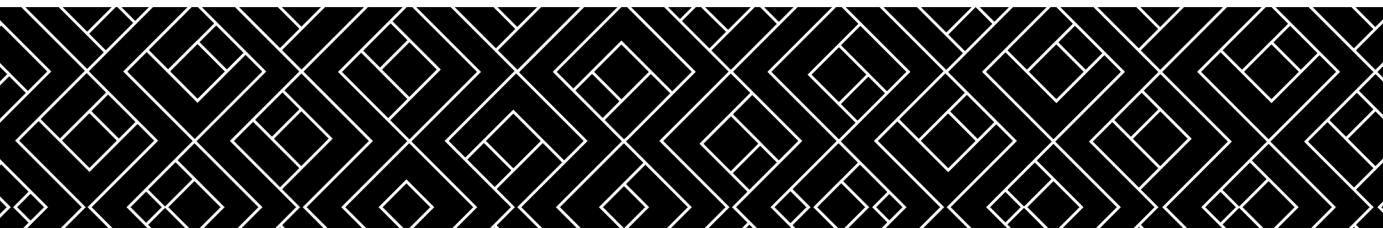


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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF
CHARACTER

With a Survey of Personality in
General

A A ROBACK



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PREFACE

THE appearance of a book on character should require no apology, although as may easily be seen from the bibliography, there is no dearth of such books. The subject of character or, in the wider sense, personality has within the last decade come to occupy the forefront of the psychological sciences and has been receiving the earnest attention of psychiatrists and social workers as well as of personnel experts.

The announcement of courses on personality, which at one time would have been greeted not without a perceptibly amused expression, is now rather welcomed by educators, at least in the United States ; and the students themselves often find that such courses broaden their outlook and reveal to them a sphere which the psychological textbook, even with its ready assimilation of psychoanalytic material, barely touches upon. The great handicap, however, has been the lack of a comprehensive volume which might be used as a suitable text showing what contributions have been made to the field of character in its widest sense, at the same time offering a tentative plan for handling the subject scientifically, so that the term "character" would be employed unambiguously and the concept analysed in such a way as to provide the reader with a workable criterion of character and a guide for its measurement.

Whether this work bears out the anticipation of the author is a matter to be judged later. I have at least spared myself no pains to follow religiously the project conceived. In order to illumine the numerous angles from which the subject has been approached, it was necessary to compress practically a whole library into the compass of a single volume, and, substituting the word "vocal" for that of "syllable" in the couplet of Cowper. "*Chase a panting vocal through time and space*"; and even if this hunt involved making excursions

into the psychological literature of half a dozen languages, besides the three principal mediums of scientific thought.

How much easier it would have been to follow the general practice of devoting less space to the views of other people and more to one's own presentation! In an age especially when erudition is frowned upon, the survey of so many authors is apt to call forth the comment that I am crowding the canvas. But it should be borne in mind that the writer on a subject like character, unless he approaches his task from a purely literary avenue, must lay before the reader an assortment of representative doctrines and treatments so as to furnish a proper background which might serve also as a guide in gaining a perspective of the field as a whole.

Selection is by all means a wholesome method to adopt in dealing with a huge mass of material, but not selection of the kind which is determined by sheer chance, national bias, local propinquity, or the results of effective publicity. Unless we take the trouble to go out of our way in quest of data before making the actual choice, unless we realize that important papers and books may have appeared in other languages than our own, and that not only those writings which have been translated into English are worth referring to—unless, in other words, we make a thorough search of the literature, inasfar as circumstances permit, we are not justified in the claim to have carried out a selective policy.

Aside from that, there is the question of what to include and what to eliminate. The process may be considered from either the inclusive or the exclusive angle. I have rather stressed the positive phase of selection because of the wide diversity of views on the subject, which may be considered representative. This was in no way an easy undertaking; and when a colleague, also interested in characterology, on glancing at one of the historical chapters on temperament remarked that "it is a good thing if one likes such work as this", he was hardly appreciating the fact that the task of poring over old discussions on temperament in order to secure a basis of comparison was irksome beyond words. Nevertheless someone has to do it; and although I do not flatter myself upon having covered all the ground exhaustively,

I feel at least reassured in the thought that I have made a sincere effort to omit nothing of value which was reasonably accessible.

A word of explanation is necessary with regard to the subject-matter incorporated in this volume. There is a seeming inconsistency about the book in that the historical part deals with character in the sense of personality minus the intellectual phase, while the constructive portion delimits the discussion in a way to comprehend character in the more restricted sense.

The reason for this apparent discrepancy is twofold. First, it is nigh impossible to dis sever the strands in the various characterological writings so as to dwell exclusively on what should, strictly speaking, be termed character. In the second place, since the historical development of the subject took place in a somewhat protean fashion, sometimes in the guise of character, sometimes appearing in the shape of temperament, and at other times taking on the aspect of individuality and personality, it becomes clear that until the chameleon-like qualities of our subject are removed or at least reduced to a minimum, we have no right to prescind its history on the ground that our premise will be established later in the book. Above all, the outline of character must be visualized against a background which, though somewhat faint and blurred, lends it, if not enchantment, at least perspective.

Many libraries have placed me under obligation for the courtesy extended in forwarding or otherwise placing at my disposal books not available in the Harvard College Library. Among these are the Clark College Library, the John Crerar Library in Chicago, the Library of Congress in Washington, the Columbia University Library, the Boston Medical Library, and the library of the Boston Psychopathic Hospital, but the special accommodations offered by the Harvard College Library deserve particular mention.

My indebtedness to Dr. G. W. Allport, of Dartmouth College, who read a large part of the manuscript and whose numerous critical suggestions have been most helpful, cannot be adequately expressed in a general acknowledgment.

Mr. J. Kelson, who has read nearly all the book in proof,

has also been of considerable assistance in pointing out occasional obscurities in the language.

The bibliography, to which frequent reference has been made in this work, was intended for inclusion in the present volume, but as its compass grew so as to include about 3,500 titles besides other references, it was decided to publish this appendix as a companion volume, which is being brought out simultaneously with the *Psychology of Character* under the title of *A Bibliography of Personality and Character* (340 pp. Sci.-Art Publishers, Cambridge, Mass.).

A. A. ROBACK.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE demand for a second edition within eight months of the original publication of a work which certainly could not appeal to the proverbial running reader indicates that there are many thinking men and women who still look upon the subject of character as one worthy of investigation. Indeed, in some colleges, courses in personality have been initiated through the medium of the present volume.

Since the book was completed in manuscript, naturally many new articles and books have appeared on character and personality, but it would be out of the question to discuss them at present. A few of the more important publications, both recent and earlier writings which had escaped my notice, I commented upon in my *Bibliography of Character and Personality*, in several instances giving an epitome of the material.

There has been nothing specific said in the numerous reviews thus far which would call for revision on my part. Hence the changes in this edition are confined to the correction of a few misprints, the touching up of a phrase here and there (especially when cognizance is to be taken of altered circumstances in the course of the year), and finally the postscript which deals with the fundamental issues raised in the most extensive reviews of the book.

A. A. ROBACK.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

February, 1928.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

THE MS. of *The Psychology of Character* was completed toward the end of 1926. Twenty-five years is a long period so far as scientific progress is concerned, but the last quarter of a century is incommensurable in terms of time. Perhaps more than the carnage and suffering on the part of the many millions, the dark outlook, the feeling of insecurity and the awareness that culture and civilization are no guarantee of justice and liberty, and that the very meaning of the word progress is no longer what it used to be—gnaw at our vitals, with telling consequences. Prior to the first World War there was a general belief in serious circles that we were going forward not only technologically but socially, ethically, and that gradually feuds on a large scale would be a matter of the past. In the year 1951 a bewildered world is anxiously wondering whether a World War III is not likely to envelop the globe in actual flames and reduce it to an arid desert. The discovery that our prospect was an illusion is perhaps one of the greatest drawbacks against attaining that sense of equilibrium which was the norm in the first decade of the century.

At present every reflective and productive individual cannot help consciously or unconsciously asking himself whether his effort is worth the pains, whether some cataclysm of global dimensions will not, in the near future, annul everything in a total devastation. We have been fortunate in wresting many great secrets from nature, but the secret of living peaceably with one another seems to be receding more and more beyond our reach in proportion to our conquest of nature.

This meditation is germane here because we have unfortu-

nately witnessed a most paradoxical phenomenon, viz., that the simplest task, that of *laissez-faire*, is far more difficult than analysing the nucleus of the atom and destroying a whole city with its inhabitants in a single instant. It further goes to prove that our own personality, or character, is less manageable than any part of nature ; and whoever would unravel the secret of unfailingly inducing coöperation and reducing distrust to a negligible minimum will have accomplished much more than splitting the atom. But there is the rub. Nature may be resistant, but cannot employ strategy, will not devise a countermove each time you have made another gain, while man will oppose at every step, and once the opposition revolves around an idea, no matter how egregiously absurd, or infernally wicked, this will gain momentum and turn into an *idée fixe*, which is no longer an idea but a neurosis, if not a psychosis, spreading in every direction. The *physical* substrate, whatever it is, the continuum of mass and energy, is not working at cross purposes with science, is not perverted by dogma but is governed by law. In the physico-chemical world, *force obeys the laws* of nature ; in our social world, *force often imposes the laws* upon mankind, and therein lies the chief difference.

A preface, however, is not the place for even a restricted discussion of this issue, which has been reserved for the chapter headed "Character in an Atomic Age". If the subject has been broached at all, it is because of the need of emphasizing the concrete advance in the physical and natural sciences as against the comparative standstill in the mental and social sciences, *in their application to living*. Not that we have lagged behind in pursuing research from all angles, but we have not the facilities for clinching the results so that they are incontrovertible, and, what is more unfortunate, the results are beset with, if not steeped in, all sorts of emotion.

In the past twenty-five years psychological schools have

expanded, new ones have been established, while others, like the vaunted behavioristic movement, have subsided, but it is gratifying to know that the trend in general has been in the direction of the point of view developed in this volume a quarter of a century ago, despite the fact that at the time, the original portion of the book was regarded as out of keeping with the theories of the day. In 1927 the mechanistic conception had reached its peak. From all sides, there were cries to throw the instinct doctrine overboard. Psychoanalysis was still busy with number-juggling and exploring complexes. The core of character was not perceived because of the various fungi that had surrounded it, and the hormic nature of man was ignored (except by McDougall and Adler, the latter of whom, however, adulterated it with adventitious matter); and for a time it seemed as if I were taking refuge in an antiquated structure.

Things have changed since. The efficacy of the stimulus-response bond is now being questioned even in mechanistic circles. The holistic pattern is receiving more and more attention generally. Problems of motivation are again centred around the theory of instincts or drives, yes even in their hereditary connotation; and psychoanalysis has veered from the study of neuroses to an analysis of character, as the more fundamental of the two. Freud himself has initiated the turn, but he had already been aware of the rumblings within his own camp, and the dissidents known as neo-Freudians (or, as I would call them, para-Freudians) have been occupying themselves less with the *id* and more with the *ego* and the *superego*. Thus the stone which once was rejected by the builders has become the cornice of the wall.

