

YOU ARE A FULL 1/32ND OF WHAT YOU MIGHT BE.....

ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS

309 L.Eliz.Dr., Craigville, MA 02636

Phone 508.775.8008

Noncommercial reproduction permitted

.....if you were God. That's both sexes x all possible personality types = 32 = God, whom you can't be (so be humble, abandoning all pretensions of deity) & can't be expected to be other than what you can be (so don't give up hope).

This Thinksheet provides some literary documentation for that arithmetic sermon.

1 If the fact that you are of only one of the two possible sexes isn't enough to make & keep you humble in your self-image & modest in your self-claims, meditate on the additional pride-shrinking fact that you can't be more than one of the 16 possible (Jungian/Briggs-Myers) personality-types,\* of which distribution I've now seen such a spate of books that it must be so.

2 I've even seen a book of 16 chapters converting each personality-type into prayer & meditation. (Can't give you details at the moment. I research Thinksheets in my head, which is a direct-access library suffering the defects of incompleteness & retrieval-system imperfection). But once you know which personality-type you are, you don't need any book to use your type as a way of expanding your prayer that God's grace will be sufficient to get you through the world without doing more harm than good....

....as I, if I may be so bold as to use myself as an ENFJ case. I pray not only that I'll make the best use of my four characteristics but also that I'll be aware of the temptations (1) to overclaim on those characteristics & (2) to underclaim for their opposites when I find those opposites in others. Thus:

*God, I'm a bit on the extravert side. Make me kinder to introverts, & less aggressive toward those more extravert than I....Father, since I'm an intuitive, help me to listen up better to those who live more in their five senses than I do....Lord, more patience, please, with those who think "too much" instead of giving more attention & energy to feeling, savoring, valuing....Jesus, you warn me against being too quick to judge. I would be more perceptive of others, of why they do what they do, of their feelings & thoughts; more aware of what's going on around me & in my & your world.*

Something like that. You get the idea. The prayers vary, & always they have compensatory intention, ie to expand my consciousness to include what others are & I'm not. Degree of difference is a further factor. I'm only slightly more feeling than thinking, a bit more than that extravert than introvert, more still judging than perceiving, & much more intuitive than sensing.

3 Of course to find all this out, history didn't have to sit around waiting for Carl Jung & Isabel Briggs Myers (\* Her "Introduction to Type" can be obtained from Center for Applications of Psychological Type, 1441 N.W. 6th St.-- Suite B 400, Gainesville, FLA 32601; my #312 is a one-page summary). It's safe to say that every civilization has taken a swing at it. In our Cape Cod livingroom I discussed it with Zaire's minister of education, whose PhD was on black-African gnostic wisdom. The ancient sages of India & China left literary traces of their pondering on personality-differences. Parents everywhere & always have been astonished at how different from one another their children are & how far from being clones of their parents. In the West, some such authors have become known as "character writers."

4 Consulting my inner library for character writers, I've come up with a few worth mentioning to you. The first is a 3rd-c. BC/BCE Greek, Theophrastos (Lat., -us), Athenian Peripatetic philosopher, whose book "Characters" sketches 30 personality types, eg the Flatterer & the Grumbler. What fun & profit it would be for a group to read & discuss this uproarious & profound classic! (And how sad that most "book groups" content themselves with recently-off-the-press ephemera, never getting around to works that have stood the test of millenia.)

5 Mr. T. got Englished in the centennial year of Columbus' sailing the ocean

blue, & it sparked a spate of "characters" books by authors you never heard of (nor I till I looked it up). Unto our day the British are famous for "characters," being good-humored about idiosyncracies (far more than were & are Americans); so Mr. T.'s idea "took" among them, it being easy for them, as it were looking out their windows, to transpose from ancient Greek characters to those around them. By Shakespeare's death (1616), this literary genre--detailed descriptions of the appearance & behavior of human "types" & classes--had become as popular as essays, the other literary enthusiasm of the age, along with plays. Which brings us back to Wm. Shakespear (orig. sp.), our language's most spectacular producer of "characters" & "types" (influenced, perhaps--I'd say doubtless--by the appetite the 1592 translation of Mr. T. created)....Two cs. later, in 1817, Wm. Hazlitt, social as well as literary critic, in his CHARACTERS OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS, displayed W.S. as a character writer in dramatic mode--the characters not just standing, but in action.

6 Curiously, exasperatingly, literary historians overlook **religion** as a category of character writing. What are Chaucer's CANTERBURY TALES but a catena of walking "characters," pilgrims to a shrine, their ir/religion showing. And then there are those characters, with Theophrastos-like names, in Bunyan's PILGRIM'S PROGRESS, whose characters Alex. Whyte lifts up in his two volumes of BUNYAN'S CHARACTERS IN THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS (Edinburgh & London: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, n.d. but ca. [judging from my copy] 1885). (Of course literary historians treat of Chaucer & Bunyan under other topics, but--as far as I've found--not under character writing.)

7 My enthusiasm for this literary genre goes back to "1/41," the date in my copy of Wm. Law's A SERIOUS CALL TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE (Dent & Dutton/06/31, Everymans Library). I can understand Sam. Johnson's saying that this book was "the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion after I became capable of rational enquiry." It first came out in 1728 when he was tutor to Edward Gibbon, who became father of the great historian of the same name. He began teaching at Cambridge U. in 1711, & his PRACTICAL TREATISE ON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION profoundly influenced Jn. & Chas. Wesley, who however were turned off, after visiting him, by his mysticism. To live out his serious call, Law founded a small community for simple living, with practices of extreme generosity to the needy, kindness to animals, & the cultivation of the small virtues, not just the great ones. (They ought not to let them out of seminary without having read this book!) Simple style, too. Look at his first ¶:

"DEVOTION is neither private nor public prayer; but prayers, whether private or public, are particular parts or instances of devotion. Devotion signifies a life given, or devoted, to God." The next ¶ sinuously, powerfully sketches the book's thesis, which I leave you to re/view.

Law's characters? He let's you bump into them as they body forth his otherwise relentlessly tight logic (reminiscent of Rich. Baxter, who died when Law was five years old). Remember Alex. Whyte's interest in "characters"? Well, in CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERISTICS [ie, topics] OF WILLIAM LAW, NONJUROR AND MYSTIC (Hodder & Stoughton; my fragile paperback 4th ed. is 1907), he does for us what maybe somebody's done by now on software: we can easily "access" in this book Law's characters. In his WAY OF DIVINE KNOWLEDGE, Academicus a divinity student. In CHRISTIAN PERFECTION, Philo the virtuoso, Patronus who loves the Church of England, Eusebius grammarian and parish minister, Matrona at fifty, Publius the politician, Julia the novel-reading widow, Junius the orthodox and his distaste for devotional books, Julius and his insincere devotions, Clito and his expedition in his prayers, Credula a busybody, Clevens--Fervidus--and Eugenia and their imaginary piety. And in his SERIOUS CALL, Penitens a notable tradesman on his deathbed, Calidus and his chief end, Serena a lady of leisure, Flavia and her two hundred a year, Miranda and her two hundred a year, Fulvius and his club, Caelia and her vexations, Flatus and his search after happiness, Feliciana and her gewgaw happiness, Succus and his god, Octavius and his end, Cognatus in holy orders, Negotius and his immense business, Mundanus a man of parts, Classicus and his Greek Bible, Paternus the author's father, Matilda..., Eusebia..., Ouranius..., Susurrus....