

An aerial photograph of a river delta, likely the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta, showing a complex network of water channels and islands. The vegetation is a mix of bright yellow and green, indicating different types of trees or crops. The water is a dark, muddy brown color.

***JOHANN
GOTTLIEB
FICHTE***

***FACTS
OF CONSCIOUSNESS***

***JOHANN
GOTTLIEB
FICHTE***

***FACTS
OF CONSCIOUSNESS***

Johann Gottlieb Fichte

Facts of Consciousness

EAN 8596547165606

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Chapter 1](#)

[Concerning External Perception](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Concerning Internal Perception or Reflection](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Concerning the Reproduction of External Perception](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Concerning Time](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[General remarks](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Communication between free individuals as such.—the moral law.](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[The Moral Tie Between Individuals](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Fuller Exposition of Individuality.](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[General Review of all the Preceding](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[The Moral Law as the Principle of Life,. and the Latter as the Visibility of the Former](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Conclusion](#)

Chapter 1

[Table of Contents](#)

Concerning External Perception

[Table of Contents](#)

All our external perception presupposes, firstly, an activity of the mind which is checked and which we call sensation; secondly, an activity of the mind which gives to this felt sensation an infinitely divisible extension and which we call contemplation; and, thirdly, an activity of the mind which objectivates the thus extended sensation and asserts it to be an external thing, and which we call thinking.

The essence of all science consists in this: that we proceed from something sensuously perceived to its supersensuous ground. It is precisely so with philosophy. Philosophy starts from the perception of knowledge through the inner sense and proceeds to its ground. In the present series of lectures we shall be busied with the first part of this science, with the phenomenon. It is this phenomenon which we propose systematically to observe, and it will be my duty to guide your observation.

It is true that to observe knowledge means also to represent it not in its immediate living Being, but in only the picture of this Being. It will be my duty to guide you in the sketching of this picture, to separate what is to be

separated, and call your attention to what is important. It will be necessary very often to appeal to a special artistical arrangement in order that consciousness should reply to the very same question we propose to it; and thus the merely natural observation will change into an artificially constructed experiment.

The general and major parts, into which this our observation may separate, cannot be fixed at the very beginning, but can be determined only by continued investigation. Until then it will be sufficient to imagine our course of lectures divided firstly into a chapter: *Concerning the Facts of Consciousness in the Perception of External Objects*. The expression, *external objects*, is used here just as common sense uses it, that is, objects, which are perceived by us as external to us, in space.

Our problem now is, to analyze the to us all well-known fact of this perception in general and according to its several components. I maintain—and request you all to look into your own consciousness and see whether you do not find it likewise—that in this fact are contained.

A.

An Affection of the External Sense; characterized by the following terms of language: red, clear-sounding, bitter, cold, &c.

The possibility of such an affection presupposes an external sense. It is, for instance, impossible that a blind man should be affected by colors. But it is also to be observed, that this affection itself is a limitation of the general sense to be affected in this particular manner. For

instance: “I perceive this flower to be red” means simply, that my seeing in general, and particularly my seeing of this color, is limited by that particular seeing of a color which the habit of language designates as red.

B.

An Extension in Space.—And I maintain, and request you to verify and recognize, that these two parts, the Sensible and Extension, completely exhaust the essence of an external object.

1. I assert that extension is by no means a sensation, but utterly different from it. To perceive this clearly, I beg you to undertake the following consideration. Red, for instance, is an altogether simple sensation, and to objectivate it, as it were, from out of our mind, a mere mathematical point would be sufficient.

Now, what is it that impels and justifies you to spread out this simple and self-same remaining sensation of red over a large space, which is precisely so large and no larger, and upon which this red color is perhaps closely limited by an adjoining other color?

