

Fernando Pessoa

## **To define a thing is to determine it in regard to other things...**

To define a thing is to determine it in regard to other things or rather by them.

For it is clear that to define a thing is to determine it. Now is it determined by itself, by ourselves (by a subject) or by ourselves by regard to another thing.

To determine a thing by itself is to leave it indeterminate. No one would define a thing by itself. (By itself nothing is defined).

To determine a thing by ourselves is to show it as we see it, perceive it, know it. It is thus we get contradictory definitions such as this: «Love is suffering.»

«Love is enjoyment.»

Where each man is the measure of the thing.

Therefore the remaining way is the true one: to determine an object by an object.

(It is already clear that since definition is the test of comprehension and since all definition implies relation, we can neither know an absolute, for to define it would make it relative, nor anything absolutely for that implies defining it without reference to another thing.)

s. d.

**Textos Filosóficos** . Vol. II. Fernando Pessoa. (Estabelecidos e prefaciados por António de Pina Coelho.) Lisboa: Ática, 1968: 238.