

Plato's greatness, the lack of which has often embittered philosophic controversy.

8. (*d*) The dialogues of Plato are dramatic or dialectic in that they reproduce by means of characters the various elements or strata of thought composing the consciousness of Athens at this time. The characters are not deprived of their value as individuals, but become representative individuals. They are thus rightly called "types," in the sense that their thought is a pronounced manifestation of thought at large. This is another note of the great writer, whose characters belong to the whole age, or, rather, to mankind, while the creations of minor writers, depending for their force upon oddities of expression, or exaggerations of some single emotion, have, like Hepzibah Pyncheon's chickens, an air of antiquity as soon as they come into being.

From the varied pageant of Greek life displayed in Plato's pages come three, if not four, different files of typical characters. First of all come such men as Cephalus, whose life has almost arrived at the "last scene of all," whose thought it would, therefore, be an impiety to unsettle, and Laches, who, though holding fast to the traditional ideas, was yet a fair mark for Socrates' critical shafts. Younger men also are of this company, Lysis Charmides, and Polemarchus, who may fairly be expected to respond to the new speculative impulse. Behind all these, and forming one body with them are Aristophanes, the antagonist of innovation and champion of the good old times, Anytus, who fears to speak evil of dignities, and Callicles, who, presenting the claims of the man of substance and honour who is well to do, thinks that philosophy is the pastime of children and fools. In the next main division are to be found sophists like Protagoras and Gorgias, worthy representatives of the new spirit of research, also their well-meaning disciples like Theodorus eager for knowledge, and, too, the younger brood of sophists, Polus, Thrasymachus, Euthydemus and the rest, showing the sophistic principles in a degenerate form. In the third division are Socrates himself, and his young disciples, Simmias, Cebes, Glaucon and Adeimantus, who have been swung from their moorings by sophistic criticism and are still grappling for some regulative principles of thought and conduct. In a fourth category must be placed Parmenides, Timaeus, Critias, the Athenian Stranger of