2. What, then, is extension, since it is evidently not sensation? It cannot be easy to answer this question, since it has been answered wrongly and in the most various manner until the present age, and since it was chiefly the correct answering of this question (through Kant) which led philosophy upon the right track.^[1]

In order to find the right answer in your own self, please assist me in the following artificial experiment, this being the first place where we need one: I ask you, whether that

body perceived by you is divisible infinitely, or whether such an attempted and continued divisibility would finally find somewhere a limit where it could not be pursued any further? I foresee that you will not be able to reply otherwise than that the body is most truly divisible infinitely. This reply is, indeed, everywhere made by common sense when left to itself; and if any philosopher answers differently, it is done not through his natural understanding left to itself, but through previously made false presuppositions and lies, which compel him to make such a different answer.

I ask further: Does, then, this infinitely divisible object put itself forth as also determined and completed, and even as included within another infinity? You cannot reply otherwise than: Yes. Hence you contemplate and assert extension to involve a completed and determined infinity; that is, you unite in extension infinity and totality into a fused and concrete unity.

Please make this very important conception still clearer to you by another one, which states the same thing and only emphasizes still more the point at issue. You draw a line from A to B. I ask you: Is not this line divisible infinitely? In going from A to B, did you not, therefore, actually complete an infinite way? Yes. Is it not necessary to assume that in going from any possible point which you may choose in the line A—B to any other possible point, you will meet the same infinity, so that you cannot absolutely go from one point to another without actually realizing that infinity? Hence you must acknowledge that that which seems to the conception utterly impossible and contradictory is actually realized in the contemplation of space.

3. I ask furthermore, how and where is now the infinite divisibility of the body? Have you actually divided infinitely, and experienced the infinite divisibility through the success of your attempt? By no means! You assert merely, that you *could* divide the body infinitely; and thus your assertion, first of all, does state not anything concerning the body itself, but merely something concerning your own faculty; whilst, secondly, this assertion has by no means been corroborated by experience, but grounds itself, if it is true, altogether upon the immediate self-contemplation of that faculty in its inner essence, as an infinite faculty testifying of itself.

Now this infinite faculty is actually *contemplated*, and is seized and encircled by our glance and placed before it as determined, and hence as the completion and totality of this infinity.

In short, if the faculty is to be contemplated as it is, it must be contemplated as infinite, for it is infinite. If it is to be contemplated, it must be fixed and gathered together, for it is the essence of contemplation to fix. And thus the self-contemplation of the faculty must necessarily become a gathering together of infinity.

Hence, as the last result of our present investigation we have this: *Extension in space is nothing but the self-contemplation of the contemplating mind as an infinite faculty.*

C.

Let us now gather together what has been made known to us by our undertaken analysis of external perception. It

involved, firstly, an affection of the external sense; and since this external sense belongs altogether to the contemplations, and is limited in and to them, it is clear that the contemplating faculty can perceive such an affection or limitation only in and to itself. Hence, in regard to this part, the external perception is a self-contemplation of a determined limitation or affection of the external sense. It involved, secondly, extension, which has clearly shown itself to be a self-contemplation of the contemplating faculty. Hence, external perception, so far as we have as yet been able to learn, goes never beyond the sphere of the contemplating faculty; and it is very easily to be comprehended from the previous analysis how the contemplating faculty, in its state of external perception, is able to say: I feel myself thus and thus limited, although in the same undivided contemplation I behold at the same time my infinite faculty.

But it is not at all to be comprehended, how the contemplating faculty can go beyond this mere perception and say: There exists outside of me, and altogether independently of me, *something* which is extended in space, and constituted thus or thus. It is evident now that our analysis of external perception has not yet been closed, and that one of its chief essentials is still lacking.

The immediate fact here is precisely, that the mind goes beyond or out of contemplation, or externalizes; now such a going out from or beyond immediate contemplation and externalizing we have always called *Thinking* (which is a mere word-designation to enable us to express ourselves

more concisely without always adding the description of the conception).

Hence we express the above fact thus: in immediate connection with what we have recognized in all external perception as contemplating, *we moreover think*; and it is precisely through this thinking, and through the inseparable union of this thinking with the before mentioned contemplation into a closely-joined life-moment of the contemplating faculty, that that which before was *in* that faculty becomes now something external, an object.

Remarks.

