

Some have followed Ward's lead in emphasizing the primacy of feeling. Need and desire have been virtually deified as realities by some writers. Others have focused upon motive as the most important area for knowledge and in terms of which to make explanations. Professional psychoanalysts have focused attention upon removing the obstructions to free expression and action. The arts and education fell under the spell of "self-expression." Many people came to believe that intention was more important than action.

Taken together, change, society, and the psyche provided a new conception of reality. The psyche provided the impetus, or force, society the framework within which and upon which the force was exerted, and history the plane upon which movement took place. This attributes greater clarity to these ideas than they have, however. By the early twentieth century, American thinkers were sloughing off the framework of natural (or social) law within which Ward cast his thought. They continued to use concepts, such as environmentalism, drawn from this framework but quite often without avowing it. The theoretical framework became much vaguer than it had been, even though this might not appear possible.

Most American reformist intel-

lectuals have adopted a pragmatic stance, disavowed conscious theory, and ostensibly acted in terms of each situation as it arose. They have not really done this, and it is doubtful whether anyone could. They have, instead, acted on the basis of assumptions and ideologies. Both of these are founded, insofar as they *are* founded, in the "new reality." Men who have no theory, metaphysics, or principles generally act upon the basis of the fag ends of those they picked up unawares.

Constantly Changing

The most important feature of this new reality is that it is constantly changing. Change is embedded in it as one of its constituents. The other constituents change, too. Few things can be more readily demonstrated than that social structures are greatly altered during the passage of time. As for the psyche, it is the root or origin of important changes, according to the above formulation. It is a force for change. There was an article of faith that reformers brought to the new conception of reality, namely, that it is *changeable*. The point of Ward's work was to establish the proposition that social change can be consciously directed, that it can be *planned*.

He asserted it over and over

again, from a great variety of angles. He called the conscious planning of social action meliorism. "Now, meliorism," Ward said, "is a dynamic principle. It implies the improvement of the social condition through cold calculation. . . . It is not content merely to alleviate present suffering, it aims to create conditions under which no suffering can exist. It is ready even to sacrifice temporary enjoyment for greater future enjoyment — the pleasure of a few for that of the mass."¹⁴ He proposed that this should be accomplished by legislation. "Legislation (I use the term in its most general sense) is nothing else but social invention. It is an effort so to control the forces of a state as to secure the greatest benefits to its people."¹⁵ He admits that governments have usually made a mess in most of their interventions in society. But this has been occasioned, he declares, by the ignorance of those who made the laws heretofore. The science of sociology will change all this.

Before progressive legislation can become a success, every legislature must become, as it were, a polytechnic school, a laboratory of philosophical research into the laws of society and of human nature. No legislator is qualified to propose or vote

on measures designed to affect the destinies of millions of social units until he masters all that is known of the science of society. Every true legislator must be a sociologist. . . .¹⁶

The means by which the changes in society should be brought about, according to Ward, were social invention and collectivization. Social invention will be devoted to discovering ways of exercising social pressure by legislation for the good of society. "Social invention consists in making such adjustments as will induce men to act in the manner most advantageous to society."¹⁷ He did not hold with prohibitions and punishments as a rule. These things restrict the liberty of some of the people. "But the contention is that only the most obdurate offenders require to have their liberty restricted, since they, too, have wants, and the social inventor should devise means by which such wants shall be spontaneously satisfied through wholly innocuous or even socially beneficial action."¹⁸

These actions were to be taken by the collective action of the populace (whatever such ideas may mean). The great collective problem, Ward thought, was of the proper distribution of goods. "This is an exclusively social prob-

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁷ Ward, *Pure Sociology*, p. 569.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 570.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 468.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 36.