

term, which serves as a kind of resting-place in the development of ideas, giving temporary satisfaction and a basis for further discussion. It forms, as it were, the synthesis or bringing together of many and varied contributions, and prepares the application of the reverse process of analysis and explication. Thus we find in more recent times that the word Evolution has exercised such a function, bringing together or focalising many stray thoughts and indefinite suggestions, affording for a moment the triumphant feeling that a new step had been taken forward, a new and comprehensive aspect gained, and that it only required further explication and unfolding in order to bring in a rich harvest of results. To the historian such definite steps never present themselves as final, the focus is soon lost again and the rays of light scattered, the rest and satisfaction afforded proved to have been only temporary. As such we must regard the introduction of the term Characteristic, and the philosophies which made use of it, such as the philosophy of Schelling. It is, however, of value to see how, in the term "Characteristic," various attributes were united by which artists and thinkers of that age tried to define to themselves the objects of art or the nature of the Beautiful. The word itself had been first introduced by two friends of Goethe, and the conception had then been criticised by Goethe himself. To him the characteristic was, as it were, the skeleton around which both nature and the artist threw the definite form which produced the beautiful object. We know—and I have elsewhere had occasion to refer to it—how Goethe was impressed by the platonic conception of ideas as the