I. The proposition, that the object—for there is only one object, since the asserted existence of something external and independent of us, which constitutes the real character of an object, belongs to all objects in the same manner—is neither *felt* in sensation, nor *beheld* in contemplation, but altogether and solely *thought*, is as important as it has never yet been recognized.

We have assisted the insight into it in a very easy manner by showing that the sensation as well as the extension in space are altogether matters of self-consciousness; and that hence if the human mind proceeds beyond this self-consciousness and transcends it by a new kind of knowledge, this latter kind of knowledge is an entirely other one and worthy to be designated by another name, for which name we propose that of Thinking. For thinking is precisely the expression used for a going beyond and out of mere self-consciousness, and we particularly request every one to comprehend this distinction. But that

there really is involved such a going beyond even in the mere external perception is an immediate fact, since we do really assume a Something independent of us and existing outside of us, instead of the simple perception of a limitation of our external sense, &c., which alone we perceive,—a fact which each one may verify in his own consciousness.

II. Here already it appears clearly that consciousness is not a mere dead and passive mirror of external objects, but in itself living and productive. Imagine a quiet sheet of water wherein the trees and plants of the shore mirror themselves, and give to this sheet of water even the power to behold the pictures imaged in it and to become conscious of them; and it is easy enough to understand how the water can arise to a consciousness of an image or shadow in it; but it is by no means explained how the water can ever get out of these pictures, and go beyond and externalize them to the real trees and plants on the shore whereof they are pictures. It is thus with our consciousness. To explain how we get an affection of our external sense, and a power to contemplate our faculty, belongs to the sphere of pure philosophy, or the Science of Knowledge, and hence should not be undertaken in a review of the facts of consciousness. That inner self-contemplation we here accept as an existing fact. But we are bound to explain how this self-contemplation can pretend to be a contemplation of objects existing by themselves and altogether beyond the sphere of the contemplating faculty; and in order to comprehend this as a fact, we must moreover assume an inner life of that

self-contemplation which goes out of and beyond itself: *Thinking*.

Now what does this thinking really achieve in external perception? Simply that it furnishes the form, the form of objective existence. Hence in the object we must distinguish two chief components, arising from different sources; firstly, the objective form, which originates through thinking, and, secondly, that which the object is in itself, and which originates from the self-contemplation of the contemplating faculty;—the material quality of the object arising from a limitation of the external sense and its extension from a contemplation of our own infinite faculty. The first is the form of the object, the second its matter. It is, moreover, to be remarked in regard to the form of thinking, that thinking is a positing, and a positing in opposition to another; hence an *op*-positing, and that, therefore, all opposition arises immediately and purely from thinking, and is produced by thinking. So much concerning thinking in general, in so far as its nature can be made clear here.

Let us now answer the question to what particular kind the here discovered thinking may belong.

I say, it is not a thinking arising in consequence of another thinking, but an absolute and in-and-upon-itself-reposing thinking. I will not say that it is the original thinking—though it may be, but surrounded with a certain hull—but it is surely the *first* thinking within the sphere of the facts of thinking; precisely as external perception generally, whereof this thinking is an inseparable component, is also the first consciousness, preceded by none other.

Hence it is not proper to say, in the ordinary sense of the word, “I” (signifying an individual, which ordinary use of language we here do not wish to deviate from, remaining, as we do, within the region of facts), that it is I who think in this thinking, since it will be shown hereafter that it is only through a reflection concerning this thinking that the “I” arrives at a consciousness of itself; but we must say, the thinking, itself, as an independent life, thinks from out and through itself and is this objectivating thinking.

And now let us gather together the whole external perception, whereof we have examined the component parts. It is, in general, a consciousness which is not made through any free principle with considerateness and in accordance with any beforehand determined conception, but which is made through itself: a peculiar and independently upon-itself-reposing life of consciousness.

