ALEXANDER FAULKNER SHAND

(1858–1936)

ALEXANDER FAULKNER SHAND never held any academical post and his career was otherwise uneventful. It is as the author of *The Foundations of Character* that he chiefly claims our attention. He did other good work, but this is mainly interesting as leading up to his masterpiece, or supplementary to it. In what follows I shall first show how he came to write this book and how he was peculiarly fitted for the task; and I shall then give some account of its main drift and method and an estimate of its value and importance.

Shand started with a strong interest in philosophy and philosophical psychology and an ambition to distinguish himself in this line by really original work. On the other hand, his social turn of mind made him a keen observer and student of character long before he thought of treating the subject in a systematic and scientific way. From the same point of view he was always a great reader, especially of French literature. When these three interests, at first relatively independent, coalesced with each other, the result was *The Foundations of Character*. It should be added that his external circumstances were peculiarly favourable. Having a comfortable competence with which he was quite content, he was perfectly free to follow his natural bent without being distracted by the need for earning a livelihood.

Shand was born in London in 1858 and died on 7 January 1936. His school was Eton. Passing to Cambridge, he showed his natural bent to philosophy by taking the Moral Sciences Tripos. In this, like A. J. Balfour and others who distinguished themselves in after life, he got only a Second Class. His failure to get a First was no doubt partly due to social distractions and to the time he spent on general reading, but chiefly to his neglect of those parts of the

curriculum which did not specially interest him. To the end of his life he paid little attention to questions which did not directly appeal to him by their intrinsic interest. At this time, as he once told me, he 'worshipped' Herbert Spencer. After leaving Cambridge, he lived until his death at his house in Edwardes Place, Kensington. Before hitting on the special line of work which he was to make peculiarly his own, he contributed to *Mind* a series of articles on Theory of Knowledge and Metaphysics. These included 'The Unity of Consciousness' and 'Space and Time' in 1888, 'The Antinomy of Thought' in 1890, and 'The Nature of Consciousness' in 1891. Between 1894 and 1897 he writes exclusively on psychological topics and especially on the psychology of feeling and will. To this period belong articles entitled 'An Analysis of Attention' (1895), 'Attention and Will' (1895), 'Character and the Emotions' (1896), 'Types of Will' (1897), 'Feeling and Thought' (1898). It was at this time or rather earlier that he began to plan a book on character. The article on 'Character and the Emotions' contains the distinction between sentiment and emotion which met with general acceptance and was to play a very important part in his later work. He received stimulus and encouragement, but not much positive help, from books on character published at this time by Malapert, Fouillée, and Paulhan. His own book, *The Foundations of Character*, appeared in 1914. The title is significant. The book does not pretend to cover the whole subject of character, but only its foundations, which Shand finds in the sentiments considered in relation to the emotions. He intended to write another book dealing in detail with the sentiments in their relation to each other. This part of his plan was never realized.

Though Shand wrote fluently, his work progressed very slowly because he was constantly rewriting in order to meet difficulties or supply deficiencies suggested by his own self-criticism or by his friends. He was constantly discussing his own problems with others, e.g. with myself,

McDougall, and Westermarck. But the help he received in this way lay only in the development and clarification of his own preconceived ideas. He tended to ignore or to fail to understand views which did not fit in with his way of thinking.

I pass now to a brief account of his work and an estimate of its importance. Shand's treatment of character owes its value: (1) to its general plan, which is comprehensive, original, and capable of being worked out in detail; (2) to the insight and thoroughness with which he actually does work it out; (3) to the method which he follows.

The character of an individual is usually described in terms of such qualities as generosity and meanness, gentleness and harshness, candour and deceitfulness. Descriptions of this kind are unsatisfactory because they do not show why the qualities 'appear in some men and not in others, nor how they develop and decay'.[1] But here are just the questions which the psychologist has to answer. He can hope for success only if he begins not with the unanalysed conception of individual character as a whole, but rather with a multiplicity of factors which enter into its constitution. Further, these factors must not be fixed and static, but developing processes which become gradually more complex and differentiated. Shand proceeds always on the principle that 'mental activity tends, at first unconsciously, afterwards consciously, to produce and to sustain system and organization'.[2] This organizing tendency belongs essentially to mental process inasmuch as it is conative. The entire process, so far as it is directed to one end, has conative unity. In the pursuit of the end it also becomes more complex and differentiated. Success is found to depend on various modes of behaviour, innate and acquired. Hence, the whole process tends to incorporate within itself a variety of relatively distinct impulses arising in the successive stages of its development. What is of special importance for Shand is that in striving towards the end, at any rate

[1] *The Foundations of Character*, p. 520. [2] Ibid., p. 21.

when full attainment is obstructed or delayed, there arises a variety of specific emotions, such as anger and fear, joy and sorrow, each having an individual nature and specific impulses of its own. The emotions are not only stages or phases in the development of a more original tendency; they have also themselves relatively distinct tendencies which may become more or less independent of the original process that gave rise to them. They thus pass through various stages under variable conditions, and they succeed each other and to some extent blend with each other in accordance with general laws dependent on their own nature. For example, 'The frustration of anger provokes a bitter sorrow, its satisfaction a peculiar joy of elation.'[1] The tendency of joy is to maintain the enjoyed situation; when this tendency is opposed, it elicits anger; when it is frustrated, sorrow; when its success is endangered, fear. In such ways the emotions are inter-organized according to general laws, though 'the precise conditions under which one elicits another are complex, and difficult to determine without a prolonged inquiry'.[2] The more frequently and persistently a certain type of emotion is experienced, the more susceptible of it the individual becomes. Thus an angry temper, though it may be partly due to innate disposition, may also be in a large measure acquired as a habit. This is an important source of qualities of character.

