

CLASSIFICATION, THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649469581

Classification, Theoretical and Practical by Ernest Cushing Richardson

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Cover @ 2017

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ERNEST CUSHING RICHARDSON

**CLASSIFICATION,
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AND PRACTICAL**

CLASSIFICATION

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL

Together with an Appendix containing an Essay towards
a Bibliographical History of System of Classification

BY

ERNEST CUSHING RICHARDSON

Librarian of Princeton University

The New York State Library School Association

Alumni Lectures, 1900-1901

Reprinted with additions

NEW YORK

CHAS. SCRIBNER'S SONS

1912

PREFACE TO THE REPRINT.

THESE lectures have been now for several years out of print. In the meantime there has been a small but persistent demand, and lately there have been several requests for a reprint. The author has hesitated to re-issue without re-editing, but it has proved impossible to find time for this, and the matter is reprinted unchanged, except for the somewhat considerable additions. No attempt has been made through this additional matter to bring up to date with the exhaustiveness attempted in the original edition, but most of the more representative and striking systems, both theoretical and practical, have been added and a certain amount of bibliographical reference has been given for the orientation of the reader who wishes to be more exhaustive.

If there were time for re-editing, the author might alter his former language a little in deference to the feelings of logicians and metaphysicians, and he would have again to revise the use of the words "corpuscles", "ions", and "electrons", but in essence there is little that he would care to change. It is true that psychologists have tended of late years still more to the notion that classification is one of subjects rather than of objects, but the author is still more of the conviction that this is a profound theoretical and practical mistake, leading to endless confusion. He sees no reason to modify the main propositions; (1) That the order of classification is the order of objects, (2) That this order forms a series of growing complexity from the simplest to the most complex, (3) That this order is at the same time the logical, chronological and generally, the genealogical order, (4) That this order concerns the subhuman, the human, and the superhuman, (5) That the human has to do with, (a) ideas of natural objects (images of things that are or have been, including human and superhuman objects) and (b) ideas of artificial objects (images of objects produced or modified by the human mind or which represent objects having no counterpart in the outer world except as figures of what might be), (6) That practical classification is the putting together of books most used together, (7) That in case of conflict in book classification the practical always prevails over the theoretical.

A word may be added as to theology, which was, perhaps, touched too lightly for clearness in the first edition—in the effort to spare prejudices. The point of view of these lectures implies that

superhuman beings, if there be such, are real objects or parts of the real universe, to be examined by the methods of science and interpreted by its laws. The logical implication from this is the strict agnostic position that, the mind of man being of the nature that it is, God cannot be known save through real objects. The logic of this in turn is, first, the doctrine of deism, that the unseen God is known only through the objective universe, and that He is not and cannot be immediately revealed to man. This again leads to the doctrine that the universe is God (Pantheism), or is pervaded by God (Immanence). This suggests in turn the doctrine of the divine word "incarnate" or the putting of the Divine Person into objective knowable substance, as the only way of revealing the (otherwise) unknowable God to mental man. This doctrine of the Word Incarnate, shared by Sumerians, Egyptians, Indians, Persians, Greeks and Scandinavians at least, seems, when joined with the doctrine of evolution, to lead to the hypothesis that the objective, knowable God, who is the universe, in His self evolution, came, or will come, to some spot in space and time where and when, His Self, or complete idea-complex of images, feelings and purposes, as to things past, present and to come, is itself made real or "immanent" and enters the objective universe of knowable realities. This again, in short, is the "Person incarnate" who in the Christian system is, by hypothesis, the historical person Jesus Christ, the Head or Self or Person, the brains, heart and will of the universe (subhuman as well as human) which forms his body. Whether this hypothesis that the Person of God took on knowable substance in the historical person Jesus Christ points to a fact, or not, is a question outside the field of a book on classification. For the purpose of this book it is enough that this theory seems to be the only one which even attempts to explain the universe as a whole. It may be said, however, in passing, that the hypothesis seems at least to answer to the ancient test of "truth," now rephrased by Pragmatism--it works, so far, for someone.

The additions to the reprint include: (1) Some account of sixteen additional theoretical systems and extended account of four new library systems, with a few references to new editions of the older systems, (2) Fourteen additional titles under *Literature* (3) Notes for orientation under *Literature*, *Theoretical systems*, *Practical (library) systems*.

The theoretical systems are: (1843) Duval-Jouve, (1881) De Roberty, (1886-7) (Masaryk), (1893) De la Grasserie, (1897) Janet, (1898) Hoffman, (1898) Cogswell, (1899) Meyer, (1899) Trivero,

(1903) Whittaker, (1904) Münsterberg, (1904) Raya, (1906) Stumpf, (1907) Le Dantec, (1909) Froument, (1910) Barthel. The practical systems are: (1904 or 1901 sq.) Library of Congress, (1905) Brussels Institut, (1906) Brown's Subject Classification, (1910) Bliss. The new titles under Literature are: Bostwick, Brown (Guide, Manual and Small library), Cannons, Dana, Delisle, Flint, Focke, Martel, Morel, Purnell, Rider, Taylor.

ERNEST CUSHING RICHARDSON.

