm' and the non-Christian 'Johannes Climacus', and we can imagine Kierkegaard uttering the same without implausibility. Indeed, Kierkegaard asked his readers not to quote the pseudonyms under his own name (*Declaration*, p. 529), and for his own part insisted: 'in the pseudonymous books there is not a single word by myself. I have no opinion about them except as third party, no knowledge of their meaning except as reader, not the remotest private relation to them' (*ibid*, p. 528). If anything it is Kierkegaard who took pains to emphasise the difference and externality of his creations, whereas in Pessoa the distinction between heteronym and semiheteronym must be understood alongside his comments on othering oneself and on his living other personalities within himself.

In Kierkegaard, however, what we find is a rhetoric of pseudonymity: not an imaginative universe quietly being spun out mostly behind the scenes, but a pattern of *legerdemain* urgently constructed in order to tip the reader into Christianity. Kierkegaard can treat the pseudonyms as in a sense external to himself precisely because 'all the pseudonymous writings are *maieutic* in nature' (Kierkegaard, *On My Work*, p. 7): they exist purely to serve a publicly communicative purpose, and in this they are unlike the players of Pessoa's interior theatre. (We may say the same of the persons of philosophical dialogues: even those modelled on life, like Plato's Socrates, are subordinate to the collective task of nursing the reader's thoughts.) Whether we suppose that Kierkegaard sincerely gave his pseudonyms thoughts and opinions thoroughly contrasting with his own, or that perhaps he smuggled in some subtextual import to be understood by the reader 'but not by the messenger' (*de silentio*, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 39), it remains evident that the whole pseudonymous authorship is a device, a means of talking to us; the point of the pseudonyms is to be a deception (Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, pp. 53-4), and somewhere behind them there remains the unitary self of Søren Kierkegaard.<sup>4</sup> It is in Pessoa that we find an inward as well as an authorly fragmentation, most of which was only posthumously made public.

<sup>3</sup> For Pessoa a 'pseudonym' was exactly that, a false name (Pessoa 'et al.', *A Little Larger*, p. 3); but I refer to Kierkegaard's *alter ego* personae as pseudonyms nevertheless, following convention.

<sup>4</sup> Even pluralists about some aspect of philosophy may be happy to speak of unitary selves: Isaiah Berlin was a value pluralist if anyone was, but wholly content to categorise people as hedgehogs and foxes.



## *Be plural like the universe!*

Not so fast. Pessoa's own accounts of his heteronymy, after all, don't always neatly fit the model as I've sketched it. At times he can sound as though his own inclination would favour a triviality thesis about authorship:

Needless to say, I agree with certain parts of [the heteronyms'] theories, and disagree with other parts.<sup>5</sup> But that's quite beside the point. If they write beautiful things, those things are beautiful, regardless of any and all metaphysical speculations about who 'really' wrote them. If in their philosophies they say true things – supposing there can be truth in a world where nothing exists – those things are true regardless of the intention or 'reality' of whoever said them. (*Selected Prose*, p. 3)

Perhaps there is 'no essential need for the heteronyms and semiheteronyms and the rest of the naming game, which some critics have dismissed as an author's ploy to mystify and even mythify his literary project' (*Zenith, Drama and Dream*, p. 7). (Pessoa is known to have indulged in some myth-making concerning the heteronyms' genesis (Kotowicz, *Voices*, p. 41).) Or perhaps he was just inconsistent in how close he felt to the heteronyms (*ibid*, p. 65). Yet the fact remains that Pessoa did assign names and personalities to many of the things he wrote, bringing ideas and moods and turns of phrase into being intertwined with the lives and outlooks of the heteronyms who signed them. He never sought to live out the ideas of 'the dramatis personae invented by [him] to play out his life and so save him the trouble' (*Zenith, Drama and Dream*, p. 2), but in the lives led by his imaginary troupe we can perhaps see reflections of doctrines that by nature were *to be lived*, even if Pessoa wasn't himself so inclined. Sensationism, once thought of, demands a 'Campos' who tries to feel everything in every way (and ends up disillusioned); and once we have the notion of just unreflectively looking at stones and trees, our minds may by habit be too busy to do it, but perhaps we find ourselves imagining a 'Caeiro' who can.

I began by elaborating a kind of psychological epistemology. To help me understand systems, I created a method for analysing those who produce them. I don't claim to have discovered that a philosophy is no more than the expression of a temperament. Others, I suppose, have already discovered this.<sup>6</sup> But I discovered, for my own orientation, that a temperament is a philosophy. ('Athayde', *Education*, p. 17)

Is it philosophically desirable to carve oneself up, even by means of a literary imagination? In the paper in which he warns us about too readily drawing inspiration from scientific writing, Cottingham concludes his defence of 'humane philosophy' with the claim that 'philosophy at its best is a way of trying to reach an integrated view of the world: in our philosophical activity, as in our lives generally, integrity has a great claim to be considered

<sup>5</sup> This completely contradicts the quotation at the head of this paper, in which Pessoa denied agreeing or disagreeing with anything his heteronyms wrote.

