The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer

Dr. Will Durant
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Director, Labor Temple School,
Author of "Philosophy and the Social Problem,"
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THE PHILOSOPHY OF HERBERT SPENCER

I. COMTE AND DARWIN

The Kantian philosophy, which announced itself as "prolegomena to all future metaphysics," was, by malicious intent, a murderous thrust at traditional modes of speculation; and, contrary to intent, a damaging blow to all metaphysics whatsoever. For metaphysics had meant, throughout the history of thought, an attempt to discover the ultimate nature of reality; now men learned, on the most respectable authority, that reality could never be experienced; that it was a "noumenon," conceivable but not knowable; and that even the subtlest human intelligence could never pass beyond phenomena, could never pierce the veil of Maya. The metaphysical extravagances of Fichte, Hegel and Schelling, with their various readings of the ancient riddle, their Ego and Idea and Will, had canceled one another into zero; and by the eighteen-thirties the universe was generally conceded to have guarded its secret well. After a generation of Absolute intoxication, the mind of Europe reacted by taking a pledge against metaphysics of any kind.

Since the French had made a specialty of scepticism, it was natural that they should produce the founder (if there are such persons in philosophy, where every idea is hallowed with years) of the "positivist" movement. Auguste Comte—or, as his parents called him, Isidore Auguste Marie François Xavier Comte—was born at Montpellier in 1798. The idol of his youth was Benjamin Franklin, whom he called the modern Socrates. "You know that at five-and-twenty he formed the design of becoming perfectly wise. and that he fulfilled his
design. I have dared to undertake the same thing, though I am not yet twenty." He made a fair start by becoming secretary to the great Utopian, Saint-Simon, who passed on to him the reforming enthusiasm of Turgot and Condorcet, and the idea that the social, like physical phenomena, might be reduced to laws and science, and that all philosophy should be focused upon the moral and political improvement of mankind. But, like most of us who set out to reform the world, Comte found it difficult enough to manage his own home; in 1827, after two years of marital infelicity, he suffered a mental break-down, and attempted suicide in the Seine. To his rescuer, therefore, we owe something of the five volumes of *Positive Philosophy* which appeared between 1830 and 1842, and the four volumes of *Positive Polity* which appeared between 1851 and 1854.

This was an undertaking which, in scope and patience, was second in modern times only to Spencer's Synthetic Philosophy." Here the sciences were classified according to the decreasing simplicity and generality of their subject-matter: mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, and sociology; each rested on the results of all the sciences before it; therefore sociology was the apex of the sciences, and the others had their reason for existence only in so far as they could provide illumination for the science of society. Science, in the sense of exact knowledge, had spread from one subject-matter to another in the order given; and it was natural that the complex phenomena of social life should be the last to yield to scientific method. In each field of thought the historian of ideas could observe a Law of Three Stages: at first the subject was conceived in the theological fashion, and all problems were explained by the will of some deity—
as when the stars were gods, or the chariots of gods; later, the same subject reached the meta-
physicial stage, and was explained by meta-
physicial abstractions—as when the stars moved
in circles because circles were the most perfect
figure; finally the subject was reduced to posi-
tive science by precise observation, hypothesis,
and experiment, and its phenomena were ex-
plained through the regularities of natural
cause and effect. The "Will of God" yields to
such airy entities as Plato's "Ideas" or Hegel's
"Absolute Idea," and these in turn yield to the
laws of science. Metaphysics is a stage of ar-
rested development: the time had come, said
Comte, to abandon these puerilities. Philos-
ophy was not something different from science;
it was the co-ordination of all the sciences with
a view to the improvement of human life.

