

As to originality—even a child may give evidence of this and continue to do so after attaining to man's estate; and yet may remain sadly lacking in any stability of character. In fact, strange as it may seem at first sight, the child and the adolescent, though less stable, are often more original than those of maturer years. The mastering influence of the social environment, however, fully accounts for this fact¹. In shaping their lives the great majority of mankind become *gens moutonniers*: they may be legally persons, but their psychological personality approximates to *nil*. Kant would stigmatize them as *Nachäffer*, servile apes of the man who has a character. Ribot styles them *les amorphes*, because psychologically they have no form that they can call their own. What they are depends on where they are. "*Ils ne sont pas une voix, mais un écho. Ils sont ceci ou cela au gré des circonstances.*" Here again Ribot exaggerates. Even in imitation there is some subjective selection and so far some character; and when the model is selected as exemplifying the subject's own ideal, there may be a good deal. Still it is not the attraction of sympathy—that *may* promote personal development—it is the domination of prestige², which tends at length to repress it, that we have here in view. The 'principle of imitation,' as Darwin called it, may facilitate the development of talents; but it prevents the development of character. It is effective in drilling *Beamten* but not in educating men; as the example of Germany proves. A man's conduct may shew all the stability that conformity to custom requires; and yet he himself will be devoid of character in the stricter sense, in proportion as he is lacking in personal initiative, personal convictions and any ideal of his own life. As regards the essentials of character, he again, as Ribot holds, is of little account. He may be described along with others of a like type—whether in respect of idiosyncrasies, vocation, or what not. But with individual psychology of that sort—comparative or morphological characterology, it might perhaps be called—we are not here concerned: beyond the taxonomy of personalities we do not propose to go.

How now are we to differentiate concrete individuals in respect of psychological rank as persons or to indicate the development of the same individual in this respect? This question brings us

¹ Cf. above, ch. xvii, § 3, p. 419.

² Cf. above, ch. xii, § 1, p. 290.