

REVIEWS

Glimpses of the Cosmos: A Mental Autobiography. Vol. I, "Adolescence to Manhood." Pp. lxxxix+244. Vol. II, "Scientific Career Inaugurated." Pp. xiii+464. Vol. III, "Dynamic Sociology." Pp. 11+434. By LESTER F. WARD. New York: Putnam, 1913.

These first three of the twelve volumes of which the series is to consist will be received with delight by all careful students of the author's major works. The advertisement says:

The volumes comprised in the series contain the collected essays of Dr. Ward, representing contributions minor in compass, but in most cases of first importance in character, which have been brought into print during a series of years, and which are here accompanied by sketches at once biographical and historical. The volumes present not merely the writings of this distinguished thinker and author, but may be described as recording, so to speak, the evolution of his brain.

Those who not only knew Dr. Ward's works but were also within his circle of acquaintance will find in these volumes invaluable means of understanding him more intimately. They reveal him more distinctly as a great man—not merely as a great craftsman in two broad scientific fields—greater even than those of us who rated him highest had estimated. To students of the development of knowledge and theory about social relations who have never discovered Ward, these books will furnish a key to a body of literature, with a stimulus to study it, without knowledge of which one of the most significant and creditable developments during the last thirty years of American life could be but superficially understood.

Until the present contents of sociology are absorbed and redistributed into systems that will arise in the future, no one can be thoroughly informed about sociology unless he is familiar with Ward's thinking, and unless he has arrived at precise agreements or disagreements with him, and knows the reasons why. Readers of this *Journal* do not get their judgments on such matters from reviewers. It is necessary, therefore, to confine this notice to certain reactions which may be recorded as the latest of a long series of individual impressions about phases of Dr. Ward's character and work.

I have known for twenty-five years that Ward was exceptionally methodical. His command of the literature of his subjects, down to brief and fugitive observations, has challenged my wonder; yet I have often queried whether the labor necessary to control such auxiliaries was worth while. The section entitled, "History of the Present Work" (I, pp. xxiii-lvi), throws much light upon his methods, and indicates that it was the habit of making entries in time, in accordance with a thorough system, which accumulated an apparatus of references by the use of interstitial moments which men without such a system would have wasted. The same results would be bought too dear by men who had to gain them without his economies. Even with this explanation, added to the statements in the text and the internal evidences as to the assistance rendered by Mrs. Cape, Mrs. Comstock, and Miss Simons, I am amazed that while the regular work of a professor was in progress, the mass of minute and difficult editing involved in the plan of this work could have been accomplished between October, 1909, and April, 1913.

In my editorial relations with Ward, which extended from his contribution to the first number of this *Journal* (July, 1895) to our correspondence about the last two manuscripts which he prepared for publication (see this *Journal*, May, 1913, pp. 737 and 814), I came to have something closely approaching awe for his terrific mental drive. It was the more impressive because it was utterly without fuss or fluster. He never for a moment seemed to be trying to get his bearings in a fog. He always knew where he was, and the direction in which he wanted to move, and the means at his command for holding his course. When he could not undertake a piece of work he stated the reasons, and they were almost mathematically convincing. He accepted an engagement with equal promptness. He seemed to have no accumulated hindrances to remove. He was as ready as an express locomotive watered and coaled and fired for its run. He was exactly punctual in keeping his promises; and of all the writers whose copy I have handled he made the fewest corrections in the proof. His papers always came to me in his own handwriting, which was of rugged size and form, and compositors told me that it was better for their purpose than typewriting. The volumes at hand reflect all these characteristics; and it seems to me that graduate students who have never seen the author will find it a liberal training in precision, not to speak of sociology and botany, to become acquainted with his method.

In one respect I am seriously disappointed in these volumes. I had

hoped that they would do something toward clearing up what has always been to me the mystery of his attitude toward religion. I have wanted to know what his early contacts with religious opinions could have been, to have left him in such a naïve state of mind toward religious ideas and religious people. There is practically nothing in these volumes to satisfy this desire. Just as Ward's prevailing interests as a botanist were in histology and morphology, rather than in ecology, so in sociology and biography he seemed to feel that there was a self-sufficient structure of his thinking, and that any reference to the surroundings in which the structure took shape was irrelevant, or at least superfluous.