There was a certain dogmatic intellectualism
about this positivism which perhaps reflected
the disillusioned and isolated philosopher.
When, in 1845, Mme. Clotilde de Vaux (whose
husband was spending his life in jail) took
charge of Comte's heart, his affection for her
warmed and colored his thought, and led to a
reaction in which he placed feeling above intel-
ligence as a reforming force, and concluded
that the world could be redeemed only by a
new religion, whose function it should be to
nourish and strengthen the feeble altruism of
human nature by exalting Humanity as the
object of a ceremonial worship. Comte spent
his old age devising for this Religion of Human-
ity an intricate system of priesthood, sacra-
ments, prayers, and discipline; and proposed a
new calendar in which the names of pagan
deities and medieval saints should be replaced
by the heroes of human progress. As a wit put
it, Comte offered the world all of Catholicism
except Christianity.
The positivist movement fell in with the flow of English thought, which took its spirit from a life of industry and trade, and looked up to matters of fact with a certain reverence. The Baconian tradition had turned thought in the direction of things, mind in the direction of matter; the materialism of Hobbes, the sensationalism of Locke, the scepticism of Hume, the utilitarianism of Bentham, were so many variations on the theme of a practical and busy life. Berkeley was an Irish discord in this domestic symphony. Hegel laughed at the English habit of honoring physical and chemical equipment with the name of "philosophical instruments"; but such a term came naturally to men who agreed with Comte and Spencer in defining philosophy as a generalization of the results of all the sciences. So it was that the positivist movement found more adherents in England than in the land of its birth; adherents perhaps not so fervent as the generous Littré, but endowed with that English tenacity which kept John Stuart Mill (1806-73) and Frederick Harrison (1831-1923) faithful all their lives to Comte's philosophy, while their English caution kept them aloof from his ceremonious religion.

Meanwhile the Industrial Revolution, born of a little science, was stimulating science in return. Newton and Herschel had brought the stars to England, Boyle and Davy had opened the treasures of chemistry, Faraday was making the discoveries that would electrify the world, Rumford and Joule were demonstrating the transformability and equivalence of force and the conservation of energy. The sciences were reaching a stage of complexity which would make a bewildered world welcome a synthesis. But above all these intellectual influences that stirred England in the youth of
Herbert Spencer was the growth of biology, and
the doctrine of evolution. Science had been
exemplarily international in the development
of this doctrine: Kant had spoken of the pos-
sibility of apes becoming men; Goethe had
written of the metamorphosis of plants; Eras-
mus Darwin and Lamark had propounded the
theory that species had evolved from simpler
forms by the inheritance of the effects of use
and disuse; and in 1830 St. Hilaire shocked
Europe, and gladdened old Goethe, by almost
triumphing against Cuvier in that famous de-
bate on evolution which seemed like another
Ernani, another revolt against classic ideas of
changeless rules and orders in a changeless
world.

In the eighteen-fifties evolution was in the
air. Spencer expressed the idea, long before
Darwin, in an essay on "The Development
Hypothesis" (1852), and in his Principles of
Psychology (1855). In 1858 Darwin and Wal-
lace read their famous paper before the Lin-
naean Society; and in 1859 the old world, as
the good bishops thought, crashed to pieces
with the publication of the Origin of Species.
Here was no mere vague notion of evolution,
of higher species evolving somehow from lower
ones; but a detailed and richly documented
theory of the actual mode and process of evolu-
tion "by means of natural selection, or the
preservation of favored races in the struggle
for life." In one decade all the world was
talking about evolution. What lifted Spencer
to the crest of this wave of thought was the
clarity of mind which suggested the applica-
tion of the evolution idea to every field of
study, and the range of mind which brought
almost all knowledge to pay tribute to his
theory. As mathematics had dominated philos-
ophy in the seventeenth century, giving to the
world Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Leibniz and Pascal; and as psychology had written philosophy in Berkeley and Hume and Condillac and Kant; so in the nineteenth century, in Schelling and Schopenhauer, in Spencer and Nietzsche and Bergson, biology was the background of philosophic thought. In each case the epochal ideas were the piece-meal production of separate men, more or less obscure; but the ideas are attached to the men who coordinated and clarified them, as the New World took the name of Amerigo Vespucci because he drew a map. Herbert Spencer was the Vespucci of the age of Darwin, and something of its Columbus too.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPENCER

He was born at Derby in 1820. In both lines his ancestors were Non-conformists or Dissenters. His father's mother had been a devoted follower of John Wesley; his father's brother, Thomas, though an Anglican clergyman, led a Wesleyan movement within the Church, never attended a concert or a play, and took an active part in movements for political reform. This drive to heresy became stronger in the father, and culminated in the almost obstinate individualism of Herbert Spencer himself. The father never used the supernatural to explain anything; he was described by one acquaintance (though Herbert considered this an exaggeration) as "without faith or religion whatever, so far as one could see." He was inclined to science, and wrote an Inventional Geometry. In politics he was an individualist like his son and "would never take off his hat to anyone, no matter of what

1Spencer, Autobiography, New York, 1904; vol. 1, p. 51.
rank.”" If he did not understand some question my mother put, he would remain silent; not asking what the question was, and letting it go unanswered. He continued this course all through his life, notwithstanding its futility; there resulted no improvement.” One is reminded (except for the silence) of Herbert Spencer’s resistance, in his later years, to the extension of State functions.