In the present edition the constructive portion, which represents the author's own conception, remains the same. If anything, the findings have been confirmed by recent work in the mental and social sciences, and perhaps some of those

who have, within the last decade, brought serious objections against accepted beliefs in psychology or psychoanalysis will be surprised to find that they had been anticipated in the first edition of *The Psychology of Character*, with which most of them are apparently unfamiliar, having lived then in German-speaking countries.

The historical part of the book remains naturally unchanged, as little has transpired to require revision in this connection. Many of the chapters, however, on contemporary activities have been amplified, and six new chapters have been added. Psycho-analysis and psychometrics, or the empirical approach to character and personality, have been especially exploited.

Since books published simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic occasionally come out under different titles, some readers may well wonder whether *The Psychology of Personality*, by the same author, brought out last year (Cambridge, Mass., Sci-Art Publishers) covers the same material as the present volume. Let it be known, therefore, that the books are entirely different in presentation, scope, and even in subject-matter.

A. A. ROBACK.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

1st June, 1951.

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PART I
HISTORICAL

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“ Von einem Menschen schlechthin sagen zu können: ‘ Er hat einen Charakter ’ heisst sehr viel von ihm nicht allein *gesagt*, sondern auch *gerühmt*: denn das ist eine Seltenheit, die Hochachtung gegen ihn und Bewunderung erregt.”¹

Kant: *Anthropologie*, Part II, Sec. III.

THERE is one department in psychology in which no progress seems to have been made for about two thousand years, in spite of the fact that it was perhaps the first topic to attract attention. It may be surmised that I am here referring to the interlocked subjects of character and temperament which, though forming the core of any study of human nature, have continued to remain in the speculative stage, while other psychological material was being subjected to experimental scrutiny. Only recently have these siblings been examined anew under the more comprehensive head of personality, and in this fresh survey the place assigned to *character* has been so circumscribed as to portend the eventual eviction of this concept from the study of psychology. It is for this reason, at least in part, that its claim to consideration should be championed.

Temperament has fared better, because of its falling distinctly into the psychological field, but it would be a difficult task to treat the one without introducing material properly belonging to the other, inasmuch as the concepts even to-day have not been sufficiently differentiated, as will be evident in the course of this volume.

¹ “ Simply to be able to say of a man: ‘ he has *character* ’ is not only to *say* a great deal of him, but to *extol* him; for that is a rare attribute which calls forth respect towards him and admiration.”

Stern, drawing the distinction between differential psychology and characterology, remarks that of the latter's two main problems only that of temperament is "about to be made accessible to our exact methods ; as regards the difficult and fundamental problem of character, however, there has scarce been an attempt made to approach it according to modern procedure." ¹ For this reason, he explains, the topic of character, in spite of its importance, is hardly touched on in his book.

The ancients have given evidence of almost uncanny insight in many of the scattered observations on both character and temperament to be found in the various books of wisdom. Yet for centuries the psychology of character seems to have made no advance—even after experimental psychology was making prodigious strides in at least some of its departments ; and, what is more noteworthy, after the subject of character had already become a central topic in ethics, religion, and education.

But perhaps it is in the latter circumstance that the trouble is to be sought. Perhaps character, as some very recent writers maintain or at any rate imply, is not closely bound up with psychology, and is merely a concept to which are attached the possibilities of moral predication, so that it can easily be dispensed with in text-books on mind or behaviour.

Causes of Neglect. Certainly this situation, at least in part, explains the neglect of this important subject, but it does not serve to excuse or justify it. While we must concede that character is not an introspective datum, nor even a sub-conscious fact, it nevertheless constitutes an integral part of personality ; and the study of personality has been rather in the ascendant than on the wane. We can just as easily dispose of intelligence from a psychological angle as character. Even assuming that character possesses primarily an ethical denotation, must we not realize that this unity of behaviour

¹ W. Stern : *Die differentielle Psychologie*, etc., p. 12 (1911 and 1921).

or uniform response which in most cases permits of prediction and in any case serves to illuminate past responses, especially in the legal sphere, is psychological subject matter *per se* and furthermore is grounded in psychological causes? Whatever objections may be raised against the psychological treatment of character may also be brought against the discussion of intelligence in psychology.

Those who see in character nothing but a moral concept and a psychological fiction are oblivious to the fact that the unity and uniformity of certain behaviour forms, even in new situations (thus ruling out the mere operation of habit), cannot be considered in anything but a psychological light. Surely there is a definite integration, the result of innate dispositions and acquired tendencies, which corresponds to the concept under discussion.

Character—a Datum of Psychology. I should not find it difficult even to subscribe to the notion that we are introspectively, or rather analytically, aware of our character, both before and after action. It is not because he is regarded as a gentleman that the man of character can readily place himself on the scale of social agents, just as the man of intellect does not require a series of intelligence tests in order to become aware of his mental capacity.

On the practical side of life the study of character will always have its advocates. The plea of Fernald which begins with the words "It is herein attempted to indicate that personality studies should recognize character as an integral field of inquiry" and ends with the conclusion that "character study then is entitled to recognition as a categorical entity; since it is an integral field of inquiry having its own locus, mechanisms and event . . ." ¹ is encouraging especially in view of the negative attitude taken by the more behaviouristically-inclined psychologists.

¹ G. G. Fernald: "Character *vs.* Intelligence in Personality Studies," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 1920. Vol. xv.

It is not to be overlooked, however, that in their general use of the word *character*, clinicians, social workers, administrators, and others who represent the practical sphere of life, have no clear-cut conception to work on, but understand by the term a conglomeration of numerous traits and qualities. Fernald, for instance, regards intelligence as the capacity or degree of personality, and character as the quality of personality, and on the strength of this division, he makes the rather suggestive remark that "character modifications continue to be reflected in behaviour after intelligence development ceases".¹

Spoilt by Ethical Atmosphere. The most general use of the word "character" in everyday life is invariably coloured with moral predicates. We may think of a man as having a poor memory, we may be aware that our friend cannot concentrate, that his perception is slow,² without his incurring our displeasure, but no sooner do we discover some weakness about his character than we are led to take an altogether different attitude. Not only do we begin to rely less and less upon him, but we treat him as if he himself is to blame for the particular defect.

The popular mind has never distinguished more than two kinds of characters. They were either good or bad, strong or weak, noble or base, of a high or a low type; and all these predicates are appraisals rather than statements of facts. To say that a man has no character is a euphemistic equivalent for the expression that he has a low type of character, and again, when Pope describes women as having no character at all, meaning that they are fickle and inconstant, the utterance again occurs in a slightly derogatory sense. All such references are calculated to evoke in the listener or reader a certain attitude or indicate that the speaker or writer has assumed such and such a position.

¹ G. G. Fernald: "Character as an Integral Mentality Function," *Mental Hygiene*, 1916. Vol. ii, p. 452.

It seems to be this very circumstance, however, that proved detrimental to the growth of the study of character. Just because it was born or bred in an ethical milieu, the psychologist would be apt to disown it as spurious, while the moralist, on the other hand, after fully adopting it, would be prone to spoil it through sheer over-indulgence. Thus we see that between the neglect of a prejudiced parent and the exaggerated attentions of a zealous foster-parent, an arrested development has been the lot of our subject. And the more strongly moralists emphasized the cardinal importance of character for ethics, and incidentally in so doing encroached on the territory of other people, the more were experimental psychologists inclined to dispose of the whole matter with a word or two, sometimes barely mentioning such terms as character, temperament, and even self and personality, although more recently the latter concept has come to swallow up the other three.

In the present work only the strictly psychological phase of character will be discussed. The ethical and pedagogical aspects that deal with character-building and for the most part contain hortatory appeals in behalf of the moral life do not enter here. Nor will the psychotechnical side of character be gone into at present. It is quite obvious that the theoretical examination of character must antedate both these inquiries, and more especially the latter.

CHAPTER II

THE LITERARY CHARACTEROLOGISTS

Dawn of Characterology. The history of the study of character is probably as old as mankind. So soon as our remote ancestors began to associate with one another in various activities, it was inevitable that certain rough generalizations should be made and handed down from generation to generation. With the advent of Greek culture, the study became more articulate; and the third century B.C. marks the beginning of a serious approach to the subject—but from two different avenues. This bifurcated course with occasional intertwining has continued to this very day.

Double Approach to Subject. The literary avenue which requires the penetration and intuitive synthesis of the worldly mind has been trodden on even by some of the biblical writers as may be attested by the wisdom of Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, and the utterances of Ben-Sirach in the Apocryphal books. These Hebrew authors in their quaint characterization of the fool, the scoffer, the wise man, the God-fearing person, the virtuous woman, etc., Plato in his dialogues, and more particularly Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, present portraits of universal types. The fine delineation of the magnanimous man or the classification of angry people in his chapter on gentleness immediately tempts us to regard Aristotle as the founder of the dynasty which in reality began with his pupil and successor, the learned Theophrastus, who, in a series of thirty sketches of human types, took his place at once as the pioneer in characterology.

The semi-scientific path which, after considerable meandering, opened up into the highway of modern endocrinology was, as is well-known, cleared by Hippocrates, whose theory of

the humors as the basis of our temperaments has, except for the modification of the Græco-Roman physician Galen, a few centuries later, withstood the onslaughts of time perhaps more successfully than any other ancient doctrine.

Theophrastus as Pioneer on Descriptive side. The tradition inaugurated by Theophrastus concerned itself with merely *describing* the various characters; and its votaries certainly gave evidence of *understanding* the men and women they came in contact with. It is thanks to these writers of antiquity and their imitators that we can say with a high degree of confidence that human nature, though ages and oceans apart, is about the same wherever found, i.e., the same differences among individuals will be discovered whether they be ancient Greeks or twentieth century Americans—a fact which would have interested the ninety-nine year old Theophrastus (at the time he wrote his *Characters*) even more than that which, as he tells us in his proem, forever puzzled him, viz. “Why it is that while all Greece lies under the same sky and all the Greeks are educated alike, it has befallen us to have characters variously constituted”.

Take for instance the following portrayal of the flatterer, and ask yourself whether its remoteness in time and place from our present environment makes it a whit less realistic than any modern account could be.

Flattery may be considered as a mode of companionship degrading but profitable to him who flatters.

The Flatterer is a person who will say as he walks with another, “Do you observe how people are looking at you? This happens to no man in Athens but you. A compliment was paid to you yesterday in the Porch. More than thirty persons were sitting there; the question was started, Who is our foremost man? Everyone mentioned you first, and ended by coming back to your name.” With these and the like words, he will remove a morsel of wool from his patron’s coat; or if a speck of chaff has been laid on the other’s hair by the wind, he will pick it off; adding with a laugh, “Do you see? Because I have not met

you for two days, you have had your beard full of white hairs ; although no one has darker hair for his years than you." Then he will request the company to be silent while the great man is speaking, and will praise him, too, in his hearing, and mark his approbation at a pause with "True"; or he will laugh at a frigid joke, and stuff his cloak into his mouth as if he could not repress his amusement. He will request those whom he meets to stand still until "his Honour" has passed. He will buy apples and pears and bring them in and give to the children in the father's presence ; adding with kisses, "Chicks of a good father." Also when he assists at the purchase of slippers, he will declare that the foot is more shapely than the shoe. If his patron is approaching a friend, he will run forward and say, "He is coming to you," and then turning back, "I have announced you." He is just the person, too, who can run errands to the Women's Market without drawing breath. He is the first of the guests to praise the wine ; and to say, as he reclines next the host, "How delicate is your fare !" and (taking up something from the table) "Now this—how excellent it is !" He will ask his friend if he is cold, and if he would like to put on something more ; and before the words are spoken, will wrap him up. Moreover he will lean towards his ear and whisper with him ; or will glance at him as he talks to the rest of the company. He will take the cushions from the slave in the theatre, and spread them on the seat with his own hands. He will say that his patron's house is well built, that his land is well planted, and that his portrait is like.

