

**ON THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE
UNIVERSAL AND THE
INDIVIDUAL, A CONTRIBUTION
TO THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF
THE THOUGHT PROCESSES**

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On the consciousness of the universal and the individual, a contribution to the phenomenology of the thought processes by Francis Aveling

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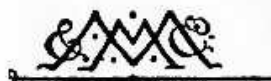
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On the
Consciousness of the Universal
and the Individual

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PHENOMENOLOGY
OF THE THOUGHT PROCESSES

*Thesis approved for the Degree of Doctor of Science
in the University of London*

BY

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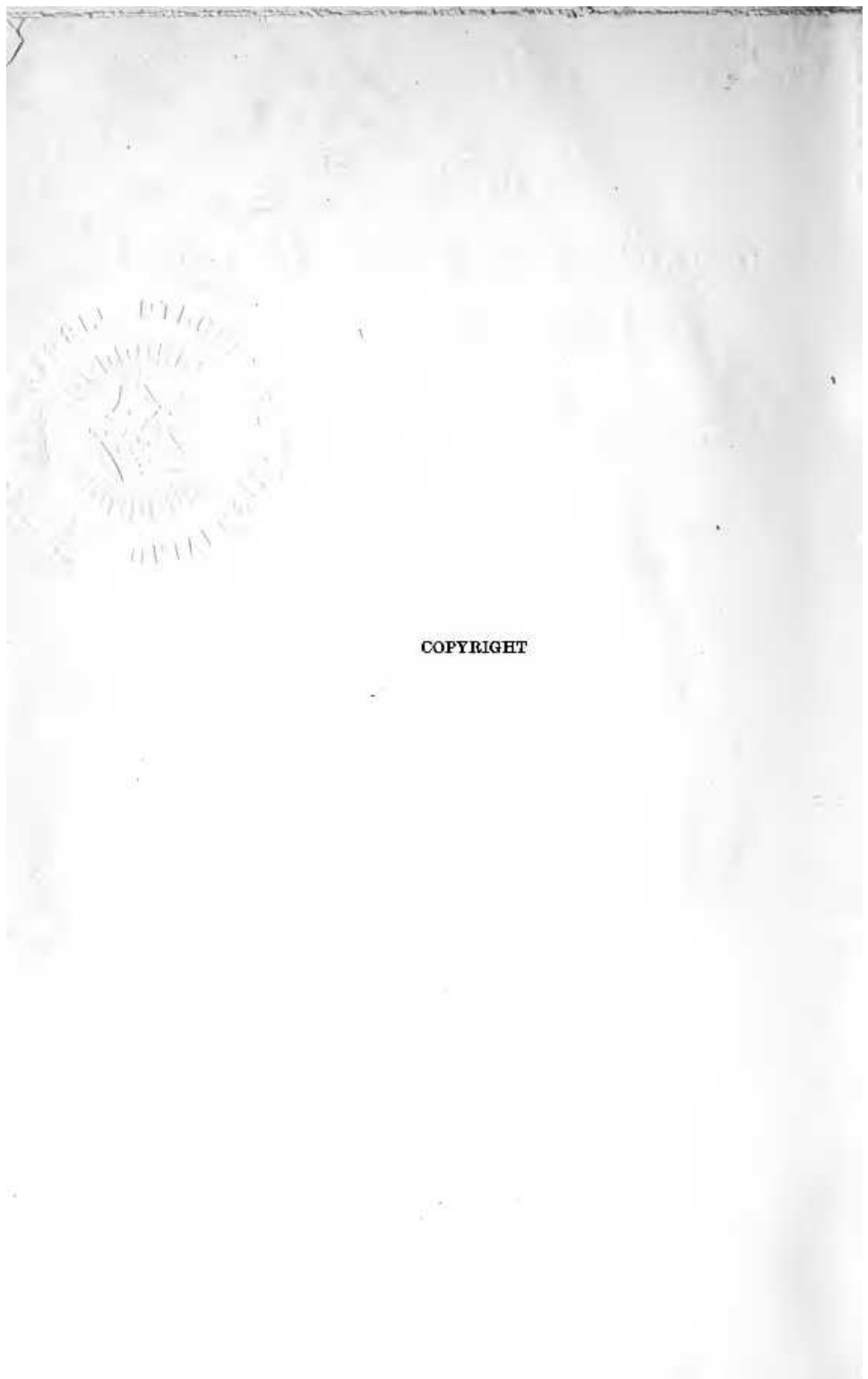
181066.

*'In qua laborans mundus jam senit, in qua plus tem-
poris consumptum est quam in acquirendo et regendo orbis
imperio consumpserit Caesarea domus.'*—JOHN OF SALISBURY,
Polyroticus, vii. 12.

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PREFACE

THE research which forms the subject of the present essay was undertaken on the completion of a previous study, made in the *Laboratoire de Psychologie Expérimentale* of the *Institut Supérieur* of the University of Louvain, upon the function of generalisation.¹ The points established in that previous research, carried out under the direction and with the help of Professor Alfred Michotte, were few in number, but of some considerable interest in themselves, and indicative of further possible lines of investigation. The problem then involved was one of perception—rather than of conception, as in the present study. It was ascertained that the instruction given beforehand to the observers—that they were to perceive pictures of objects, or objects, exposed in the tachistoscope, as (α') individuals or

¹ Notes of this study were published in the *Journal of Psychology*, vol. iv. part ii., September 1911, under the title "The Relation of Thought-Process and Percept in Perception."

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(β') as generals (types)—had a pronounced effect upon the subsequent perception. It was further ascertained that this effect of the instruction can be counteracted, or minimised, by (α') objective causes (character of the stimuli) and (β') subjective, or subjective-objective, causes (on the part of the observer). It was abundantly clear, however, that striking differences were to be observed in the structure of the percept, and in the related phenomena of consciousness, in the two cases of individual and general (typical) perception. Hardly a protocol was dictated, out of some 860, that was not clear as to the fact that the picture, or object, shown was seen either as a general or as a particular. There was seldom hesitation in the mind of the observers to assign each experience, whether conditioned by the instruction or not, to one or other of these classes. The research thus indicated a promising field for further investigation, which the work described in the present essay was designed to carry out.

Before, however, describing in detail the experiments made, and analysing the introspective results obtained, it will be well to preface a rough sketch of the history of the problem with which we

are occupied, to outline some of the solutions that have been put forward to meet it in its various phases, and thus to show what an extraordinary and important part it has played in the development of European philosophy.

Our essay is therefore divided into three parts. The first briefly sets out the history of the development of the problem of the 'Universals,' with its metaphysical, epistemological, and psychological implications.¹ The second presents the data of our present research with the conclusions thereon based. The third consists of a short Bibliography of works referred to in the text.

¹ This part is written from a frankly selective stand-point, and is in no sense to be considered an exhaustive, or even a complete statement of the history of the subject. Its main object is to provide a point of view which we wish to adopt in the subsequent treatment of the experimental data afforded by our research; and for this purpose it is given as a suitable introduction to the main part of our essay.