The father, as well as an uncle and the paternal grandfather, were teachers of private schools; and yet the son, who was to be the most famous English philosopher of his century, remained till forty an uneducated man. Herbert was lazy, and the father was indulgent. At last, when he was thirteen, Herbert was sent to Hinton to study under his uncle, who had a reputation for severity. But Herbert promptly ran away from the uncle, and trudged all the way back to the paternal home at Derby—48 miles the first day, 47 the next, and 20 the third, all on a little bread and beer. Nevertheless he returned to Hinton after a few weeks, and stayed for three years. It was the only systematic schooling that he ever received. He could not say, later, just what it was he learned there; no history, no natural science, no general literature. He says, with characteristic pride: “That neither in boyhood nor youth did I receive a single lesson in English, and that I have remained entirely without formal knowledge of syntax down to the present hour, are facts which should be known; since their implications are at variance with assumptions universally accepted.” At the age of forty he tried to read the Iliad, but “after reading some six books I felt what a task it would be to go on—felt that I would

2P. 53. 3P. 61. 4P. vii.
rather give a large sum than read to the end." Collier, one of his secretaries, tells us that Spencer never finished any book of science. Even in his favorite fields he received no systematic instruction. He burnt his fingers and achieved a few explosions in chemistry; he browsed entomologically among the bugs about school and home; and he learned something about strata and fossils in his later work as a civil engineer; for the rest he picked his science casually as he went along. Until he was thirty he had no thought at all of philosophy. Then he read Lewes, and tried to pass on to Kant; but finding, at the outset, that Kant considered space and time to be forms of sense-perception rather than objective things, he decided that Kant was a dunce, and threw the book away. His secretary tells us that Spencer composed his first book, Social Statics, "having read no other ethical treatise than an old and now forgotten book by Jonathan Dymond." He wrote his Psychology after reading only Hume, Mansel and Reid; his Biology after reading only Carpenter's Comparative Physiology (and not the Origin of Species); his Sociology without reading Comte or Tylor; his Ethics without reading Kant or Mill or any other moralist than Sedgwick. What a contrast to the intensive and relentless education of John Stuart Mill!

Where, then, did he find those myriad facts with which he propped up his thousand arguments? He "picked them up," for the most part, by direct observation rather than by reading. "His curiosity was ever awake, and he

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5P. 300.
6Appendix to Royce's Herbert Spencer.
7Autob., i, 438.
8Pp. 289, 291.
9Collier, in Royce, 210?.
was continually directing the attention of his companion to some notable phenomenon . . . until then seen by his eyes alone." At the Athenaeum Club he pumped Huxley and his other friends almost dry of their expert knowledge; and he ran through the periodicals at the Club as he had run through those that passed through his father’s hands for the Philosophical Society at Derby, "lynx-eyed for every fact that was grist to his mill."\(^\text{10}\) Having determined what he wanted to do, and having found the central idea, evolution, about which all his work would turn, his brain became a magnet for relevant material, and the unprecedented orderliness of his thought classified the material almost automatically as it came. No wonder the proletaire and the business man heard him gladly; here was just such a mind as their own—a stranger to book-learning, innocent of "culture," and yet endowed with the natural, matter-of-fact knowledge of the man who learns as he works and lives.

For he was working for his living; and his profession intensified the practical tendency of his thought. He was surveyor, supervisor and designer of railway lines and bridges, and in general an engineer. He dripped inventions at every turn; they all failed, but he looked back upon them, in his *Autobiography*, with the fondness of a father for a wayward son; he sprinkled his reminiscent pages with patent salt-cellars, jugs, candle-extinguishers, invalid-chairs, and the like. As most of us do in youth, he invented new diets too; for a time he was vegetarian; but he abandoned it when he saw a fellow-vegetarian develop anemia, and himself losing strength; "I found that I had to rewrite what I had written dur-

\(^\text{10}\) *Ibid.*
ing the time I was a vegetarian, because it was so wanting in vigor.”11 He was ready in those days to give everything a trial; he even thought of migrating to New Zealand, forgetting that a young country has no use for philosophers. It was characteristic of him that he made parallel lists of reasons for and against the move, giving each reason a numerical value. The sums being 110 points for remaining in England and 301 for going, he remained.