In short the Flatterer may be observed saying and doing all things by which he conceives that he will gain favour.

Nature of Literary Method. What the literary characterologists have done, then, is to label a mode of behaviour according as it affects others and then proceed to describe the essentials of this mode of behaviour. The list of such modes of behaviour must naturally remain arbitrary, and as we shall presently see, this is the chief fault of that extensive school. The trend which the study of temperament has taken, on the other hand, is bound up with the more scientific purpose of *explaining* differences in types. Hence the classification,

to begin with, must be condensed and attached to some correlational scheme. In this way, Galen was able to assign a definite cause for each of the four outstanding types of individuals in the preponderance of the so-called bodily humors. The sanguine person, always full of enthusiasm, was said to owe his temperament to the strength of the blood, the melancholic's sadness was supposed to be due to the over-functioning of the black bile, the choleric's irritability was attributed to the predominance of the yellow bile in the body, while the phlegmatic person's apparent slowness and apathy were traced to the influence of the phlegm.

But to revert to the fundamental differences between the two approaches to the study of individual types, the one leading to the *description* of a large number of characters, the other calling for the *explanation* of a limited number of qualities on a physical basis, we note that throughout its long history, the subject, or perhaps one should say the twin subjects, had its two lines of followers without it becoming apparent until comparatively recently that after all *temperament was bound up with the affective side of man, while character had its being in a universe of conduct.*

Limitations of Theophrastus' Method. The limitations of the literary and descriptive characterologists can be gathered from an analysis of the titles in Theophrastus' sketches and are even more obvious in the host of imitators who introduced many new characters. In the first place, no one could venture to claim that Theophrastus has included all, or the majority, or even the most important human characters in his book. Furthermore, in spite of his gift for definition which seems to have been peculiar to the Greek philosophers, the description which follows his definition does not always correspond with it. But worse still, a number of the statements made in the various sketches might fit any one of several characters. There is considerable overlapping in the relatively small number of sketches. Much of what the boastful man and the

vulgarian are guilty of doing, the boor will do also ; and how can we draw the line, notwithstanding the topical definitions, between the unreasonable man and the offensive person, between the garrulous man and the loquacious man ?

In addition, Theophrastus' conception of character is a rather miscellaneous one. The offensive man who is charged with a "distressing neglect of the person" is treated in the same series as the flatterer and the patron of rascals. Yet a little reflection will make it clear that the flatterer is criticized, not because of his actions but for his motives, while the offensive man is blamed for his actions only, as he certainly does not intend to be offensive. Again, these qualities which are universal can hardly be compared with such a circumscribed trait as the patronizing of rascals ; and the disciples of Theophrastus of whom there have been many, beginning with the Renaissance, are even more open to this objection.

It is extremely difficult to determine just where to begin in the history of modern characterology,¹ for there is much

¹ Aldington's *Book of Characters*, published quite recently, is the best source-book of that kind. In this painstaking compilation, the author has brought together some five hundred short character studies from the time of Theophrastus to the eighteenth century British and French writers. Had he chosen to expand the volume, he doubtless would have added to his material several sources which we now miss in his anthology, such as *The English Theophrastus (or the manners of the age being the modern characters of the court, the town and the city)*, published in 1702 and attributed to Abel Boyer ; *Characters*—transcript made by and for the Reverend Philip Bliss ; *Confused Characters of Conceited Coxcombs*, by "Verax Philobasileus" (1661) and some of the lively descriptions in *The Lover*, one of Steele's numerous periodicals.

George Eliot's *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, Thackeray's *Book of Snobs*, and Gay's *Miniature Pictures* (1781) might be added to the list. Fawcett's *Social Silhouettes* portrays American characters of recent years, by throwing into relief some special foible of the heroes and heroines.

On the other hand, we must not suppose that every book labelled "Characters" or "Characteristics" properly falls into our discourse. Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, and also his *Second Characters*, treat of subjects entirely different from that under discussion, as does Carlyle's

depiction of traits to be found in nearly every genre of writing. It is possible to begin with Chaucer as at any rate the first English sketcher of characters. His portraits of the merchant, the lawyer, the nun, the haberdasher, the friar, etc., are vivid descriptions of those types, even though they are too highly saturated with local color and too deeply cast in a narrative mould to possess any psychological value for our purpose. *A fortiori* must the two pamphlets which appeared about the middle of the sixteenth century, Awdeley's *Fraternity of Vagabonds* and Harman's *Caveat or Warning for Cursetors*, be ruled out of this category. They possess the germ of this type of writing, but lack the synthesis of characterization.

First Attempts at Characterology in England. Ben Jonson, though not ostensibly engaged in character writing, is perhaps the first English man of letters to have tackled this type of literature, and both in his *Cynthia's Revels* and *Every Man Out of his Humor*, he has given some excellent sketches which are, however, on the whole bare outlines rather than finished portraits.

Hall's *Characterismes of Vertues and Vices*, published in 1608, while patterned after Theophrastus, not only lacks his directness but is influenced in its moralizing by some of the biblical books like Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes—a fact which seems to have escaped the classical scholar Jebb in his introduction to the translation of Theophrastus! Hence Hall's rhetoric and hankering after antithesis, which Jebb with all his fine critical sense is at a loss to explain.

Sir Thomas Overbury and his associates whose collection appeared in 1614 (*Characters or Witty Descriptions of the Properties of Sundry Persons*) have added a decided literary

Characteristics. Hazlitt's *Characteristics* offers some tangential contact at least with the main problems of motivation, while Madame De Puisieux' *Les Caractères*, spoken of again toward the end of this chapter, is apparently calculated to bring to mind the brilliancy of La Bruyère's famous work by that name, without, however, resembling the latter in any other respect.

flavor to the simple wisdom of their predecessors. In the eighty sketches which make up that collection, few are of universal characters. Many are odd and complex characterizations, such as "A Drunken Dutchman Resident in England", "A Button Maker of Amsterdam", "A Braggadochio Welshman", "A French Cook", "An Almanac Maker". There has been a departure from the original plan of Theophrastus in that different callings and stations in life are introduced; the tailor, the sailor, the soldier, the tinker, the footman, etc. Comparisons are instituted by Overbury in felicitous metaphor. "The virtuous widow," for instance, "is the palm tree that thrives not after the supplanting of her husband. For her children's sake she first marries, for she married that she might have children, and for their sakes she marries no more. She is like the purest gold, only employed for prince's medals, she never receives but one man's impression". The ordinary widow, however, described in the next sketch, "is like the herald's hearse cloth; she serves to many funerals, with very little altering the color. The end of her husband begins in tears, and the end of her tears begins in a husband . . . Her chiefest pride is in the multitude of her suitors; and by them she gains; for one serves to draw on another, and with one at last she shoots out another, as boys do pellets in eldern guns." (This last thought was borrowed by other character writers.)

For our purpose, perhaps the most important item in the collection going under the name of Overbury, is the explanation of the threefold sense of the word character: ¹ (1) "a deep impression", like a letter in the alphabet; (2) "an impress or short emblem, in little comprehending much"; (3) "a picture (real or personal) quaintly drawn, in various colors, all of them

¹ The Earl of Shaftesbury in *The Second Characters* (Rand's edition, p. 90) appears to have had these three senses in mind, hence the title of his book, but he fails to distinguish them clearly, and the third meaning as given by Overbury is entirely missing in Shaftesbury's definitions.

heightened by one shadowing"; and the author synthesizes all three senses with this harmonic turn, "It is a quaint and soft touch of many strings, all shutting up in one musical close; it is wit's descant on any plain song."

The sermonizing note is again struck in Nicholas Breton's collection, which though appearing the following year (1615), is a relapse to a medieval conception. What the author thinks of a parasite, a drunkard, a coward, a fool, a beggar, and an "atheist or most bad man" is much in the way of plain invective, and his reflections are highly subjective.

Psychological Penetration of Earle's Sketches. John Earle, on the other hand, is a worthy descendant of Theophrastus, but whereas the latter describes the behaviour of his characters in particular instances, Earle tells us what they do in general. There is perhaps less wit in his *Micro-cosmographie* (1628) than in the Overbury collection, but there is a great deal more poise and sound judgment. His titles are less whimsically chosen and his pictures developed with greater finish. If Overbury is more worldly, Earle is more of a sage, displaying no cynicism. His paradoxes and epigrams are of a scintillating kind and are yet not exaggerated.

A self-conceited man is one that knows himself so well that he does not know himself. Too excellent well-dones have undone him He is now become his own book which he pores on continually, yet like a truant reader skips over the harsh places and surveys only that which is pleasant. In the speculation of his own good parts his eyes, like a drunkard, see all double, and his forces like an old man's spectacles, make a great letter in a small print His walk is still in the fashion of a march, and like his opinion unaccompanied, with his eyes most fixed upon his own person, or on others with reflection to himself.

"The world's wise man is an able and sufficient wicked man. It is a proof of his sufficiency that he is not called wicked but wise . . . His conclusion is commonly one of these two, either a great man or hanged."

A flatterer is a dunce to him for he can tell him nothing but what he knew before : and yet he loves him too because he is like himself. . . .

"The pretender to learning is one that would make all others more fools than himself, for though he knows nothing, he would not have the world know so much. He conceits nothing in learning but the opinion, which he seeks to purchase without it, though he might with less labor cure his ignorance than hide it."

"The affected man is an extraordinary man in ordinary things, one that would go a strain beyond himself and is caught in it. A man that overdoes all things with great solemnity of circumstance and whereas with more negligence he might pass better, makes himself with a great deal of endeavor ridiculous."

Earle refers to the bowling alley as a place where there are three things thrown away besides bowls, viz., "time, money and curses" and the last ten for one. It is there that one can best discover friends "especially in the losers, where you have a fine variety of impatience, whilst some fret, some rail, some swear and others more ridiculously comfort themselves with philosophy". In this sentence, Earle seems to allude to the four temperaments in this order: (a) the melancholic, (b) the sanguine, (c) the choleric and (d) the phlegmatic.

Typical Characterizations Display Analytic Sense. One is safe, I believe, in regarding Earle as the most psychological of all the British literary characterologists. First of all he is comprehensive in his characterizations, instead of selecting only two or three elements to enlarge on ; but more than that he is analytic. The pictures of his plausible man and meddling man which are reproduced here easily rank with any portrait drawn by Theophrastus.