We cannot proceed further without introducing Shand's conception of what, for want of a better name, he calls a sentiment. A sentiment is not itself a tendency. It is a complex system of tendencies, actual and potential, each directed to its own end and giving rise to its own emotions, but essentially connected with each other inasmuch as they are all concerned with and centred on the same object. Whatever is an object of love or hate fulfils this unifying function, and the different forms of love and hate constitute different kinds of sentiment—e.g. self-love, parental love, conjugal love, love of power or money or knowledge, or

[1] *The Foundations of Character*, p. 37. [2] Ibid., p. 38.

even the love of a game or sport. Most of these arise only in the higher stages of mental development because they presuppose complex systems of ideas and concepts. But others are found in a primitive form, even at the perceptual level. These issue from a congenital disposition called into play by appropriate external situations. Consider, for instance, parental love as found in the higher animals. There is the tendency to communion with their offspring which finds a special expression in playing with them. With this is correlated joy in their presence and sorrow in bereavement or in prolonged separation from them. There is the tendency to protect them, with the corresponding emotions, such as fear when they are threatened by serious danger, and anger when the danger comes from an aggressor with whom it is felt possible to contend; or there may be a blend of fear and anger. There is the general tendency to maintain and promote their welfare, with corresponding sorrow at their sickness or pain. Parental love is thus, even at the perceptual level, a primitive sentiment arising directly out of an innate disposition. The same is also true of self-love. With the development of ideational and conceptual process both these primitive sentiments become immensely more complex and involve a greater variety of emotions. At the same time new sentiments arise which are impossible at the perceptual level—e.g. avarice and ambition.

Shand distinguishes desires from emotions and sentiments and treats them separately. Desires are essentially conditioned by trains of ideas referring to the future. They emerge when the end ideally anticipated is sufficiently remote in time to make its attainment seem doubtful. The prospective emotions of hope and fear, in their various stages and phases, depend on desire as thus defined.

Emotions and desires and the sentiments in which they are organized are according to Shand the ultimate constituents or 'foundations' of character. General qualities such as cruelty and gentleness, so far as they are not innately determined, are due to the prevalence of certain kinds of

sentiment fostering certain kinds of emotion. What is distinctive of cruelty is found first in that form of anger which finds satisfaction in the infliction of pain. Sentiments of hatred are prolific in anger of this type. But the more frequently an emotion is experienced the more prone to it an individual becomes, so that it arises independently of the special sentiments to which it was originally due. Hence hatred is one source (though not the only one) of cruelty as a general quality of character extending beyond the sentiment with which it is primarily connected. In general, qualities of character

> though there may be an innate bias to one or other of them in individual persons, are, like our desires, not independent tendencies; and we have to trace them to those systems to which they belong, and with which they are inherited or acquired. . . . Thus we are gradually led up to a conception of character in which the first confusion of its diverse kinds of constituents is reduced to order, and we are presented with an interplay of systems, as complex as their ends require them to be; and the understanding of their laws—of their growth, constitution, decay and interaction —becomes our principal problem.[1]

The above rough sketch should be enough to show that the plan of the book is both comprehensive and in a high degree original. But Shand's claims to attention rest not only on his general plan but even more on the insight, patience, and judicious caution with which he works it out in detail. Within the limits of this paper I cannot follow him in his detailed treatment of special questions. I shall add only some account of his method. Following Mill, he starts from relevant generalizations about character as expressed in proverbs, &c. But what is most distinctive of his method is the use which he makes of the rich material to be found in literature, and especially in French literature. His mode of dealing with this material is determined by its very defects as it originally presents itself. It mainly takes the form of generalizations which contain truth enough to

[1] *The Foundations of Character*, p. 520.

be interesting and important but cannot, as they stand, be accepted as universal principles. On the contrary, they are found on critical scrutiny to require large qualifications and reservations. They are also relatively isolated instead of being connected with each other in a system resting on ultimate psychological principles. But such a system is just what a science of character aims at as an ideal. Shand's method is to advance tentatively and gradually towards this ideal by examining and explaining the reservations and qualifications required by the empirical generalizations of common sense and literature. In this critical process more general laws emerge, and emerge in connexion with each other. The ultimate principles of this system ought to be identical with the ultimate principles of Psychology in general. But we must not take for granted that such principles are already sufficiently ascertained independently of the test supplied by this special application of them. So far as traditional laws fail us in working out a science of character, they must be condemned as false or inadequate. Thus Shand finds the laws of association as formulated by Mill to be glaringly insufficient.

Shand regarded himself as only a pioneer in this line of research. As such, he had all the success he could reasonably look for. Unfortunately successors have not hitherto been found to carry forward the investigation which he began. The reason no doubt is that the interest of psychologists has been diverted into other channels. When they do take up Shand's problem they will find that his book fulfils the promise of its title and supplies foundations on which they can build.

G. F. Stout.