

Fernando Pessoa

## CRITIQUE OF MATERIALISM

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Materialism asserts that thought is the product of the brain, as excitation is the product of the muscles. Thus all functions are the products of various kinds of movements — thought of motion of the cerebral molecules; feeling, sensation, perception, of the motion of the nerves, along them.

We shall now proceed to criticize this dogmatic and metaphysical system — for it is dogmatic and metaphysical and doomed to intellectual death together with its brother system — that of theology and of religion.

Matter and motion, or matter or motion or neither matter nor motion.

If all be matter and matter produce motion.

If all be motion, and motion the only reality, then motion by itself (Heraclitus).  
Every alters, moves, is displaced.

Hypotheses:

1. Matter alone is real.
2. Motion alone is real.
3. Matter and Force are real and consequently with their motion.
4. Neither matter nor force is real.

1. *Matter alone is real.*

In the first place, what is matter, what is this we are called to consider as the basis of all and the reality?

Either we have but sensations of the world and correspond (in some way) to reality. Let us then consider what we know, apart from the discussion of sensation.

The reality behind all things is obviously that which we find if we abstract and put aside what are merely the properties and the qualities of things.

Matter, real matter, is unknown, and the least material thing that can be conceived. But there is one idea of ours which appears to be, but is not, a property: plurality, number, quantity, I mean, (. . .)

Of the innateness of the idea of number.

It is said that counting, arithmetics, all numerical things are drawn from experience. This thing is one, that is another, that one further an another still: one, two, three. All is explained, or is it not?

Far from it: all is misunderstood. True we may learn to count (or we may not) by adding this thing and that and that other; but, this allowed, it is not yet explained how I know that there is a this thing, and a that thing, and a that other thing. True, we draw our idea of plurality from nature, *because we see plurality there*. We do but realise as true an innate idea. To see plurality anywhere we must be born to see it. In the same way, we think without knowing the laws of thought.

Read Fouillée's *Plato*.

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