Accordingly, in his "Personal Remark" (I, pp. lvii-lxxxix), there are only two items from which inferences bearing on this subject might be drawn, and they merely serve to emphasize the unanswered questions. In the first place, Dr. Ward refers to his maternal grandfather with the casual remark, "who I believe was a clergyman" (*op. cit.*, p. lxviii). In the second place, he calls the place where his parents lived during his eleventh and twelfth years, ". . . only headquarters . . . a place . . . for my parents to have social and religious society" (*ibid.*, p. lxxi). Beyond this I have discovered not a syllable which might be taken as a guide to his religious associations. Whatever we might suppose about the religious atmosphere of the home as thus vaguely indicated, the boy was not in that home after he was fourteen, and there is not the slightest indication of further religious contacts until recoils from them begin to appear in his writings, starting for example with the editorial written at the age of twenty-seven, on "The Present Age" (*ibid.*, p. 48).

From the viewpoint of Ward's own aims in editing these volumes, viz., to exhibit the histological development of his own mind (*ibid.*, p. xiv), this hiatus is deplorable. No one is scientifically interested today in studying the evolution of anything, if it must be considered in isolation from its environment. That detachment leaves us merely the result of the evolution minus the principal factors of its process. We can find out what Ward thought, but in this connection, at any rate, we cannot find out what is much more worth finding out, viz., why he thought it.

Ward's attitude toward religious beliefs and those who professed them was very much like that of a model housewife toward a slattern. In either case the monster in question would rate as inexplicable and intolerable and inexcusable. To Ward's mind, until long after the publication of *Dynamic Sociology*, what religious people understood as

reverence for truth was merely benighted and stubborn refusal to be taught the truth. While I think his religious philosophy was in substance nearer right than wrong, his manner of treating religious opinion was unfortunately lacking in what the Germans call *Schliff*; and his utterances on religious subjects were often in a tone which tended to confirm religious people in the impression that the sort of science for which he spoke was itself defiance of truth.

My acquaintance with Ward began in correspondence over this feature in *Dynamic Sociology*. I asked him why he felt called upon to say things in the book which were immaterial to its argument, and which would gratuitously wound the feelings of religious people. His reply was: "I was not writing for the weak minded." He had no working measure of the strength of mind it has always cost individuals who were in and of resolute religious groups merely to begin tentative criticism of the *mores* of those groups.

In fact, Ward was tilting at certain types of theology, not at religion; and so far as I could discover he never successfully differentiated the two. His feelings softened, however, notably in later years. In New Orleans a decade ago, he said to me, while we were chatting over the lunch-table: "I've changed my views about religion. I see now that it has a function in society." Some of the papers which will appear in later volumes of the present series will illuminate this remark.

From my earliest acquaintance with Ward, I have had no doubt that he was a genuinely religious man; and as a moral matter I have never had a more serious reaction than amusement at his inability to recognize himself in that character. He was a prophet of righteousness as uncompromising as Amos or Hosea, but what he regarded as truth was so clear to him that he could not see how people who had not reached his outlook could be honest.

Among all the other subjects which a glance through these volumes tempts one to discuss, I mention but two more. The first is the paper entitled, "Mind as a Social Factor" (III, 361). It was completed and published in 1884. I do not remember that I had seen it until these volumes reached me. So far as I am aware, it is the most compact and forcible formulation that Ward ever made of the radical conception, developed in *Dynamic Sociology* in 1883, which displaced the Spencerian type of fatalistic evolutionism in American social theory. The main thesis of the essay is contained in these paragraphs (III, 367):

. . . modern scientific philosophers fail to recognize the true value of the *psychic factor*. Just as the metaphysicians lost their bearings by an empty

worship of mind, and made philosophy a plaything, so the modern evolutionists have missed their mark by degrading mind to the level of mechanical force. They seem thus about to fling away the grand results that the doctrine of evolution cannot otherwise fail to achieve. Far be it from me to appeal to the prejudices of the enemies of science by casting opprobrium upon scientific deductions, but when I consider the tendencies which are now so unmistakable, and which are so certainly the consequence of the protracted study, on the part of leading scientists, of the unquestionable methods of nature, I think I can, though holding precisely opposite opinions, fully sympathize with Carlyle in characterizing the philosophy of evolution as a "Gospel of dirt."

