

Fernando Pessoa

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Having come thus far we are now and at this point made to face another problem, which is important and not without interest. It is contained in this: 'how have we the idea of liberty if such liberty do not exist? How do we believe ourselves free if we are determined in our every act?»

There are several philosophers who have written on this point. Their aim has been chiefly to conciliate determinism and responsibility. What reason there is for doing this I do not know. Is it that they do not wish science to take from governments and from powers the only and sacred right of and reason for inflicting penalties upon men? Or is it a certain fear of the new, a certain remnant of respect for the old and warmly cherished ideas which are generally, if not entirely, wrong?

Now the idea of liberty is either legitimate or it is not. If it be an idea, truly and purely a simple idea, it is, *ipso facto*, legitimate, and liberty is a truth (fact). Or on the other hand it is only by name an idea, that is, an intuition, of the nature of those of time, of space, of colour, or, still better of those of good and of beautiful. In this latter case since it is not an intuition, it must be the result of reasoning.

We shall now consider both these theories.

In the first place, free-will has not the characteristic quality of intuition, simplicity. An intuition cannot be defined. What colour is, what space is, we cannot say; if we define them, we do so wrongly and in terms of the thing defined.

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