

Fernando Pessoa

I. Mind can know nothing absolute.

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For the absolute is the indeterminate (no, the absolute is the self-determinate) — the words are synonymous — and what is indeterminate is inconceivable, for the condition of conceivability is the determination of a thing. On the other hand (moreover) what is inconceivable today was always unconceivable and shall ever so be. For, for the inconceivable to become conceivable is for it to become determined. But a «determined Absolute» is an absolute no longer, is a contradiction in *terms*.

Let it, however, become determined. Then it is either determined by itself, or by ourselves, or by something, not ourselves, outside it. To be determined by itself is to be indeterminate. To be determined by a subject is to receive from it its determination; i.e. the determination lies in the subject and not in the object, and the object, far from being known as noumenon is known as phainoumenon.

II. *The human mind knows, can know nothing absolutely.*

To know a thing absolutely is to know it in itself, that is to say independently of other things (relations that is to say). But that which is independent of other things is absolute and therefore unknown and unknowable.

By former proposition.

We can know only the relative, and all things relatively, incompletely, we can know only something of a thing, «quelque apparence du milieu des choses». (Pascal).

To know, comprehend, or understand a thing is to have of it an idea susceptible of positive and complete definition, etc. By positive definition I mean explaining what a thing is and not what it is not, as happens for instance, with the infinite. By complete definition (I understand) is one which includes all the attributes of the thing defined.

s. d.

Textos Filosóficos . Vol. II. Fernando Pessoa. (Estabelecidos e prefaciados por António de Pina Coelho.) Lisboa: Ática, 1968: 235.