But I need not longer dwell upon the blighting influence of this construction of the known laws of nature. Let us approach the kernel of the problem.

The *laissez-faire* doctrine fails to recognize that, in the development of mind, a virtually *new power* was introduced into the world. To say that this has been done is no startling announcement. It is no more than has taken place many times in the course of the evolution of living and feeling beings out of the tenuous nebulae of space. For, while it is true that nature makes no leaps, while, so long as we consider their beginnings, all the great steps in evolution are due to minute increments repeated through vast periods, still, when we survey the whole field, as we must do to comprehend the scheme, and contrast the extremes, we find that nature has been making a series of enormous strides and reaching from one plane of development to another. It is these independent achievements of evolution that the true philosopher must study.

Not to mention the great steps in the cosmical history of the solar system and of the earth, we must regard the evolution of protoplasm, the physical basis of life, as one of those gigantic strides which thenceforth completely revolutionized the surface of our planet. The development of the cell as the unit of organization was another such stride. The origin of vertebrate life introduced a new element, and the birth of man wrought still another transformation. These are only a few of nature's revolutions. Many more will suggest themselves. And although in no single one of these cases can it be said at what exact point the new essence commenced to exist, although the development of all these several expressions of nature's method of concentrating her hitherto diffused forces was accomplished through an unbroken series of minute transitional increments continued through eons of time, still, it is not a whit less true that each of these grand products of evolution, when at length fully formed, constituted a new cosmic energy and proceeded to stamp the future products and processes with a character hitherto wholly unknown upon the globe. . . .

It has always been a marvel to my comprehension that wise men and philosophers, when smitten with the specious logic of the *laissez-faire* school, can close their eyes to the most obtrusive fact that civilization presents. In spite of the influence of philosophy, all forms of which have thus far been negative and nihilistic, the human animal with his growing intellect has still ever

realized the power that is vouchsafed through mind, and has ever exercised that power. Philosophy would have long since robbed him of it, and caused his early extermination from the earth, but for the persistence, through heredity, of the impulse to exercise in self-preservation every power in his possession; by which practice alone he first gained his ascendancy ages before philosophy began.

The great fact, then, to which I allude is that, in spite of all philosophy, whether mythological, metaphysical, or naturalistic, declaring that man must and can do nothing, he *has*, from the very dawn of his intelligence, been transforming the entire surface of the planet he inhabits. No other animal performs anything comparable to what man performs. This is solely because no other possesses the developed psychic faculty.

The paper from which these extracts are made should have a place in the double-starred literature of sociological instruction.

Only a word need be said about the second of these minor subjects. Have any of the sociologists joined the Bergson cult? I do not know how persistent the affection is, but those of us who have not suffered from it will probably be more interested than those who have at finding a diagnosis of the disease in Ward's best vein, in the first volume at the close of the "Personal Remark" (pp. lxxxiii-lxxxviii). Ward never pricked a bubble more neatly.

We shall report the other volumes in the series as fast as they appear.

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Since *Puck* and *Judge* passed into the category of class organs, and *Life* is no longer as unexpected as at first, the United States of America has become a vast stomach gnawing with hunger for a steady diet of strictly high-grade humor. With a single regret we greet this first evidence that an inexhaustible source of supply for the demand has been tapped. The title chosen for this gurgling spring of revivification will retard discovery of its soul-refreshing properties by the multitude, until philanthropists like ourselves have spread abroad the news that, barring its whimsical taboo of a catchy label, it has all the requisites of a potential best-seller. Since the soul of humor is dramatic juxtaposition of things out of their places and proportions, and since the folk-soul is a garbage heap of things whose displacements and disproportions miss being humor-