A Plausible Man

Is one that would fain run an even path in the world, and jut against no man. His endeavor is not to offend,

and his aim the general opinion. His conversation is a kind of continued compliment, and his life a practice of manners. The relation he bears to others, a kind of fashionable respect, not friendship but friendliness, which is equal to all and general, and his kindnesses seldom exceed courtesies. He loves not deeper mutualities, because he would not take sides, nor hazard himself on displeasures, which he principally avoids. At your first acquaintance with him he is exceeding kind and friendly, and at your twentieth meeting after but friendly still. He has an excellent command over his patience and tongue, especially the last, which he accommodates always to the times and persons, and speaks seldom what is sincere, but what is civil. He is one that uses all companies, drinks all healths, and is reasonable cool in all religions. (He considers who are friends to the company, and speaks well where he is sure to hear of it again.) He can listen to a foolish discourse with an applausive attention, and conceal his laughter at nonsense. Silly men much honour and esteem him, because by his fair reasoning with them as with men of understanding, he puts them into an erroneous opinion of themselves, and makes them forwarder hereafter to their own discovery. He is one rather well thought on than beloved, and that love he has is more of whole companies together than any one in particular. Men gratify him notwithstanding with a good report, and whatever vices he has besides, yet having no enemies, he is sure to be an honest fellow.

A Meddling Man

Is one that has nothing to do with his business, and yet no man busier than he, and his business is most in his face. He is one who thrusts himself violently into all employments, unsent for, unfeed, and many times unthanked; and his part in it is only an eager bustling, that rather keeps ado than does anything. He will take you aside, and question you of your affair, and listen with both ears, and look earnestly, and then it is nothing so much yours as his. He snatches what you are doing out of your hands, and cries "Give it me", and does it worse, and lays an engagement upon you too, and you must thank him for his pains. He lays you down an hundred wild plots, all impossible things, which you must be ruled by perforce, and he delivers them with a serious and counselling forehead; and there is a great deal more wisdom in this forehead than his head.

He will woo for you, solicit for you, and woo you to suffer him ; and scarce anything done, wherein his letter, or his journey, or at least himself is not seen, if he have no task in it else, he will rail yet on some side, and is often beaten when he need not. Such men never thoroughly weigh any business but are forward only to show their zeal, when many times this forwardness spoils it, and then they cry they have done what they can, that is, as much hurt. Wise men still deprecate these men's kindnesses and are beholding to them rather to let them alone ; as being one trouble more in all business, and which a man shall be hardest rid of.

Similarly his characterization of the rash man, the affected man, the flatterer, the foolishly reserved man who is " a fool with discretion," the discontented man, the mere great man and the coward who himself " is most commonly fierce against the coward . . . for the opinion of valor is a good protection to those who dare not use it . . ." are all not without psychological interest.

Although Earle has been dwelt on at greater length than was intended, it will be in place perhaps to cite his description of the staid man who might, in our own day, be regarded as the man of character.

A Stayed Man

Is a man : one that has taken order with himself, and sets a rule to those lawlessnesses within him : whose life is distinct and in method, and his actions, as it were, cast up before : not loosed into the world's vanities, but gathered up and contracted in his station : not scattered into many pieces of businesses, but that one course he takes, goes through with. A man firm and standing in his purposes, not heaved off with each wind and passion : that squares his expence to his coffers, and makes the total first, and then the items. One that thinks what he does, and does what he says, and foresees what he may do before he purposes. One whose " if I can " is more than another's assurance ; and his doubtful tale before some men's protestations :—this is confident of nothing in futurity, yet his conjectures oft true prophecies :—that makes a

pause still betwixt his ear and belief, and is not too hasty to say after others. One whose tongue is strung up like a clock till the time, and then strikes, and says much when he talks little :—that can see the truth betwixt two wrangles, and sees them agree even in that they fall out upon : that speaks no rebellion in a bravery or talks big from the spirit of sack. A man cool and temperate in his passions, not easily betrayed by his choler :—that vies not oath with oath, nor heat with heat, but replies calmly to an angry man, and is too hard for him too :—that can come fairly off from captains' companies, and neither drink nor quarrel. One whom no ill hunting sends home discontented, and makes him swear at his dogs, and family. One not hasty to pursue the new fashion, nor yet affectedly true to his old round breeches ; but gravely handsome, and to his place, which suits him better than his taylor : active in the world without disquiet, and careful without misery ; yet neither unguilphy in his pleasure, nor a seeker of business, but has his hour for both. A man that seldom laughs violently, but his mirth is a cheerful look : of a composed and settled countenance, not set, nor much alterable with sadness or joy. He affects nothing so wholly, that he must be a miserable man when he loses it ; but fore-thinks what will come hereafter, and spares fortune his thanks and curses. One that loves his credit, not his word reputation ; yet can save both without a duel. Whose entertainments to greater men are respectful, not complimentary ; and to his friends plain, not rude. A good husband, father, master ; that is, without doting, pampering familiarity. A man well poised in all humours, in whom nature shewed most geometry, and he has not spoilt the work. A man of more wisdom than wittiness, and brain than fancy ; and abler to anything than to make verses.

The Logician of Characterologists. The distinctive feature of Thomas Fuller's few character studies is the classificatory tendency. The writers before him, and indeed even those who followed him, spoke of whole classes with one sweep. At most, they divided their characters into good or bad, or excellent and ordinary, such as the virtuous widow and the ordinary widow, the mere dull physician and the surgeon ; but Fuller is the logician of the seventeenth century character portrayers. His definitions are cast in a philosophical mould.

"The liar is one that makes a trade to sell falsehoods with intent to deceive." "The harlot is one that herself is both merchant and merchandise which she selleth for profit and hath pleasure given her into the bargain, and yet remains a great loser." Thus he classifies and sub-classifies his liars and favorites, and is always anxious to discriminate between terms.

In Samuel Butler we have the most pretentious character writer of the period. Some of his sketches are veritable essays. The most psychological of these treat of the proud man, the philosopher, the fantastic, the melancholy man, the curious man, the fanatic, the prater, the medicine-taker (who in our own day would be called the neurotic) and the over-doer.

Richard Flecknoe's *Enigmatical Characters* (1658) may be cited here only because of one truly psychological drawing which the book contains, viz., *Of One Who Troubles Herself With Everything*.

Decline of Character Writing in Eighteenth Century. The eighteenth century did not see such a luxuriant crop of literary characterologists as its predecessor. *The English Theophrastus or the Manners of the Age* (anonymous) published in 1702, is far from bearing out its title. The book is rather a collection of sparkling sayings and epigrams derived from many sources, particularly from La Rochefoucauld; and even the author's own reflections are patterned after the French so-called moralists, and adapted to the taste of the English readers, with perhaps a pinch of stronger seasoning. To quote only one or two remarks of this acute observer who wrote more than two hundred years ago: "To give a true reason of *constancy* and *inconstancy* is more the business of an *anatomist* or *naturalist* than of a moral philosopher, for they rather depend upon the frame of the *body* than the constitution of the mind . . . If divorce was to be come by without the trouble of suing for an Act of Parliament, 't would raise the pleasures of a married life and sink the delights

of intriguing." As a critic of society, the author can well take his place with the most uncompromising of to-day.

Character Drawing in the Periodical Essay. Steele and Addison, through the medium of the various periodicals which are associated with their names: the *Tatler*, the *Spectator*, the *Guardian*, and the *Lover*, have contributed a number of both character and portrait studies of which Addison's "Character of a Salamander" in the *Spectator* is a remarkable anticipation of modern sex pathology, as may be observed from the following quotation :

There is a Species of Women, whom I shall distinguish by the name of Salamanders. Now a Salamander is a kind of Heroine in Chastity, that treads upon Fire and lives in the midst of Flames without being hurt. A Salamander knows no Distinction of Sex in those she converses with, grows familiar with a Stranger at first Sight, and is not so narrow-spirited as to observe whether the Person she talks to be in Breeches or in Petticoats. She admits a Male Visitant to her Bed-side, plays with him a whole Afternoon at Pickette, walks with him two or three Hours by Moon-light ; and is extremely Scandalized at the unreasonableness of an Husband, or the Severity of a Parent, that would debar the Sex from such innocent Liberties. Your Salamander is therefore a perpetual Declaimer against Jealousie, and Admirer of the French Good-breeding, and a great Stickler for Freedom in Conversation. In short, the Salamander lives in an invincible State of Simplicity and Innocence ; Her Constitution is preserv'd in a kind of natural Frost ; She wonders what People mean by Temptations ; and defies Mankind to do their worst. Her Chastity is engaged in a constant Ordeal, or fiery Trial ; (like good Queen Emma) the pretty Innocent walks blindfold among burning Plough-shares, without being scorched or singed by them.

Mandeville the Trenchant. If I make a slight digression here in the subject matter, while yet keeping to the chronological order of the authors, to consider the work of Bernard de Mandeville, it is because that fearless and ruthless dissector of society presents an unvarnished picture of human nature and offers, incidentally, some observations which may be

applied in the view on character set forth in this book. Mandeville, whose fame is due to his *Fable of the Bees*, may be regarded as the English counterpart of the French literary moralists, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère and Rousseau, to whom, as his name suggests, he is most probably related racially. To the critical spirit which inspired the former two writers, however, he brings a discursive method which renders his quasi-nihilistic views even more efficacious. Like his French fellow-believers, he indicts man *en masse*, claiming that the "moral virtues are the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride".

"There is no man," he continues to say, "of what capacity or penetration soever that is wholly proof against the witchcraft of flattery, if artfully performed and suited to his abilities

A Precursor of Nietzsche. In his thoroughgoing *Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue*, he as much as denies the existence of this quality, except in an artificial sense. We must keep this in mind as bearing on the central discussion of character in Chapter IX. How does he achieve his end? By analyzing generally accepted virtues into their mental components and in the light of the situation of which they are a part.

Pity, though it is the most gentle and the least mischievous of all our passions, is yet as much a frailty of our nature as anger, pride or fear. The weakest minds have generally the greatest share of it, for which reason none are more compassionate than women and children. . . . It is an impulse of nature that consults neither the public interest nor our own reason, it may produce evil as well as good. It has helped to destroy the honour of virgins, and corrupted the integrity of judges; and whoever acts from it as a principle, what good soever he may bring to the society, has nothing to boast of but that he has indulged a passion that has happened to be beneficial to the public. There is no merit in saving an innocent babe ready to drop into the fire; the action is neither good nor bad, and what benefit soever the infant

received we only obliged ourselves; for to have seen it fall, and not striven to hinder it, would have caused a pain, which self-preservation compelled us to prevent: nor has a rich prodigal, that happens to be of a commiserating temper, and loves to gratify his passions, greater virtue to boast of, when he relieves an object of compassion with what to himself is a trifle.

Asylum in Religion. Mandeville is ready to admit that the case of the man who, from his love of goodness, can part with what he values himself is different; yet even such a one derives pleasure out of the act by contemplating his own worth, which contemplation is a sign of pride. Thus has Spinoza's dictum that "virtue is its own reward" paled under the searchlight of Mandeville, who, however, fearing lest his negativism has led him too far, turns to "true religion" for his solution and salvation. To sum up Mandeville's position: Mankind has essentially one character, manifesting itself in various phases of weakness or frailty. Not reason but passions govern us, hence our only refuge is in guidance of the Deity. And if we doubt the sincerity of Mandeville's injunction, as there is reason to do, we must conclude that the author of the celebrated *Fable of the Bees* is a follower of Mephistopheles in his moral nihilism.

