

Fernando Pessoa

KNOWLEDGE

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1. We know things, not as they are, but merely as they appear to us. (Kant).

Tant d'hommes — *tant de sensations* .

Society has caused commonness of sensation. Commonness of nomenclature and acquired sensation-point are the cause of our thinking and feeling all alike.

A man who has lived in a country where there are no clocks, on going into a region where there are clocks and on seeing one for the first time feels very much otherwise than a native of that country. Hence the entire subjectivity of our knowledge (subjective idealism).

Matter does not exist — *as matter*. It exists as matter only through the medium of *our senses*. To the rustic a tree is a tree; to a poet is more than a tree. It is in some sort like this that we see matter through lack of spiritual perception. As those mountains which, when seen from far, seem the barest and most sterile crags, but which, seen from near show not rocks or sterilest at all, but valleys and large acres of cultured land.

We are spiritually weak; that is to say — we are but capable, as long as we do not use our widest and deepest powers, of a material comprehension.

Nevertheless we bear in us the power of perceiving the truth — not phenomenal truth, but noumenal truth. I assert it now, and shall ever assert it — that man has fallen short of the mystery of the universal only through unwillingness to think deeply. A lack of will power, it seems — if not absolute, at least, sufficiently repressive — is always linked to the strongest powers of thought. The great geniuses have always this failing.

Objective Idealism: Leibnitz.

Subjective Idealism: Fichte.

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