His character had the defects of its virtues. He paid for his resolute realism and practical sense by missing the spirit and zest of poetry and art. The only poetical touch in his twenty volumes was due to a printer who made Spencer speak of “the daily versification of scientific predictions.” He had a fine persistence whose other side was an opinionated obstinacy; he could sweep the entire universe for proofs of his hypotheses, but he could not see with any insight another’s point of view; he had the egotism that bears up the non-conformer, and he could not carry his greatness without some conceit. He had the limitations of the Pioneers: a dogmatic narrowness accompanying a courageous candor and an intense originality; sternly resisting all flattery, rejecting proffered governmental honors, and pursuing his painful work for forty years in chronic ill-health and modest seclusion; and yet marked, by some phrenologist who gained access to him—“Self-esteem very large.”12

The son and grandson of teachers, he wielded the ferule in his books, and struck a high didactic tone. “I am never puzzled,” he tells us.13 His solitary bachelor life left him lacking in the warmly human qualities, though he

11Autob., i, 401. “Post hoc propter hoc”?
12P. 228. 13P. 464.
could be indignantly humane. He had an affair with that great Englishman, George Eliot, but she had too much intellect to please him. He lacked humor, and had no subtlety or nuances in his style. When he lost at his favorite game of billiards, he denounced his opponent for devoting so much time to such a game as to have become an expert in it. In his Autobiography he writes reviews of his own early books, to show how it should have been done.

Apparently the magnitude of his task compelled him to look upon life with more seriousness than it deserves. "I was at the Fête of St. Cloud on Sunday," he writes from Paris; "and was much amused by the juvenility of the adults. The French never entirely cease to be boys; I saw grey-haired people riding on whirligigs such as we have at our own fairs." He was so busy analyzing and describing life that he had no time to live it. After seeing Niagara Falls he jotted down in his diary: "Much what I had expected." He describes the most ordinary incidents with the most magnificent pedantry—as when he tells us of the only time he ever swore. He suffered no crises, felt no romance (if his memoirs record him well); he had some intimacies but he writes of them almost mathematically, plotting the curves of his tepid friendships without any uplifting touch of passion. A friend said of himself that he could not write well when dictating to a young woman stenographer; Spencer said that it did not bother him at all. His secretary says, "The passionless thin lips

14I, 457-62; II, 44. 15I, 415, 540.
16I, 533. 17I, 465.
18"Tyndall once said of him what a much better fellow he would be if he had a good swear now and again,"—Elliott, Herbert Spencer, p. 61,
told of a total lack of sensuality, and the light eyes betrayed a lack of emotional depth."  

Hence the monotonous levelness of his style: he never soars, and needs no exclamation-points; in a romantic century he stands like a sculptured lesson in dignity and reserve.

He had an exceptionally logical mind; he marshalled his a prioris and his a posterioris with the precision of a chess player. He is the clearest expositor of complex subjects that modern history can show; he wrote of difficult problems in terms so lucid that for a generation all the world was interested in philosophy. "It has been remarked," he says, "that I have an unusual faculty of exposition—set forth my data and reasonings and conclusions with a clearness and coherence not common."  

He loved spacious generalizations, and made his works interesting rather with his hypotheses than with the proofs. Huxley said that Spencer's idea of a tragedy was a theory killed by a fact; and there were so many theories in Spencer's mind that he was bound to have a tragedy every day or two. Huxley, struck by the feeble and undecided gait of Buckle, said of him to Spencer: "Ah, I see the kind of man: he is top-heavy." "Buckle," Spencer adds, "had taken in a much larger quantity of matter than he could organize."  

With Spencer it was the other way; he organized much more than he had taken in. He was all for co-ordination and synthesis; he deprecated Carlyle for lacking a similar turn. The fondness for order became in him an enslaving passion; a brilliant generalization over-mastered him. But the world was calling for a mind like his; one who could transform the wilderness of facts with sunlit clarity into

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19Royce, 188. 20Autob., ii, 511. 21I, 467. 22II, 4.
civilized meaning; and the service which Spencer performed for his generation entitled him to the failings that made him human. If he has been pictured here rather frankly, it is because we love a great man better when we know his faults, and suspiciously dislike him when he shines in unmitigated perfection.