A SCEPTIC TO THE RESCUE OF HUMAN VALUES

It will be surprising to some that the great sceptic David Hume should come to the defence of human dignity in almost the same words as his French contemporary Vauvenargues, who was the sanest of the French literary moralists.¹ With his characteristic common sense, this philosopher, the chief opponent of the Common Sense School, recognizes that "it is that comparison" between one animal and another or others of the same species "which regulates our judgment concerning its greatness". That there is a natural difference between merit and demerit, virtue and vice, wisdom and folly, he

¹ See further, section II of this chapter.

continues to say in one of his minor essays *Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature*, "no reasonable man will deny: yet it is evident that in affixing the term, which denotes either our approbation or blame, we are commonly more influenced by comparison than by any fixed unalterable standard in the nature of things."

The incisive logic of Hume's argument to refute the cynicism of many literary philosophers is so rarely referred to in spite of its analytical masterliness that I cannot forbear to quote several passages from this essay. Perhaps no one has brought out the issue so clearly as did Hume, and no one has in my estimation been more successful in turning the tables on the doubting and therefore doubtful moralists than was this sceptic who was viewed with such concern by his racial fellow-philosophers, the members of the "Common Sense" School, which in principle could not but receive greater impetus and support from its adversary's endeavors than from the representations set forth by its own leaders. And it is largely this essay which shows many exponents of Hume's philosophy mistaken when they class him as a hedonist, or a utilitarian, and mention him in one breath with Bentham, the Mills, and Spencer. Indeed Hume's statement "I feel a pleasure in doing good to my friend, because I love him; but do not love him for the sake of that 'pleasure'" might well be mistaken for an utterance of Bishop Butler's.

A Relative Matter. "There is much of a dispute of words in this controversy," says Hume. "When a man denies the sincerity of all public spirit of affection to a country and community, I am at a loss what to think of him. Perhaps he never felt his passion in so clear and distinct a manner as to remove all his doubts concerning its force and reality. But when he proceeds afterwards to reject all private friendship, if no interest or self-love intermix itself; I am then confident that he abuses terms, and confounds the ideas of things; since it is impossible for any one to be so selfish or rather so

stupid, as to make no difference between one man and another, and give no preference to qualities which engage his approbation and esteem. Is he also, say I, as insensible to anger as he pretends to be to friendship? And does injury and wrong no more affect him than kindness or benefits? Impossible: he does not know himself: he has forgotten the movements of his heart; or rather, he makes use of a different language from the rest of his countrymen, and calls not things by their proper names. What say you of natural affection? (I subjoin), Is that also a species of self-love? Yes; all is self-love. *Your* children are loved only because they are yours: *your* friend for a like reason; and *your* country engages you only so far as it has a connection with *yourself*. Were the idea of self removed, nothing would affect you: you would be altogether inactive and insensible: or, if you ever give yourself any movement, it would only be from vanity, and a desire of fame and reputation to this same self. I am willing, reply I, to receive your interpretation of human actions, provided you admit the facts. That species of self-love which displays itself in kindness to others, you must allow to have great influence over human actions, and even greater, on many occasions, than that which remains in its original shape and form. For how few are there, having a family, children, and relations, who do not spend more on the maintenance and education of these than on their own pleasures? This, indeed, you justly observe may proceed from their self-love, since the prosperity of their family and friends is one, or the chief, of their pleasures, as well as their chief honour. Be you also one of these selfish men, and you are sure of every one's good opinion and good-will; or, not to shock your ears with their expressions, the self-love of every one, and mine among the rest, will then incline us to serve you, and speak well of you.

Analysis of Fallacy. "In my opinion, there are two things which have led astray those philosophers that have insisted so much on the selfishness of man. In the *first* place, they found

that every act of virtue or friendship was attended with a secret pleasure ; whence they concluded, that friendship and virtue could not be disinterested. But the fallacy of this is obvious. The virtuous sentiment or passion produces the pleasure, and does not arise from it. I feel a pleasure in doing good to my friend, because I love him ; but do not love him for the sake of that pleasure.

“ In the *second* place, it has always been found, that the virtuous are far from being indifferent to praise ; and therefore they have been represented as a set of vainglorious men, who had nothing in view but the applauses of others. But this also is a fallacy. It is very unjust in the world, when they find any tincture of vanity in a laudable action, to depreciate it upon that account, or ascribe it entirely to that motive. The case is not the same with vanity, as with other passions. Where avarice or revenge enters into any seemingly virtuous action, it is difficult for us to determine how far it enters, and it is natural to suppose it the sole actuating principle. But vanity is so closely allied to virtue, and to love the fame of laudable actions approaches so near the love of laudable actions for their own sake, that these passions are more capable of mixture, than any other kinds of affection ; and it is almost impossible to have the latter without some degree of the former. Accordingly we find, that this passion for glory is always warped and varied according to the particular taste or disposition of the mind on which it falls. Nero had the same vanity in driving a chariot, that Trajan had in governing the empire with justice and ability. To love the glory of virtuous deeds is a sure proof of the love of virtue.”

Importance of Outcome. Thus does Hume vindicate the values which were in danger of being relegated to the mythological limbo by a set of wits whose very brilliancy occluded their horizon. A fundamental issue is involved here, even if the term character should not be restricted in the narrower sense. Unless we recognize the significance of comparison and

discrimination, especially as regards the strivings and intentions of different individuals, we might as well give up our quest ; for it will be quite easy by pursuing the same nihilistic method with respect to other qualities to show that they are essentially the same in all individuals, and differ but in circumstance. Clearly then there would be no room for a scheme of types on any basis, if we embrace this negativistic view-point. Hence our dwelling at length on the controversy between the deniers and the upholders of human values. That this question is in no way influenced by a religious *Weltanschauung* or decided by an ethic "from above" is amply proven by Hume's protagonism on the side of the values. Surely no one with so much as a smattering of his life and philosophy would venture to class him with the religious or moral dogmatists. It is just because Hume was the empiricist *par excellence* that he was able to pick out the flaws in the reasoning of the superficial empiricists who degraded the status of man only because they were thinking in terms of absolute standards.

Bucke Atomizes Behavior. Character writing, as an art, declined in the nineteenth century, but it did not disappear. In the *Book of Human Character* (1837), by Charles Bucke, which is a mine of wisdom, drawing for its ore on anecdotes and episodes from history and biography, we have a more useful type of sketch. No longer do we meet with the ribaldry and bias of the early British character writers. Bucke, who is a diminutive Montaigne, in his own way, has endeavored to be objective in his observations, and for that reason his work approaches a scientific inquiry.

In the four hundred and fifty odd thimble studies, almost the whole gamut of human foibles and fortunes is run. By means of apt illustrations, Bucke treats here of persons whom it is difficult to know, who see clearly and yet represent superficially, those who spin too finely, those who can do little things greatly, who waste great powers on subordinate

subjects, whose politeness is altered by the mention of money, who think too much about the past, who are always concerning themselves about the future, who believe their own lies, who break off in the middle, who have elegant manners but vulgar minds, who are cruel in general yet clement in particular, who suspend their natural characters, who being innocent have no regard to appearances, etc. To be sure, the subject-matter of these two volumes is not altogether so distinctly psychological, but after due allowance is made for such apparently, at least for our purpose, irrelevant reflections, as those on "whose opinions we value only in part", those "who are valued at a distance", "who can be judged only in reference to their misfortune", etc., there is still a valuable residue left.

Approaches Psychoanalysis. Bucke still remains a psychological analyst of rare acuteness. Instead of treating characters *en bloc*, and following especially the general notions of the time, he has searched deeper into the recesses of man, looking not for vices but for peculiarities, contradictions, twists in the make-up of man, duality of character, in this way really anticipating the Freudian movement, not forsooth in its principles and methods, but in *noting bits of uniform behavior in different people*, peculiarities which, though Bucke did not go that far, call for explanation, and which in themselves are of great service in throwing important light on the whole life of a given individual. It is, for instance, highly significant that some men are great in minor things. The fact that Gray could turn out perhaps the most perfect poem in the English language, yet could not finish his poem on Education because of its contemplated magnitude, is something to be reckoned with, not only theoretically, but practically in the guidance of talent.

Some of the section headings in Bucke's work seem strangely familiar to followers of the new movement in psychology. I mean such headings as "who give reasons for all they do";

" who give wise reasons for unwise actions " ; " wise men who give unwise counsel ", and the like.

Miscellaneous Addenda. Before concluding the portion on the British contribution to literary characterology, mention might be made of Hazlitt's *Characteristics*, inspired by La Rochefoucauld's maxims. We should also refer to Thackeray's *Book of Snobs*, which, though written in a light vein, is not without insight, and George Eliot's *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, not in its entirety, but in her delineations of Mixtus and Scintilla in " A Half-Breed ", of Touchwood's behaviour in " A Bad Temper ", and in the essays, " A Man Surprised at His Originality ", " A Too Deferential Man ", and " The Watch-Dog of Knowledge ". Edgar Fawcett's *Social Silhouettes* is an excellent example of the narrative-sketch in American literature.

In addition, the various collections extant on both famous and notorious figures, such as biographies of eccentrics, of scoundrels (not necessarily convicted by law) and last, but not least, the short character studies and silhouettes of notables which the English literature of the seventeenth century abounds in.

ESTIMATE OF BRITISH CHARACTEROLOGISTS

The chief defect of the British character writers of the seventeenth century, with the possible exception of Earle and Overbury, is the want of a serious purpose in their approach, as is well illustrated by the fact that *The Whimsies*, published in 1631,¹ and attributed to Richard Brathwait, contains a series of twenty-four characters according to the alphabet, such as an " Almanack-maker ", " A Ballad-monger ", " A Corrant Coiner ", " A Decoy ", an " Exchange man ", a " Forester ", a " Gamester ", etc.

¹ Reprinted in twenty-six copies only, with a preface by J. O. Halliwell, 1859.

Essence of Character Sketch. The dedicatory epistle of this anonymous writer is from the present standpoint more significant than most of the characters depicted. "What else are characters," we read in this epistle, "but stamps or impressions, noting such an especial place, person or office; and leaving such a mark or cognizance upon it, as the conceit may neither taste of too much lightness nor the close of so witty an observance leave too much bitterness, nor the whole passage or series incline to too much dullness? . . . Strong lines have been in request; but they grew disrelishing, because they smelled too much of the lamp and opinionate singularity. Clinchings likewise were held nimble flashes; but affectation spoiled all, and discovered their levity."

Alas, this author, who knows so well what is desirable and yet adopts a puerile method in practice, may truly say of himself:

*Video meliora proboque
Pejora sequor.*

"He writes best" we are told by this sage, "that affects least and effects most. . . . This hath been ever my maxim, that singularity and affectations are antipodes to judgment and discretion. Self-opinion makes a man's self his own minion. He is the true emblem of Narcissus, and dotes more on his own shadow than on others' substance."

As a matter of fact, "Clitus-Alexandrinus," the pseudonymous author, has put his finger on the weak spot of English character writing during that period, which for the most part consisted of squibs and lampoons often garnished with disgusting profanity and such devices as puns, assonance, alliteration, and other effects of a low order.

Chief Fault of British Character Writers. Such is true especially of books like *Confused Characters of Conceited Coxcombs* by "Verax Philobasileus", published in 1661,¹

¹ Reprinted in twenty-six copies only, with a preface by J. O. Halliwell, 1859.

and the motley transcript collection of Philip Bliss entitled *Characters*.¹ The former, addressing himself to the "facetious reader", justifies his invective by pleading that since "characters are descriptions and when the persons described prove vicious and vain, excuse me gentle reader, if this treatise prove so likewise".