<sup>6</sup> Among them 'Bernardo Soares' (*Disquiet*, p. 83).

the master virtue' (*Humane Philosophy*, p. 254). If fragmentation of the discipline into sealed-off specialisms is bad for philosophy (*ibid*), perhaps fragmentation of oneself into incompatible outlooks is likewise unfortunate: a case calling for philosophical ministration rather than for celebration. 'Consistency', according to Kant, 'is the highest obligation of a philosopher' (*Practical Reason*, p. 18); and Pessoa was consistently manifold.

I do not know what Cottingham would make of 'Caeiro', 'Campos', 'Reis' and the rest: integrity, in his understanding, is at root a matter of knowing who one is (*Integrity*, p. 8), and there is a case for saying that Fernando Pessoa, the spectator at the centre of his heteronymic universe, knew very well who he was. Or failing that, that he made numerous and revealing attempts at discovering it, even if he reached no obvious goal in that direction. We must acknowledge, all the same, that if we want a solid, grounded, justified *episteme*, plurality after Pessoa's model looks deeply unlikely to lead us towards it; and if we don't want a piecemeal life, but one that's stable and grounded as a cohesive and meaningful whole, then he probably isn't pointing in the direction of that either.

Where does all this leave our two methodological poles, the philosophies of impersonal demonstrative arguments and the philosophies of examined living? Exactly where they were, no doubt; but if we are of the view that Pessoa and the heteronyms were doing philosophy at all (be it good philosophy or bad, original or derivative), then we seem to have arrived at the discovery that a hybrid option is possible: one which far from being impersonal is replete with the trappings of (imaginary) personality, yet nevertheless divorced from a strict association between life and idea, if we take such an association to demand a psychological unity which Pessoa rejected. Even if the synthesis is sterile in the end, its rearrangement of the terrain I sketched out earlier offers a site for metaphilosophical reflection on what the landscape does or ought to look like, and on where Pessoa *does* fit in.

Perhaps it is doubtful that multiplicity is philosophically desirable, and no less doubtful that for non-Pessoas it is philosophically *possible*. I don't, in the end, particularly advocate taking Pessoa's life and work as a methodological guide for doing philosophy.<sup>7</sup> Yet there may nevertheless be something interesting and even useful for philosophers to discover in Pessoa and the heteronyms, if we see in his employment of a literary imagination a particularly striking illumination of an imaginative element in philosophical practice. Thanks to the lives he lived within himself, Fernando Pessoa could come as close as the written word permits to taste-testing doctrine after doctrine—all the while retaining something of the observational detachment of the man of science-philosophy.

For the final word, it falls to the 'Master' heteronym 'Alberto Caeiro' to chide Pessoa and, perhaps, us all (quoted in Kotowicz, *Voices*, p. 50): 'Mystical poets are sick philosophers / And philosophers are crazy.'

Durham, 2010

<sup>7</sup> Not that I'm stopping you either. If you try it, please let me know how things turn out.

*All my books are books of reference.*

Books marked with \* are either wholly heteronymic or collections of writing by Pessoa and the heteronyms (with varying amounts of editorial commentary); their author should be taken to be 'Fernando Pessoa' for the purpose of not exasperating booksellers and librarians. Those marked † are works by Kierkegaard which were originally published under the pseudonyms preserved here.

·Álvaro de Athayde, Baron of Teive·, *The Education of the Stoic: The Only Manuscript of the Baron of Teive*\* (trans. & ed. Richard Zenith, 2005, Cambridge: Exact Change).

Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (trans. Alberto Toscano, 2005, Stanford: Stanford University Press).

·Alberto Caeiro·, *The Keeper of Sheep No. 5*, in *Fernando Pessoa & Co.: Selected Poems*\* (trans. & ed. Richard Zenith, 1998, New York: Grove Press), pp. 49-51.

·Álvaro de Campos·, 'Notes For the Memory of My Master Caeiro', in *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa*\* (trans. & ed. Richard Zenith, 2001, New York: Grove Press), pp. 38-50.

·Álvaro de Campos·, 'Time's Passage', in *Fernando Pessoa & Co.: Selected Poems*\* (trans. & ed. Richard Zenith, 1998, New York: Grove Press), pp. 146-68.

·Álvaro de Campos·, 'Ultimatum', in *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa*\* (trans. & ed. Richard Zenith, 2001, New York: Grove Press), pp. 72-87.

John Cottingham, 'Integrity and Fragmentation', in *Journal of Applied Philosophy* Vol. 27, No. 1 (2010), pp. 2-14.

John Cottingham, 'What Is Humane Philosophy and Why Is It At Risk?', in *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* Vol. 65 (2009), pp. 233-55.

·Thomas Crosse·, 'Translator's Preface To the Poems of Alberto Caeiro', excerpted in *The Selected Prose of Fernando Pessoa*\* (trans. & ed. Richard Zenith, 2001, New York: Grove Press), pp. 50-55.

Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason* (trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, 2008, Radford: Wilder Publications).

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