"Up to this date," wrote Spencer at forty, "my life might fitly have been characterized as miscellaneous." Seldom has a philosopher's career shown such desultory vacillation. "About this time" (age twenty-three) "my attention turned to the construction of matches." But gradually he found his field, and tilled it with honest husbandry. As early as 1842 he wrote, for the Non-conformist (note the medium he chose), some letters on "The Proper Sphere of Government," which contained his later laissez-faire philosophy in ovo. Six years later he dropped engineering to edit The Economist. At the age of thirty, when he spoke disparagingly of Jonathan Dymond's Essays on the Principles of Morality, and his father challenged him to do as well with such a subject, he took the dare, and wrote his Social Statics. It had only a small sale, but it won him access to the magazines. In 1852 his essay on "The Theory of Population" (one of the many instances of Malthus' influence on the thought of the nineteenth century) suggested that the struggle for existence leads to a survival of the fittest, and coined those historic phrases. In the same year his essay on "The Development Hypothesis" met the trite objection—that the origin of new species by progressive modification of older ones had never been seen—by pointing out that the same argument told much more strongly

22 II, 67. 21 I, 279.
against the theory of the "special creation" of new species by God; and it went on to show that the development of new species was no more marvelous or incredible than the development of a man from ovum and sperm, or of a plant from a seed. In 1855 his second book, *The Principles of Psychology*, undertook to trace the evolution of mind. Then, in 1857, came an essay on "Progress, Its Law and Cause," which took up Von Baer's idea of the growth of all living forms from homogeneous beginnings to heterogeneous developments, and lifted it into a general principle of history and progress. In short Spencer had grown with the spirit of his age, and was ready now to become the philosopher of universal evolution.

When, in 1858, he was revising his essays for collective publication, he was struck by the unity and sequence of the ideas he had expressed; and the notion came to him, like a burst of sunlight through opened doors, that the theory of evolution might be applied in every science as well as in biology; that it could explain not only species and genera but planets and strata, social and political history, moral and esthetic conceptions. He was fired with the thought of a series of works in which he would show the evolution of matter and mind from nebula to man, and from savage to Shakespeare. But he almost despaired when he thought of his nearly forty years. How could one man, so old, and an invalid, traverse all the sphere of human knowledge before his death? Only three years back he had had a complete break-down; for eighteen months he had been incapacitated, broken in mind and courage, wandering aimlessly and hopelessly from place to place. The consciousness of his latent powers made his weakness a bitter thing to him. He knew that he would never be quite
healthy again, and that he could not bear mental work for more than an hour at a time. Never was a man so handicapped for the work he chose, and never did a man choose, so late in life, so great a work.

He was poor. He had never given much thought to getting a living. "I don't mean to get on," he said; "I don't think getting on is worth the bother."25 He had resigned the editorship of The Economist on receiving $2,500 as bequest from an uncle; but his idleness had consumed this gift. It occurred to him now that he might seek advance subscriptions for his intended volumes, and so live from hand to mouth, and pay his way as he went. He prepared an outline, and submitted it to Huxley, Lewes, and other friends; they secured him an imposing list of initial subscribers whose names might adorn his prospectus: Kingsley, Lyell, Hooker, Tyndall, Buckle, Froude, Bain, Herschel, and others. Published in 1860, this prospectus brought 440 subscriptions from Europe, and 200 from America; the total promising a modest $1,500 a year. Spencer was satisfied, and set to work with a will.

But after the publication of First Principles, in 1862, many subscribers withdrew their names because of the famous first part, which, attempting to reconcile science and religion, offended bishops and pundits alike. The way of the peacemaker is hard. First Principles and The Origin of Species became the center of a great Battle of the Books, in which Huxley served as generalissimo for the forces of Darwinism and agnosticism. For a time the evolutionists were severely ostracised by respectable people; they were denounced as immoral monsters, and it was thought good form to insult

them publicly. Spencer's subscribers fell away with every instalment, and many defaulted on payments due for instalments received. Spencer went on as long as he could, paying out of his pocket the deficit which every issue involved. At last his funds and his courage were exhausted, and he issued to the remaining subscribers an announcement that he could no longer continue his work.