It would be only right to state that most of the character writers discussed are possessed of a fine style, employing an excellent diction and happy metaphor. As pamphleteers they are in their element; but as psychological draughtsmen they are failures because they express *their* own emotions instead of observing universal traits. At the bottom of this shortcoming is *provinciality or perhaps insularity*. For the British, character writing is a game which may be started anywhere and left off anywhere. Their skill is incontestable, but what they lack is a sense of *direction*. The French writers manifest a far more serious purpose *seeking that which is common to men and women of all countries* even if they see them only through the medium of their own countrymen. The British, with the exception of Earle, are apt to make much of the *individual* idiosyncrasies; the French perceive the peculiarities of the type, even where they depict an individual.

II

CHARACTER WRITING IN FRANCE

The nation which, next to the English, cultivated the portraiture of human traits is the French. It would take us too far afield to comment on the racial differences as revealed by the character writings of the two peoples, but one can hardly dispute the fact that there are such differences, one

¹ For good reasons this transcript though published was never printed.

of the most striking being the seriousness with which the French characterologists approach their task, as compared with the levity of the English, except in the case of the exhortative writers who border on tedious sermonizing.

La Rochefoucauld. The giant in French character portrayal is of course La Bruyère, but we must not forget that Molière's characters, for instance Alceste in *Le Misanthrope*, or Tartuffe, are life pictures whose behavior intrigues us as students of human character even more than their comical situations entertain us as spectators. Nor must we lose sight of that shrewd observer of society, La Rochefoucauld, whose shafts forever tend to hurt our self-regard. It is true he speaks of human nature in general and is apt to slur individual differences, yet in probing the mainsprings of action, he constantly brings before us certain principles of motivation which are germane to our subject. In this respect, curiously enough, he happens to come nearer our territory in his *Pensées* which he has either suppressed or materially altered in the later edition of his main work, than in the *Maximes* for which he is chiefly known.

How true, e.g., is this thought of La Rochefoucauld's even in our own day of alleged predictability of human behaviour. "Prudence is raised to the skies ; there is no end to the praises which are sung to it. It is the guide of our actions and conduct. It is the master of fortune. It shapes the destiny of empires. Without it, we are beset with all the evils. With it we have all the good in the world, and as a poet once said, if we but possess prudence we lack no divinity, as if to say that we find in prudence all the assistance which we ask of the gods. And yet the most consummate prudence cannot make any guarantees in regard to the slightest effect in the world, since operating on material so changing and so unknown as man is, it cannot execute with certainty a single one of his projects." (*Pensées*, 20.) In spite of this, the French wit seems to believe in a deterministic, or rather in this case, fatalistic philosophy, for,

says he in another place, "notwithstanding a certain amount of uncertainty and variation which is apparent in the world, there may yet be observed a definite secret concatenation and order regulated for all times by Providence, which brings it about that everything marches along in proper place and follows the course of its destiny." (*Pensées*, 69.)

Needless to say, many of La Rochefoucauld's severe and most *parti pris* judgments in the interest of his doctrine that egoism is the sole root of all our actions may be taken with a grain of salt by modern psychology. When, for instance, he traces curiosity back to the selfish impulse of appearing superior to others, he fails to examine this universal tendency as manifested by infants, animals, and savages, who are not yet tainted with the vices of a civilization as La Rochefoucauld sees it. Nor does he appreciate that curiosity expresses itself in a variety of ways and is not confined to the object of scholarship.¹

The nearest La Rochefoucauld comes to differentiating men is in the section "De la différence des esprits" of his *Réflexions Diverses*. The word "esprit" in French is practically untranslatable, and does not quite answer to our term "intelligence". It partly includes what is sometimes spoken of as character in the recent literature. Thus the detailed classification of the various forms of *esprit*, such as *bel esprit*, *esprit adroit*, *bon esprit*, *esprit utile*, *esprit d'affaires*, *esprit fin*, *esprit de finesse*, *esprit de feu*, *esprit brillant*, *esprit de détail*, etc., falls within our universe of discourse and may well be considered in the light of modern analysis.

La Rochefoucauld's observations give the impression that their author might have made a far more important psychological contribution, if he had only exerted himself. As it is,

¹ It is interesting to note that La Rochefoucauld's great contemporary, Pascal, remarks similarly in his *Pensées* that curiosity is but vanity. "Most commonly we desire knowledge only that we may talk of it. Otherwise people would not cross the sea if they could say nothing about it."

however, his thoughts should be given more prominence in books dealing with motivation, especially as many of his and La Bruyère's *aperçus* make their appearance in the more recent psychological literature as newly-discovered facts.

La Bruyère's General Condemnation of the Species Man.

The richest material on the study of human nature is to be found in La Bruyère's *Les Caractères*. While also judging men collectively in the manner of La Rochefoucauld, he is less of the doctrinaire and more inclined to recognize that there is a variety of characters. Of the seventeen chapters constituting the book for which his name is justly famous, that on Mankind is the most important. La Bruyère, if I may use an *oxymoron* figure, is benevolently severe. "Let us not be angry with men," he opens up this chapter, "when we see them cruel, ungrateful, unjust, proud, egotists, and forgetful of others; they are made so, it is their nature, we might just as well quarrel with a stone for falling to the ground or with a fire when the flames ascend." It would be possible, however, to take a less charitable view of our author. He may be said to extenuate a minor fault of man in order to heap a greater one on him, and what he says on that score is highly significant, especially as it tends to corroborate La Rochefoucauld's more direct conclusions. "In one sense men are not fickle, or only in trifles; they change their habits, language, outward appearance, their rules of propriety and sometimes their taste, but they always preserve their bad morals and adhere tenaciously to what is ill and to their indifference for virtue." To seek consistency in this perspicacious Frenchman would be a futile task. After all, a writer who does not aim to be discursive, is exempt from the obligation to work out all the implications of his views.

Samples of La Bruyère's Outstanding Human Types.

But we must remember that La Bruyère is better known for his character portrayals than for his general reflections, and though his miniature sketches are rather portraits, often

composites of people he had known, they are, in spite of the fact that a number of them (especially that of Ménélaque, the most elaborate of his characters) are sheer caricatures, valuable for the characterization which limns the portraits. There is for instance, Giton: "He speaks with confidence. He unfolds an ample handkerchief and blows his nose noisily. He spits to a great distance and sneezes very loudly. . . . At table and in walking he occupies more room than any one else. He takes the centre and walks with his equals . . . If he sits down you see him settle into an armchair, cross his legs, frown, pull his hat over his eyes and see on one or lift it up again and show his brow from pride and audacity. He is cheerful, a hearty laugh, impatient, presumptuous, quick to anger, irreligious, politic, mysterious about current affairs. He believes he has talent and wit. He is rich." Who can fail to see in this picture the representation of what Jung has called the extravert, of the lower variety, or perhaps as he would deport himself two and a half centuries ago?

On the other hand, who will deny that Phédon is the true example of the introvert?

Phédon has a bilious complexion. He is abstracted, dreamy, and with all his wit seems stupid. He forgets to say what he knows—and if he does so, he sometimes comes out badly. He thinks he is a nuisance to those he speaks to; he relates things briefly but frigidly. He is not listened to; he does not stir laughter. He is superstitious, scrupulous, timid. He walks gently and lightly; he seems afraid to touch the ground; he walks with lowered eyes and dares not raise them to the passers-by. He is never among those who form a circle for discussion; he places himself behind the person who is speaking, furtively gathers what he says and goes away if he is looked at. He occupies no space, claims no place; he walks with hunched shoulders, his hat pulled over his eyes so as not to be seen; he shrinks and hides himself in his cloak; there are no streets or galleries so overcrowded and filled with people but that he finds a means of traversing them easily, of slipping through them without being noticed. If he is asked to sit down, he places himself just on the

edge of the chair ; he speaks in a low tone in conversation and articulates badly ; yet with his friends he is open about public affairs, bitter against the age, very little disposed in favor of the ministers of state and the government. He never opens his mouth except to reply ; he coughs and blows his nose behind his hat ; he spits almost on himself, and he waits until he is alone to sneeze, or if it happens to him, it is unperceived by the company present : he costs nobody a salute or a compliment. He is poor.

Where shall we find such succinct portrayals of the professional spectator, who is seen everywhere and can tell you everything trivial, of the humdrum Narcisse who will do to-morrow what he does to-day and what he did yesterday ; of Hermippe, with whom no one is to be compared for accomplishing quietly and easily a perfectly useless piece of work ?

This Hermippe had taken ten steps to go from his bed to his wardrobe and now by altering his room he only takes nine—how many steps saved in the course of his life ! Elsewhere you turn the door-knob, push it or pull and the door opens ; what a waste of labour ! Here is an unnecessary movement which he saves himself—and how ? That is a mystery he does not reveal. Indeed he is a great master in mechanics and machinery, at least in those everyone can get on without. Hermippe brings the daylight into his house otherwise than by the windows ; he has found a way of going up and down stairs otherwise than by the stairway, and he is looking for a better way of going in and out than by the door.

Of a more desultory kind is the depiction of character in Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*. Nevertheless the correspondence between Rica and Usbec, who are the heroes of the book, contain some allusions to various types of people, which at least deserve mention.

Passing over the feeble imitation of La Bruyère by Madame de Puisieux¹ (published in 1750) which, however, is not without

¹ Like most of her predecessors and contemporaries in France who discussed the broad subject of human nature, she magnifies on the trait of *amour-propre* which, to the writers, served as a sort of

merit as a mirror of the finer man and especially woman, we come to the most philosophical of the French character writers, compared with whom La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère are men of the world, penetrating and sparkling, but still without the feeling that there is something more to be sought than they were content in finding.

Vauvenargues—Philosopher of French Characterologists.

Naturally we cannot expect of a man who died in his thirty-second year the same degree of maturity as of a middle-aged person. His range of experience must necessarily be limited as compared with the other two masters, but that his insight and depth exceed theirs may be inferred from many passages. Decrying the sweeping condemnations of humanity by the illustrious epigrammatists just named, Vauvenargues in his essay, *Sur le caractère des différents siècles*, justly points out "I speak of this force and grandeur of the mind, which compared with the sentiments of weak spirits, deserve the names which I have given them. I speak of a relative grandeur, and not of anything else, for there is nothing great among men except by comparison". The twenty-eight characters which Vauvenargues drew are again nothing but miscellaneous portraits of unequal merit. As such they do not concern us here, but it is in his psychological work, *Introduction à la connaissance de l'esprit humain*, that we meet with some attempt at a more systematic differentiation of characters. Vauvenargues holds that character comprises everything which goes to make up "l'esprit et le coeur", and it is marked by the most bizarre contrarities. He warns us against confusing the qualities of the "mind" (*âme*) with that of the "spirit" (*l'esprit*) especially as the majority of people are apt to judge a thing by its covering. Take, for instance, such a general trait as seriousness. We often think of it as an absolute

explanation of all the virtues as well as of the vices; in other words, character as such was to them only a higher phase of egoism, which they took it upon themselves to reduce to a common denominator.

category, but how many different ingredients might have composed it. You may be serious by temperament, because of too great or too little feeling, too many or too few ideas, because of timidity, habit or even money considerations. Vauvenargues then proceeds to distinguish the different serious types as they appear to an attentive observer. Tranquil-minded seriousness, e.g., carries with it a gentle and serene air. The seriousness of despondency reveals a languishing exterior, etc. To be sure, these correlations are commonplace, but this French moralist, unlike those who had gone before him recognizes "*la nécessité indispensable de bien manier les principes les plus familiers, et de les mettre tous ensemble sous un point de vue qui en découvre la fécondité et la liaison*". In other words, Vauvenargues is probably the first Frenchman to look for a basis of classification which could be more or less rigidly applied.