Princeton, New Jersey,
January 15, 1912.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

A WORD of explanation is due to the members of the Alumni Association regarding these lectures. The invitation to deliver them was a double one; on the one hand from a representative of the school who wished something on the philosophical order, which should be a contribution to the theory of library science, and on the other hand from a representative of the alumni who wished something very practical. The lectures are the result of an attempt to meet both wishes even at the risk of falling between two stools.

There is a perhaps small, but very earnest, number of librarians at the present day who are extremely anxious that the rising generation of librarians should be thoroughly grounded in the habit of searching the historical and philosophical basis of their art to the very bottom. They believe that the real progress of things in years to come depends precisely on that thing, that there is no danger of any neglect of the most thorough study of practical method in every aspect, but that there is danger that the habit of scientific thought will be neglected. They believe as cordially as any that the scholar without business ability and training is as much out of place in a library as he would be in Wall Street, but they believe also and with equal conviction that the best banker without literary and scholarly attainment is a pitiable spectacle as a librarian.

This view is perhaps held as concretely at the Albany Library School as anywhere, although the bibliographical and even palaeographical courses at Pratt Institute and elsewhere are strong symptoms of the same feeling. At the Albany school with its nearly fifty students, every one college trained, if anywhere, something of the most scholarly possible work can be, and is, attempted with success. It was felt that here, if anywhere, the attempt might be made to present to students of library science the view that the most highly philosophical treatment that can be given to its problems has important bearing on progress in the most practical details of the art.

It is by no means intended to claim that these particular lectures represent adequate philosophical knowledge or that their conclusions are in any sense final. They are simply the thinking of this one lecturer along this line. If there is in them any contribution, however small, so much the better. The point of the lectures, however, was not so much to reach results as to incite others to scholarly work. If the lectures fail to reach this end, whether through being too

scholastic or for any other reason, it will be a matter of regret to the lecturer, but it will be his fault, not the fault of the principle.

Of these lectures it may perhaps be said with some degree of reason that a pure discussion of the order of the sciences seems to belong rather to the college course itself than to a library school course. As a matter of fact, however, the student in college does not get this—at least does not get it in that intensely practical way in which it comes to those whose life work will be the interpretation of a system, or perhaps helping in the evolution of a new system.

As regards the matter in itself considered, one may sustain the thesis that it is as necessary for a thoroughly first-class librarian to know the philosophical order and divisions of the sciences as it is for a bridge-builder to know Mechanics. Those librarians therefore who say that they "do not see the use" of the study of incunabula, palaeography, the laws (rather than the rules) of classification, the history of libraries, ethics and social conditions as governing and governed by the production and distribution of books, the theory of literature, etc., etc., have an undoubted right to their point of view, but that point of view is not the one calculated to produce a true librarian.

There are those who seem to think that anything scholarly leads to unpracticality because many of the men represented to be most learned are unpractical. But are there none unpractical among the ignorant? Learning which is not practical is not scholarly but scholastic. Of learning which is practical there cannot be too much in any trade. Other things being equal—heredity, personality and common sense—the more "learned" a librarian is the better he will buy, the better organize his treasury, secretaryship, shelf and delivery and all the other departments, the better too will his books be cataloged, classified and used.

Since the lectures were delivered two observations have been made which require notice here. Mr. E. M. Fairchild, of the Albany Educational Church Board, has, apropos of the question of the natural order, called attention to the fact that the new educators, not only in colleges but in secondary schools, are coming to arrange their lines of teaching according to the "natural" order of the sciences. It follows that if the system of classification in vogue in any library is at variance in any way with the order in use in the schools the librarian must be all the more intimate with the scientific order to the end that he may harmonize, so far as possible, with his library classification and may guide pupils who are in the habit of thinking in another order. The use, therefore, which the library student will find for a somewhat intimate familiarity with the relations of the

sciences, theoretically considered, will not be limited by the use in making or altering a classification or even, what is its chief practical use, in classifying into it, but will extend to all sorts of reference work, from that of helping the special student down to that of helping the primary school child—or his teacher.

The second observation which calls for notice in this preface is a remark that “coming from Princeton campus” the lectures may, in some mysterious way, be calculated to cast an “odium theologicum” somewhere. The intention of the lecture was distinctly to stop with the merest reference to theology, and it was supposed that even this reference had been sufficiently guarded in speaking of it as the “theory known as Christianity,” etc. However, in the fear that there may still lurk something explosive in the handling of so dangerous a subject, even in small quantities, and thereby unjust responsibility be cast on the Princeton Theological Seminary, whose professors the lecturer is honored to know, but with whom he has no official connection whatever, or even odium, theological, philosophical or otherwise, be cast on the University with which he is connected, I hasten to say that nobody connected with Princeton save the lecturer himself is responsible for these views or has even heard that he has them. Whether the possible odium is because the views are too orthodox or because they are too heterodox, informant saith not.

It should perhaps be noted that usage, which seemed fluctuating as to “ions” or “corpuscles” when these lectures were written, now seems to have settled on “corpuscles” for fractional atoms.

Orthographic usage is somewhat influenced by the preferences of the *Library Journal*, where these lectures were first published in part.

ERNEST CUSHING RICHARDSON.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, }
 March 20, 1901. }