

velopmental directions which act as forces upon the present and the future. These forces are thought of as acting ineluctably and inevitably to bring about certain developments.

The most famous of such theses was that of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, but the idea informs all reformist thought in the contemporary era. Progressivism is deeply imbued with the idea of history as a progressive force. It becomes apparent in such notions as the following: you can't turn back the clock; the latest is the best; it is necessary to adjust to changing times. Such words and phrases as the following, when they are used to refer to ideas, draw their sustenance from this view of history: reactionary, backlash, neanderthal, anachronistic, and so on.

Sir Isaiah Berlin says, "The notion that history obeys laws, whether natural or supernatural, that every event of human life is an element in a necessary pattern has deep metaphysical origins."⁴ The matter goes deeper than this, however. When history is dealt with as a being, it has itself become metaphysic-like. It has been made into a constituent part of underlying reality. If anyone objects

that the word "history" is only being employed as a metaphor, he should be ready to explain why we can't turn back the clock then. Surely, no metaphor would prevent it, or could cause all that has occurred. Whether History only stands for the forces or is itself the force is largely irrelevant. The forces themselves are treated by those who think in this way as metaphysic-like beings.

Is Society Real?

The second ingredient of the "new reality" is society. The belief in the reality of society was a precondition to the development of sociology, no doubt, and a continuing assumption of those who pursue the study. At any rate, that is the way it was and generally has been. But before going further with this analysis some distinctions should be made. There *are* social phenomena. Such phenomena include institutions, customs, traditions, folkways, habits, behavior patterns, and so on. Moreover, it may be descriptively useful to refer to those who share a preponderance of these as living in a society.

The development with which I wish to deal hinges, philosophically, upon whether society is a phenomenon or a noumenon. Or, somewhat more familiar language may be used in describing

the basis upon which a distinction might be made: Is society an appearance or is it real? Is the word "society" a convenient designation for certain phenomena or does it refer to a real being in its own right? Do social phenomena stem from society or do they stem from people? Are individuals real or are they products (extensions) of society?

An Organic Whole

The above questions may make the development to be described clearer than it would otherwise be. My point is that thinkers began to treat society as if it were real. This does not mean that they explicitly treated it as a being distinct from those who were supposed to compose it. Lester Frank Ward said, "Society is simply a compound organism whose acts exhibit the resultant of all the individual forces which its members exert." Yet he went on to say, "These acts, whether individual or collective, obey fixed laws. Objectively viewed, society is a natural object, presenting a variety of complicated movements produced by a particular class of natural forces."⁵ But, one may ask, whence come these laws? Do they come from individuals? Strictly speaking, this would have to mean that individuals create

laws. This could not be, for such would not be laws.

Actually, Ward's confusion arose from the contradictory premises upon which he was operating. On the one hand he treated society as if it were real, spoke of social laws and forces, and worked to develop a sociology that would describe these laws of society.⁶ On the other, he wanted men to take over the direction of society and control the forces to desirable ends. For example, "The social forces only need to be investigated as the rest have been, in order to discover ways in which their utility can be demonstrated. Here is a vast field of true scientific exploitation as yet untracked. . . . To just what extent the present evil tendencies of society may be turned to good, under the management of truly enlightened legislation, it is impossible to predict."⁷ What does social force refer to, if not to men? And if they are forces acting upon men, how can men act upon and direct them?

Ward's thought lies athwart the path of two different modes of thought—the deterministic and melioristic—at the point of divergence. It was filled with the conclusions of nineteenth century deterministic thought—the talk of forces, progressive laws, social

⁴ Isaiah Berlin, *Historical Inevitability* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 13.

⁵ Ward, *Dynamic Sociology*, I, 35.

⁶ See *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.