I say an independent and upon-itself-reposing life; for the being and life of consciousness are altogether lost in the described determinations and do not extend further, although it is quite possible that the same life may in a future reflection go beyond the before described determinations, may extend its life and add new determinations of it. But this thus-in-itself lost consciousness, which forms a completely closed spiritual life-moment by itself, is not simple, as we have already stated, but rather composed of two chief ingredients, thinking and self-contemplation; whereof the latter again separates into two utterly distinct components. And these two—or, if you choose, three—components are melted together so inseparably and into one, that the one cannot

occur without the other, and that consciousness is formed only through the synthetical union of the three. The contemplating faculty cannot contemplate its infinite faculty without feeling at the same time its external sense limited in a certain manner; and immediately with this consciousness of its own condition there connects a thinking, intimately united with that consciousness to one life-moment; whereby that which before was in us for our contemplation now becomes a body externally existing and endowed with a certain sensible quality. Again, on the other hand: objective thinking cannot occur unless there is a contemplation, since all thinking is a going beyond, an externalizing, which, of course, presupposes an internal from which to go beyond, or to externalize.

Chapter 2

[Table of Contents](#)

Concerning Internal Perception or Reflection

[Table of Contents](#)

All our internal perception presupposes, firstly, an activity of the mind whereby it can free itself from its condition of external perception, and hence posit itself both as a knowing of itself as knowledge (that is, of a limitedness of itself through external perception), and as a knowing of itself as a creative principle (that is, of a power in itself to free itself from that limitedness), which activity of the mind is called intellectual contemplation; and, secondly, an activity of the mind whereby it objectivates this its own power and posits it as an independently existing thing, which activity is called intellectual thinking.

A.

Having thus analyzed the facts of consciousness in *external* perception, it seems that we might now, without further preliminaries, proceed to an analysis of *internal* perception, or reflection, as our second chapter.

But since, as it partly is known already and partly is evident at the first glance, this reflection or internal perception is a condition altogether different from—nay, in part, utterly opposed to—that of external perception, it may

seem curious to many how such opposite determinations are possible in one and the same consciousness; and hence, before going further, we first ought to answer this question: how is it possible for the life of consciousness to proceed from one of its conditions to its opposite; or, how is it possible for us at all to proceed from our first to a second chapter?

To solve this question, let us consider together, and let me beg you to find in your own minds true the following:

1. I assert that knowledge in its inner form and essence is the *being of freedom*. What freedom is, I assume to be known to you. Now, of this freedom I assert that it exists absolutely; not, as some one might suppose at the first view, as a quality of some other in-itself-existing substance and inherent in the same, but as an altogether independent being or existence, and that this independent and peculiar being of freedom is knowledge. I assert that this independent being of freedom places itself before itself as knowledge; and that whoever wants to comprehend knowledge in its essence, must think it as such a being of freedom.

Explanatory.—Here already we get a glimpse of an altogether other, higher, and more spiritual being than common materialistic understanding is capable of thinking. That understanding can very well join something like freedom to a substance as its background, which substance, if closely examined, is however always of a material nature; but finds it very hard, nay, if it has been kept on the wrong track for a considerable time, altogether impossible to arise to a comprehension of an independent existence of

freedom. To *prove* such a pure being of pure freedom is a matter belonging to the Science of Knowledge; at present I only ask you to consider such a thought as a possible, problematic thinking. Nevertheless, it can be made clear even here, in immediate contemplation, that knowledge may be actually and in fact such a being and expression of freedom. For in my knowledge of the actual object outside of me, how is the object related to me as the knowing? Evidently thus: its being and qualities are not mine, and I am free from both, floating above and altogether indifferent in regard to them.

2. In every *determined* knowledge, that general freedom which exists, and exists as certainly as a knowledge in general is, is limited in some particular manner. In every determined knowledge there is a duplicity melted into a oneness: *freedom*, which makes it a knowledge; and a certain *limitation* or canceling of this freedom, which makes it a determined knowledge.

3. All change and all alteration of the determinations of the one general knowledge (or of the one general freedom) must, therefore, consist in either the making loose of latent freedom, or the making latent of loose freedom.

4. But further: since this freedom is to be nothing but freedom and knowledge generally, nothing but the being of absolute freedom, such a making latent or loose of freedom can be achieved solely through, freedom itself. Freedom itself is the principle of all its possible determinations; for if we were to assume an outside ground of those determinations, freedom would not be freedom.