

**ON THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE  
UNIVERSAL AND THE  
INDIVIDUAL: A CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF  
THE THOUGHT PROCESS, THESIS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649661770

On the Consciousness of the Universal and the Individual: A Contribution to the Phenomenology of the Thought Process, Thesis by Francis Aveling

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Cover @ 2017

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DALLAS · SAN FRANCISCO

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.  
TORONTO

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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*'In qua laborans mundus jam senescit, in qua plus tem-  
poris consumptum est quam in acquirendo et regendo orbis  
imperio consumpsit Caesaris domus.'—JOHN OF SALISBURY,  
Polycraticus, vii. 12.*

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ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1912

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[From the Psychological Laboratory of the University of  
London, University College.]

## PREFACE

### CORRIGENDA

- P. v, l. 8, for Professor Alfred Michotte read Professor Albert Michotte.  
P. 36 note, l. 3, for démonstration, un instrument : read démonstration ; pour vérifier la démonstration, un instrument :  
P. 38, ll. 19, 20, for *De Regulari Directione Ingenii* read *Regulae ad Directionem Ingenii*.  
P. 55, l. 4 and note 2, and p. 246, l. 17, for *Die logische Untersuchung* read *Logische Untersuchungen*.  
P. 56, footnote, for *Erfühlung* read *Ertüllung*.

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 (*a'*) individuals or

<sup>1</sup> 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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## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 (*a'*) individuals or

<sup>1</sup> 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."

( $\beta'$ ) 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 ( $\alpha'$ ) objective causes / (character of the stimuli) and ( $\beta'$ ) 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