Then came one of the encouraging incidents of history. Spencer's greatest rival, who had held the field of English philosophy before the publication of *First Principles*, and now saw himself superseded by the philosopher of evolution, wrote to Spencer as follows, on February 4, 1866:

"Dear Sir:

On arriving here last week, I found the December livraison of your *Biology*, and I need hardly say how much I regretted the announcement in the paper annexed to it. . . . I propose that you should write the next of your treatises, and that I should guarantee the publisher against loss. . . . I beg that you will not consider this proposal in the light of a personal favor, though even if it were I should still hope to be permitted to offer it. But it is nothing of the kind—it is a simple proposal of cooperation for an important public purpose, for which you give your labor and have given your health. I am, Dear Sir,

Very truly yours,

J. S. Mill."  

Spencer courteously refused; but Mill went out among his friends and persuaded several of them to subscribe for 250 copies each. Spencer again objected, and could not be moved. Then

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26 *Autob.*, ii, 156.
suddenly came a letter from Prof. Youmans, saying that Spencer’s American admirers had bought, in his name, $7,000 of public securities, of which the interest or dividends were to go to him. This time he yielded. The spirit of the gift renewed his inspiration; he resumed his task, and for forty years he kept his shoulder to the wheel, until all the Synthetic Philosophy had arrived safely into print. This triumph of mind and will over illness and a thousand obstacles is one of the sunny spots in the book of man.

III. FIRST PRINCIPLES

1. The Unknowable

“We too often forget,” says Spencer, at the outset, “that not only is there ‘a soul of goodness in things evil,’ but generally also a soul of truth in things erroneous.” He proposes, therefore, to examine religious ideas, with a view to finding that core of truth which under the changing form of many faiths, has given to religion its persistent power over the human soul.

What he finds at once is that every theory of the origin of the universe drives us into inconceivabilities. The atheist tries to think of a self-existent world, uncaused and without beginning; but we cannot conceive of anything beginningless or uncaused. The theist merely puts back the difficulty by a step; and to the theologian who says, “God made the world,” the child’s unanswerable query comes, “Who made God?” All ultimate religious ideas are logically inconceivable.

All ultimate scientific ideas are equally beyond rational conception. What is matter? We reduce it to atoms, and then find ourselves forced to divide the atom as we had divided
the molecule; we are driven into the dilemma
that matter is infinitely divisible,—which is
inconceivable; or that there is a limit to its
divisibility,—which also is inconceivable. So
with the divisibility of space and time; both of
these are ultimately irrational ideas. Motion is
wrapped in a triple obscurity, since it involves
matter changing, in time, its position in space.
When we analyze matter resolutely we find
nothing at last but force—a force impressed
upon our organs of sense, or a force resisting
our organs of action; and who shall tell us
what force is? Turn from physics to psy-
chology, and we come upon mind and conscious-
ness: and here are greater puzzles than before.
"Ultimate scientific ideas," then, "are all rep-
resentations of realities that cannot be com-
prehended. . . . In all directions the scientist's
investigations bring him face to face with an
insoluble enigma; and he ever more clearly
perceives it to be an insoluble enigma. He
learns at once the greatness and the littleness
of the human intellect—its power in dealing
with all that comes within the range of ex-
perience, its impotence in dealing with all that
transcends experience. He, more than any
other, truly knows that in its ultimate nature
nothing can be known."27 The only honest phi-
losophy, to use Huxley's word, is agnosticism.

The common cause of these obscurities is the
relativity of all knowledge. "Thinking being
relating, no thought can express more than rela-
tions. . . . Intellect being framed simply
by and for converse with phenomena, involves
us in nonsense when we try to use it for any-
thing beyond phenomena."28 And yet the rela-

27First Principles, New York, 1910; p. 56.
28Pp. 107-108. This unconsciously follows Kan
and succinctly anticipates Bergson.
tive and phenomenal imply, by their names and natures, something beyond them, something ultimate and absolute. "On watching our thoughts we see how impossible it is to get rid of the consciousness of an Actuality lying behind Appearances, and how from this impossibility results our indestructible belief in that Actuality." 29 But what that Actuality is we cannot know.

From this point of view the reconciliation of science and religion is no longer very difficult. "Truth generally lies in the co-ordination of antagonistic opinions." 30 Let science admit that its "laws" apply only to phenomena and the relative; let religion admit that its theology is a rationalizing myth for a belief that defines conception. Let religion cease to picture the Absolute as a magnified man; much worse, as a cruel and blood-thirsty and treacherous monster, afflicted with "a love of adulation such as would be despised in a human being." 31 Let science cease to deny deity, or to take materialism for granted. Mind and matter are, equally, relative phenomena, the double effect of an ultimate cause whose nature must remain unknown. The recognition of this Inscrutable Power is the core of truth in every religion, and the beginning of all philosophy.

