SCIENCE

VOL. LXV APRIL 29, 1927 No. 1687

CONTENTS

SCIENCE: A Weekly Journal devoted to the Advancement of Science, edited by J. McKeen Cattell and published every Friday by

THE SCIENCE PRESS

New York City: Grand Central Terminal.

Lancaster, Pa. Garrison, N. Y.

Annual Subscription, $6.00. Single Copies, 15 Cts.

SCIENCE is the official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Information regarding membership in the Association may be secured from the office of the permanent secretary, in the Smithsonian Institution Building, Washington, D. C.

Entered as second-class matter July 18, 1923, at the Post Office at Lancaster, Pa., under the Act of March 8, 1879.

ARCHETYPES AND SYMBOLISM[1]

IT has been a custom in this association to grant an incoming president three great privileges: he is allowed to address you for more than twelve minutes; he is allowed to speak on any topic he chooses, and, thirdly, what he says is allowed to go without immediate contradiction and embarrassing discussion. Most of your preceding presidents have utilized this attractive opportunity for departing from the troublesome humdrum problems of the day and gaily sailing forth on a sea of generalities where there are no limiting shores or submerged rocks in the way of facts to annoy one. This precedent allures me and I propose to indulge just this once. The particular speculative cruise on which I would have you join me is indicated in the title, and it involves a discussion of a characteristic prevalent among writers and teachers—including teachers of anatomy. As I see it, teachers have a shameless yearning for the diagrammatic; the tendency to state things in a simple way, even when the things themselves are not simple; the tendency to supply sharp contours or classifications where the real margins are indistinct or the parts intimately blended. Apparently the impression is prevalent that there are simple laws and ground plans underlying all that we see about us, and for many years the investigator has been in hot pursuit after them. Our great heroes are those who succeed in cleverly expressing the complex phenomena of nature in the form of precisely stated laws, or archetypal patterns and we grade our heroes according to the length of time their laws or patterns endure. Let us consider the nature of this situation and see what is to be done about it.

If we stop and picture to ourselves some of the circumstances of the beginnings of our guild, the original utility of diagram and symbolism is plainly evident. It is difficult to see how civilization could have developed without them. As you all know, the origins of the medical and biological sciences are to be found in the ancient priestcrafts. Among the earliest civilizations, it was the priests who were the possessors of the truth. They fostered what there was of learning. Much of their information came to them through direct revelation—by virtue of their peculiar and magical understanding of the desires

[1] Presidential address, read before the American Association of Anatomists, at the Nashville meeting, April 14, 1927.