RÉSUMÉ

In the rather comprehensive survey of literary characterology, we may note diverse trends. There are *objective observers* like Theophrastus and to a certain extent La Bruyère, and *subjective depicitors* like most of the British character writers who took a character as a suitable theme to elaborate epigrammatically, often injecting their own bias into the elaboration. The frequency with which certain characters are painted, such as the prostitute, in her various euphemistic and plainer designations, would form an interesting study in itself as throwing light on the British mind of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but since the literary and occasionally as in Nicholas Breton, the purely didactic impulse are predominant in these sketches, little is offered by them in the way of psychology. The French character writers, on the other hand, are more realistic, but their delineations are composite portraits, and not sufficiently inclusive. While the *British writers relieve themselves in their*

sketches of an animus against a class, La Bruyère squares himself with certain individuals who had provoked his critical sense or indignation.

In general, the literary approach to the study of character can provide us only with clues. It lacks most when it lacks the conscious effort to analyse the subject, instead of being guided by random inspiration. In the one case, the investigator is guided by his purpose; in the other, the products are obtained in a haphazard fashion, and while, in themselves ripe and savory, they cannot contribute towards a wholesome regimen.

Hundreds of characters have been passed in review by these writers, from the most common to the most singular and fantastic, yet if we were to aim at exhaustiveness, that number multiplied by itself would not give a fraction of the possible number of characters, even in our own day, especially if the scope is so broadened as to include considerations of office, circumstances and physical condition, as well as assumed relationships.

The more complicated a civilization grows, the greater the list of characters that would find their place in such collections as Overbury's or Samuel Butler's. Were they to write in our age, they would doubtless satirize the radio fan, the movie theatre frequenter, the cross-word puzzle fiend, and so on *ad libitum*. The truth is that the *character should function as a sort of law under which a large number of individuals might be subsumed as particular instances*. The individualization of character just as the particularization of a law, that is to say, where each case should be governed by a separate law, would be subversive of our entire goal, which is to ensure a modicum of predictability. To be sure, human character presents greater difficulties than all other material, but for that very reason our endeavors must be doubled to obtain a rule of guidance.

As to the rough generalizations of character in the work of Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Montesquieu, and other

French writers, it is astonishing to see how many of their maxims and reflections are duplicated in the writings of the psychoanalysts. Rationalization, the inferiority complex, compensation, projection, and other mechanisms are implied though not discussed by name. When La Rochefoucauld, for instance, says: "If we had no faults we should not take so much pleasure to notice them in others," the crystallized thought here is of a psychoanalytic stamp as it is also in the further reflection: "Aversion for lies is often an imperceptible ambition to render our testimony of considerable weight and to secure for our words a religious respect."

One cannot afford to dismiss the detached thoughts of these sages from the purview of psychology only because their authors did not put forth any scientific claims. If they have not worked out their problems, they, at least, have suggested them in the form of stimulating aphorisms. Despite the fact that there is no train of reasoning in these reflections, they nevertheless give evidence of a consistent position in at least one respect, viz. that *amour-propre* is the spring of all action, good and bad, and that even the virtues of mankind are born of weakness—not an edifying point of view, to be sure, but one which requires examination, and, because of its widespread influence, it must be discussed rather than ignored.

CHAPTER III

THE COURSE OF THE HUMORAL DOCTRINE

We must now come back to see what had happened to the *explanatory* approach to the study of character which had been initiated by Hippocrates and Galen. In one sense it may be said that the original theory is still intact. Our ordinary vocabulary harks back to the assumptions of these Greek physicians. We still make use of such words as *spleen* for rancorous utterances, and *galling* as a synonym for vexing. Indeed, the French have no other word for anger in their everyday parlance than the word *colère*, while I have heard on many occasions foreigners say that a person is without a gall as signifying that he or she is unusually mild-tempered. Similarly the other terms belonging to the ancient doctrine have come to be household words, and no attempts to supplant them in favor of terms of more recent coinage have been of any avail. If the doctrine of humors has now been abandoned, its atmosphere still lingers, as is evident from the very persistence of such expressions as "good humor", "bad humor", "ill-humor", "humorous", "humoresque", etc.

Significance of the number four. It is not strange that the number four should suggest a significant range of differences. We must remember the scheme of elements in the philosophy of Empedocles which might have been not without its influence on Hippocrates. It would be a mistake to over-estimate the originality of the great Hippocrates in formulating his famous theory. Before him the Greek hylozoists had already devoted their attention to the causes of illness, and the function of the so-called humors figured greatly in the teachings of Anaxagoras, and even more in those of Democritus, who had

written a treatise on the humors, and Alcmeon of Crotona, who attributed disease to the disturbance of the equilibrium of the elementary qualities.¹

The four directions of the compass, too, might have been a co-operating factor in the establishment of the fourfold temperament doctrine. The hankering for symmetry and the belief in numerical consistency or, rather, parallelism as a tacit criterion of truth, are to be detected even in the philosophy of Kant, who pointed out that the four temperaments corresponded to the four figures of the syllogism. But, of course, these circumstances alone would not explain the firm hold which the humoral theory has exercised on the minds of great figures in the history of thought.

Aristotle's Modification. In spite of the vitality of this doctrine, which, because of the celebrity of its originators, had enjoyed for many centuries an unparalleled security, we must not suppose that it had always remained free from accretions, or that it has advanced untrammelled by the critical demands of modern science. As far back as Aristotle, the original exposition of Hippocrates appeared in a more scientific cast. Like Kant many centuries later, Aristotle regarded the blood, because of its general nutrient function, as the basis of all temperamental differences, yet, probably influenced by the teachings of Empedocles, he sought the causes of the fundamental peculiarities in the elemental ingredients of the blood. Not the other humors were to account for these idiosyncrasies, but the admixtures or components of the blood. The tendency for blood to clot is due to the earthen element in its composition, and constitutes the fiery or choleric temperament. Cold-bloodedness is due to watery blood and conduces to fear. The in-coagulability of the blood is the result of the want of earth material. In the linking of fear with those individuals

¹ P. Malapert: *Le Caractère* (1902), p. 120.

whose blood does not clot, we really have a faint anticipation of the recent work on the adrenal glands.

Medieval Views. For all that, the Hippocratic humoral doctrine survived Aristotle's modification, in the latter form established by the celebrated Galen; and its truth was not questioned in the Middle Ages, even by the staunchest Aristotelians.

Galen, the medical genius of the second century of our era, had drawn up nine temperaments, of which one was the perfectly normal, while four were simple in which one of four qualities (warm, cold, humid, and dry) was predominant, with the other three qualities in various degrees of equilibrium, and finally four were combinations, such as warm and dry, warm and humid, cold and dry, cold and humid—these constituting the celebrated quartet of temperaments. Among other achievements, Galen has the merit of clearly distinguishing between the melancholic and the choleric types which prior to him were both labelled “bilious”.

Many a subsequent writer draws his support for certain arguments from illustrations based on this theory. Thus, the illustrious Maimonides in the twelfth century, combating the doctrine of fatalism, adduces the following analogy to show how innate dispositions may be either thwarted by lack of exercise or opportunity for development, or else intensified by constant application: “For instance, a man whose natural constitution inclines towards dryness, whose brain matter is clear and not overloaded with fluids, finds it much easier to learn, remember, and understand things than the phlegmatic man whose brain is encumbered with a great deal of humidity. But, if one who inclines constitutionally towards a certain excellence is left entirely without instruction, and if his faculties are not stimulated, he will undoubtedly remain ignorant. On the other hand, if one by nature dull and phlegmatic, possessing an abundance of humidity, is instructed and enlightened, he will, though with

difficulty, it is true, gradually succeed in acquiring knowledge and understanding. In exactly the same way, he whose blood is somewhat warmer than is necessary has the requisite quality to make of him a brave man. Another, however, the temperament of whose heart is colder than it should be, is naturally inclined towards cowardice and fear, so that if he should be taught and trained to be a coward he would easily become one. If, however, it be desired to make a brave man of him, he can without doubt become one, provided he receive the proper training, which would require, of course, great exertion.”¹

Literary Conceptions of the Humors. In English literature, Wyclif appears to be the first to allude to the temperaments, or rather, the humors. His sermons, published in 1380, contain the statement that “Blood is most kindly humor, answering to the love of God, three other humors in man answer to three other loves”. Shakespeare has in his plays a number of references to the humors, and Ben Jonson gives us the characteristics of the four temperaments when he describes the true critic in *Cynthia's Revels* as “neither too fantastically melancholy, too slowly phlegmatic, too lightly sanguine, nor too rashly choleric; but in all so composed and ordered, as it is clear nature went about some full work”. Ben Jonson expresses himself with greater scientific pretensions, if not precision, in his play, “Every Man Out of his Humor,” where he writes:—

Why humour, as it is ‘ens’, we thus define it,
To be a quality of air or water;
And in itself holds these two properties
Moisture and fluxure: as, for demonstration
Pour water on this floor. ’Twill wet and run.
Likewise the air forced through a horn or trumpet
Flows instantly away, and leaves behind
A kind of dew; and hence we do conclude
That whatsoe’er hath fluxure and humidity

¹ Maimonides: *Eight Chapters* (of Ethics).

As wanting power to contain itself
 Is humour. So in every human body
 The choler, melancholy, phlegm and blood
 By reason that they flow continually
 In some one part and are not continent
 Receive the name of humours. Now thus far
 It may, by metaphor, apply itself
 Unto the general disposition ;
 As when some one peculiar quality
 Doth so possess a man that it doth draw
 All his effects, his spirits and his powers,
 In their confluxion all to run one way,—
 This may be truly said to be a humour.

Burton on the Humors. It is, however, in Burton's famed *Anatomy of Melancholy* that we find a detailed and quaint, not to say fantastic, description of the humoral doctrine :—

A humour is a liquid or fluent part of the body comprehended in it, and is either born with us, or is adventitious and acquisite. The first four primary humours are—Blood, a hot, sweet, temperate, red humour, prepared in the meseraic veins, and made of the most temperate parts of the chylus (chyle) in the liver, whose office it is to nourish the whole body, to give it strength and colour, being dispersed through every part of it. And from it spirits are first begotten in the heart, which afterwards in the arteries are communicated to the other parts. Pituita or phlegm is a cold and moist humour, begotten of the colder parts of the chylus (or white juice coming out of the meat digested in the stomach) in the liver. His office is to nourish and moisten the members of the body. Choler is hot and dry, begotten of the hotter parts of the chylus, and gathered to the gall. It helps the natural heat and senses. Melancholy, cold and dry, thick, black and sour, begotten of the more feculent part of nourishment, and purged from the spleen, is a bridle to the other two hot humours, blood and choler, preserving them in the blood, and nourishing the bones. Mention must also be made of serum, and of 'those excrementitious humours of the third concoction, sweat and tears'. An exact balance of the four primary humours makes the justly constituted man, and allows for the undisturbed production of the 'concoctions'—or processes of digestion and assimilation.