2. Evolution

Having indicated the unknowable, philosophy surrenders it, and turns its face to what can be known. Metaphysics is a mirage; as Michelet put it, it is "the art of befuddling one's self methodically." The proper field and function of philosophy lies in the summation and unification of the results of science. "Knowledge of the lowest kind is un-unified

29 P. 83. 30 Autob., ii, 16. 31 F.P., 103.
knowledge; science is partially-unified knowledge; philosophy is completely-unified knowledge." Such complete unification requires a broad and universal principle that will include all experience, and will describe the essential features of all knowledge. Is there a principle of this kind?

We may perhaps approach such a principle by trying to unify the highest generalizations of physics. These are the indestructibility of matter, the conservation of energy, the continuity of motion, the persistence of relations among forces (i.e., the inviolability of natural law), the transformability and equivalence of forces (even of mental and physical forces), and the rhythm of motion. This last generalization, not usually recognized, needs only to be pointed out. All nature is rhythmical, from the pulsations of heat to the vibrations of violin strings; from the undulations of light, heat and sound to the tides of the sea; from the periodicities of sex to the periodicities of planets and comets and stars; from the alternation of night and day to the succession of the seasons, and perhaps to the rhythms of climatic change; from the oscillations of molecules to the rise and fall of nations and the birth and death of stars.

All these "laws of the knowable" are reducible (by an analysis which must not here be followed in detail) to the final law of the persistence of force. But there is something static and inert about this principle; it does not so much as hint at the secret of life. What is the dynamic principle of reality? What is the formula of the growth and decay of all things? It must be a formula of evolution and dissolution, for "an entire history of anything must include its appearance out of the

\[P. 119.\]
imperceptible and its disappearance into the imperceptible."\textsuperscript{33}

So Spencer offers us his famous formula of evolution, which made the intellect of Europe gasp for breath, and required ten volumes and forty years for its explanation. "Evolution is an integration of matter and a concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation."\textsuperscript{34} What does this mean?

The growth of planets out of nebulae; the formation of oceans and mountains on the earth; the metabolism of elements by plants, and of animal tissues by men; the development of the heart in the embryo, and the fusion of bones after birth; the unification of sensations and memories into knowledge and thought, and of knowledge into science and philosophy; the development of families into clans and gentes and cities and states and alliances and the "federation of the world": here is the integration of matter,—the aggregation of separate items into masses and groups and wholes. Such integration of course involves a lessening of motion in the parts, as the growing power of the state lessens the freedom of the individual; but at the same time it gives to the parts an interdependence, a protective tissue of relationships, which constitutes "coherence" and promotes corporate survival. The process brings, too, a greater definiteness of forms and functions: the nebula is shapeless, nebulous; and yet out of it come the elliptical regularity of the planets, the sharp lines of mountain-chains, the specific form and char-

\textsuperscript{33}P. 253.  \textsuperscript{34}P. 367.
acter of organisms and organs, the division of labor and specialization of function in physiological and political structures, etc. And the parts of this integrating whole become not merely definite but diverse, heterogeneous in nature and operation. The primeval nebula is homogeneous—i. e., it consists of parts that are alike; but soon it is differentiated into gases and liquids and solids; the earth becomes here green with grass, there white with mountain-tops, or blue with the multitudinous sea; evolving life begets, out of a relatively homogeneous protoplasm, the varied organs of nutrition, reproduction, locomotion, and perception; a simple language fills whole continents with its multiplying dialects; a single science breeds a hundred, and the folk-lore of a nation flowers into a thousand forms of literary art; individuality grows, character stands out uniquely, and every race and people develops its peculiar genius. Integration and heterogeneity, aggregation of parts into ever larger wholes and differentiation of parts into ever more varied forms: these are the foci of the orbit of evolution. Whatever passes from diffusion to integration and unity, and from a homogeneous simplicity to a differentiated complexity (cf. America, 1600-1900), is in the flow of evolution; whatever is returning from integration to diffusion, and from complexity to simplicity (cf. Europe 200-600 A. D.), is caught in the ebb of dissolution.

