

Fernando Pessoa

The Infinite is then the Possible

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How does this possible realise itself? How is it realised?

It is realised by numbers. But by how many numbers? By an infinite number of numbers (let the expression pass). The infinite then, in realising itself, realises itself as itself, by itself. In becoming other than itself it does but return to itself. (Cf. Hegel).

Consider, the 1 has nor power to produce the 2, neither cardinally nor ordinally; not cardinally because the 1 is less than the 2, nor ordinally because it supposes the 2.

The infinite is Quantity (in-se). Now numbers are quantity but not quantity-in-se.

Cardinally, the 1 cannot produce the 2, for it is smaller. *Note* (Let there no mistake. In our mind thinking of the 1 makes us think, by association, on the 2; but this is in our mind, this is mentally altogether).

It is the 2 that might produce the 1 for it is greater and contains it. But it could not produce the 3, nor the 3 the 4 and so on without stopping. We mount higher and higher, in the scale of numbers without ever attaining, so long as we keep to numbers, the limit which we desire. So we are bound to conceive something taken to be as, by paradox, the highest possible number. (Notice the word «possible»). Now this «highest possible number» is manifestly *no number*, for a number has always a number greater than it is. So we are taken to something which will contain and produce all numbers without being, and *by that reason* not being a number. (We must have, this is to say, something which is neither a number nor not a number).

Again what is the reason of the word «produce», which we have employed? How can the Infinite (quantity-in-se) produce numbers? Is it a force that it should originate anything ?

It is by colour that we observe colours, that we know colours. We possess the idea of colour. It is in this way that we know colour.

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