The eccentric Burton with his stupendous erudition quotes authority upon authority, citing also conflicting views in his search for the physical causes of melancholy, in this way giving us a glimpse of what was generally thought of the humoral theory in the centuries immediately preceding his.

Taking the next step, the French critic Bouhours, in the seventeenth century traces actual components of literary talent to the functioning of the humors. "The bile gives brilliancy and penetration, the black bile good sense and solidity, the blood engenders grace and delicacy."

Except for slight modifications and extensions, the original theory of the temperaments has in spite of occasional opposition, as notably in the case of Paracelsus, held its own until the modern researches in anatomy and physiology began to expose the fiction of black bile.

PROGRESS OF HUMORAL DOCTRINE MIRRORS HISTORY OF IDEAS

Mysticism. The history of the doctrine which Hippocrates originated is in a sense the history of human ideas, for it mirrors the great scientific interests of the time, even up to our own period. The temperaments have become almost a symbol of permanence of aspiration changing its form only as a result of the march of progress. The first attempts to modify or at least interpret the ancient table after the time of Aristotle began with the revival of learning when science and fancy were strange bedfellows. Here may be mentioned the allegorical treatment of the temperaments by the sixteenth century mystic Jakob Boehme, who in his *Christosophy* regarded the four compositions as different asylums in which the jewel of man—the soul—is imprisoned.

Alchemy. The age of alchemy also shows its fossil marks on the perpetual theory which was now to be brought into relation with the most important alchemical substances. The

basis of the choleric temperament was thought to be the predominance of the sulphuric element. The excess of mercury was supposed to be at the root of the sanguine temperament, and the melancholic temperament was traced to the preponderance of salt in the body.

Impress of Scientific Era. Then came the scientific revolutions of Copernicus, Galilei, and Harvey. Their discoveries gave the cue for further speculations on the temperaments. Toward the beginning of the eighteenth century Andreas Rüdiger in his *Physica Divina* reduced the number of elements responsible for temperamental differences to two, viz. aether as cause of the light qualities, and air as cause of the heavy qualities. Both together, neutralizing each other, they bring about elasticity of the body. Now, since various degrees of lightness and heaviness are possible, the complexions resulting from the fusion of the various grades of contraction and expansion give rise to four different kinds of elasticity :—

- (1) Aether and air both rarefied, together with great elasticity—sanguine temperament.
- (2) Aether and air both unrefined, together with slight elasticity—phlegmatic temperament.
- (3) Aether refined and air unrefined, together with heavy elasticity—choleric temperament.
- (4) Aether unrefined and air refined, together with easy contractibility and hard expansibility—melancholic temperament.

Probably one consequence of Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood was the shift of emphasis from the composition of the blood to its movement as the determinant of differences in temperament.¹ Anatomists and physiologists were now connecting these differences with the pressure of the blood against the blood vessels, and were looking into the

¹ This as well as several other references in this chapter are taken from J. Henle's "Von den Temperamenten", in his *Anthropologische Vorträge*, pp. 110 ff.

differences in diameter of these vessels. In a word, the humoral doctrine was beginning to change into a solid theory.

SOLIDS INSTEAD OF HUMORS

Chief among these new investigators was Stahl at Halle, of phlogiston fame, who took into consideration three factors, (a) the constitution of the blood, (b) the porosity of the tissues and (c) the width of the blood vessels. The sanguine temperament he attributed to the thin flow of the blood, loose tissues and moderately wide blood vessels, which conditions produce proper warmth and redness for life's course to proceed smoothly. But where the blood flows thin and the porosity of the solid substance is slight, the choleric temperament will be found; for the blood will have to be retained more in the blood vessels on account of the inexpandibility of the solid matter. The vessels must then be wide, and the pulse rate must be high because of the resistance to be overcome, and consequently, there is greater heat with this temperament. The conditions of the phlegmatic type are set down as thicker blood, wide pores and narrow vessels, so that the firm tissues are penetrated only by the more fluid, watery parts of the blood, hence the comparatively pale skin and lack of warmth which characterize this type. Finally the melancholic temperament is due to dark thick blood, small pores and considerably wide vessels. A more concise formula incorporating Stahl's theory was brought out by the latter's colleague Hoffmann (1660-1742) as may be seen in this table:—

Temperament	Sanguine	Phlegmatic	Choleric	Melancholic
blood	fluid	thick	fluid	thick
fibres	loose	loose	dense	dense

Haller's Work. It was not until about the middle of the eighteenth century when Haller laid the foundations of modern experimental physiology that the theory of humors

received a permanent setback. Haller cited many arguments to show that the connection between the blood and the temperaments is not a necessary one, and on the other hand that the firm parts through which the blood flows, or rather their strength and irritability, are fundamental in accounting for different temperamental constitutions, the choleric being produced by the strength and irritability of these tissues ; the phlegmatic by weakness without irritability ; the melancholic (hypochondriac or hysterical) by weakness with irritability. Haller gave no place to the sanguine temperament in his scheme, but originated the sturdy peasant type, the Bœotian temperament, which he thought differed from the phlegmatic in possessing force, though in common with the general type it lacked sufficient irritability. Haller's disciples included the sanguine temperament in their revision of his great work *Elementa Physiologiae*. The components of this temperament were, according to them, slight irritability with moderate strength.

The Rise of Nerve Physiology. A new era was ushered in with the research work on nerve physiology ; and as heretofore, the doctrine of the temperaments took a new turn in harmony with the general scientific outlook of the generation. From humors to solids, and thence to a particular kind of solids—such was the transmigration of the Galenian hypothesis. The nervous system was now to be the seat of the mysterious compositions which of yore were ascribed to the humors alone. The chief of this school was Wrisberg, one of Haller's disciples. His task was to make of the fourfold division a double category, viz., choleric-sanguine and melancholic-phlegmatic. This accomplished, he endowed the former type with a larger brain, with thicker and firmer nerves and with a high sensitivity both of the organism in general and the specific sense organs. Quick perception and keenness of judgment are due to the conditions just mentioned, but in return, there is also an inclination toward pain and anger.

The phlegmatic-melancholy type, contrariwise, is marked by a small brain, very fine nerves and duller senses. Such people require strong impressions to actuate them, and are not adapted for scientific achievement, but can bear well the inconveniences of life and its drudgery.

THE NON-MATERIALISTIC CONCEPTIONS

Alchemy, physics, chemistry, pathology, physiology, neurology—all had their contact with the temperaments. It was now high time for philosophy to step in and dismiss all the materialistic theories as either worthless or so highly speculative as to be of little assistance. Platner, a contemporary, and now all but forgotten adversary of Kant, directing his gaze upwards, resorts to an intangible spontaneous (*selbsttätig*) principle of sensation and movement, which to him is definitely connected with the soul. This principle he discovers to be twofold and to reside, in its purer form, in the visual, auditory, and tactual nerves, but in the coarser form, in the olfactory, gustatory and cœnesthetic nerves. The first of these systems gives rise to ideas which refer to abstract concepts and absolute truths; the second system or organ, as Platner calls it, arouses in the soul the vague and hazy feelings pertaining to the animal part of man. It is by virtue of the combination of these two psychic mechanisms that the temperaments are to be explained.

Values Introduced. The departure of Platner from his predecessors is complete in that he invents a fresh table of temperaments and insists on a new centre of gravity in the discussion. He introduces *values* into the erstwhile chemical and physiological constitutions; and his list comprises (a) the *Attic* or *mental*, derived from the preponderance of the higher psychic organ (visual, auditory and tactual nervous constellation) over the lower organ (olfactory, gustatory and coenesthetic); (b) the *Scythian* or *animal* temperament, resulting from the preponderance of the second organ over

the first; (c) the *Roman* or *heroic*, where both organs or systems are well matched; and (d) the *Phrygian* or *faint* temperament produced by the lack of energy in either of the two organs. But each of these four temperaments may further be subdivided according as the second psychic organ functions easily and free from inhibition or with difficulty and obstructedly. Consequently the Attic type branches off into the ethereal and melancholic divisions; the Scythian into the sanguine and the Bœotian temperaments; the Roman into the fiery and the masculine; and the Phrygian into the phlegmatic and the hectic (in the sense of wasting).

What makes Platner's obscure view interesting from an historical angle is not only the fact that he had completely broken with the past in seeking out psychological ingredients for the temperaments as well as in localizing the components or, at any rate, assigning them a field of operation, but also the introduction of value denominators for his eight divisions, which was an innovation at this time.¹

KANT'S DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPERAMENTS

Kant's treatment of character is more critical. Taking cognizance of the double sense of the term he makes allowance for both meanings (a) character as a mere distinguishing quality, (b) the moral make-up, "if it is a question of possessing

¹ In Stern's *Differentielle Psychologie* (Appendix) we meet with a table of temperaments presumably taken from A. J. Dorsch's *Beiträge zum Studium der Philosophie* (1787), which is the same as Platner's, with whom it must have originated, although Stern does not refer to the latter. Platner's delineations of the eight temperaments, as he conceives them, indicate that he must have mixed considerably with people. In breadth that part of his *Philosophische Aphorismen* (vol. ii, 2nd ed., 1800, pp. 480-514), is superior to Kant's sections in the *Anthropologie* covering the same ground. Kant, however, goes deeper than Platner in search of explanations. Platner's revelation of the type of pleasures which each of the eight types is apt to seek, discloses him as a man of the world as well as a philosopher.

a character at all." Between the two marks of individuality which he calls respectively *characteristic* and *character*, he inserts the third mark, viz., temperament, which he regards as a mode of sensibility (*Sinnesart*). In keeping with his system of Practical Reason, he predicates of the first two (*characteristic* and *temperament*) "what will necessarily become of the individual"; of the third however—*character* in the strict sense of the word—he predicates "what the individual is prepared to make of himself, endowed as he is with freedom." Character is for him a mode of thought (*Denkungsart*). The temperaments he considers both as *physiological* facts, such as physical constitution and complexion of the humors, and *psychological* tendencies due to the composition of the blood. Kant, however, is at pains to declare that he is interested rather in the psychological phenomena than in the explanation which may proceed either through the humoral or the neurological channel. Adhering to the ancient nomenclature, he divides the four temperaments into those of feeling (sanguine and melancholic) and those of action (choleric and phlegmatic). Furthermore in his characteristically symmetrical scheme each temperament is subject to two conditions, viz., *tension* and *relaxation*. The sanguine temperament is characterized by rapidity and force but not by depth. On the other hand in the melancholic, the experience takes root with less speed, but lasts a longer time. Similarly the choleric temperament is that of the *hasty* person, while the phlegmatic individual is simply without the affective spur to action, though not necessarily lazy or without life.

Phlegmatic Redeemed. It would take too much space to reproduce here the masterly delineations of the four temperaments as presented by the profound philosopher in his *Anthropologie*—the most readable of Kant's works—and we shall therefore have to content ourselves with the most outstanding features of his exposition. In the first place,