Not content with this synthetic formula, Spencer endeavors to show how it follows by inevitable necessity from the natural operation of mechanical forces. There is, first, a certain "Instability of the Homogeneous": i. e., similar parts cannot long remain similar because they are unevenly subject to external forces, outer parts, e. g., are sooner attacked, like coast-line
towns in war; and the variety of occupations moulds similar men into the varied embodiments of a hundred varied professions and trades. There is, again, a "Multiplication of Effects": one cause may produce a vast variety of results, and help to differentiate the world; a word amiss, like Marie Antoinette’s, or an altered telegram at Ems, or a wind at Salamis, may play an endless role in history. And there is the law of "Segregation": the parts of a relatively homogeneous whole, being driven separate into different areas, are moulded by diverse environments into dissimilar products,—as the English become Americans, or Canadians, or Australians, according to the genius of the place. In these many ways the forces of nature build the variety of this evolving world.

But finally, and inescapably, comes "Equilibration." Every motion, being motion under resistance, must sooner or later come to an end; every rhythmic oscillation (unless externally reinforced) suffers some loss of rate and amplitude. The planets ride through a lesser orbit, or will ride, than once they rode: the sun will shine less warmly and brightly as the centuries pass away; the friction of the tides will retard the rotation of the earth. This globe, that throbs and murmurs with a million motions, and luxuriates into a million forms of riotously breeding life, will some day move more leisurely in its orbit and its parts; the blood will run cooler and more slowly in our dessicated veins; we shall not hurry any more; like dying races, we shall think of heaven in terms of rest and not of life; we shall dream of Nirvana. Gradually, and then rapidly, equilibration will become dissolution, the unhappy epilogue of evolution. Societies will dis-integrate, masses will migrate, cities will fade into the dark hinterland of peasant life; no
government will be strong enough to hold the loosened parts together; social order will cease to be even remembered. And in the individual too, integration will give way to disruption; and that co-ordination which is life will pass into that diffuse disorder which is death. The earth will be a chaotic theatre of decay, a gloomy drama of energy in irreversible degradation. The earth itself will be resolved into the dust and nebula from which it came. The cycle of evolution and dissolution will be complete. The cycle will begin again, and endless times again; but always this will be the dénouement. *Memento mori* is written upon the face of life; and every birth is a prelude to decay and death.

IV. BIOLOGY: THE EVOLUTION OF LIFE

The second and third volumes of the Synthetic Philosophy appeared in 1872 under the title of *Principles of Biology*. They revealed the natural limitations of a philosopher invading a specialist's field; but they atoned for errors of detail by illuminating generalizations that gave a new unity and intelligibility to vast areas of biological fact.

Spencer begins with a famous definition: "Life is the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations." The completeness of life depends on the completeness of this correspondence; and life is perfect when the correspondence is perfect. The correspondence is not a merely passive adaptation; what distinguishes life is the adjustment of internal relations in anticipation of a change in external relations, as when an animal crouches to avoid a blow, or a man makes a fire to warm his food. The defect of the definition lies not mere-

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35 *Principles of Biology*; New York, 1910; i, 99.
ly in its tendency to neglect the remoulding activity of the organism upon the environment, but in its failure to explain what is that subtle power whereby an organism is enabled to make these prophetic adjustments that characterize vitality. In a chapter added to later editions, Spencer was forced to discuss "The Dynamic Element in Life," and to admit that his definition had not really revealed the nature of life. "We are obliged to confess that Life in its essence cannot be conceived in physico-chemical terms."36 He did not realize how damaging such an admission was to the unity and completeness of his system.

As Spencer sees in the life of the individual an adjustment of internal to external relations, so he sees in the life of the species a remarkable adjustment of reproductive fertility to the conditions of its habitat. Reproduction arises originally as a readaptation of the nutritive surface to the nourished mass; the growth of an amoeba, for example, involves an increase of mass much more rapid than the increase in the surface through which the mass must get its nourishment. Division, budding, spore-formation, and sexual reproduction have this in common, that the ratio of mass to surface is reduced, and the nutritive balance is restored. Hence the growth of the individual organism beyond a certain point is dangerous; and normally growth gives way, after a time, to reproduction. On the average, growth varies inversely with the rate of energy-expenditure; and the rate of reproduction varies inversely with the degree of growth. "It is well known to breeders that if a filly is allowed to bear a foal, she is thereby prevented from reaching her proper size. . . . As a converse fact, cas-

36I, 120.
trated animals, as capons and notably cats, often become larger than their unmutilated associates."\(^{37}\) The rate of reproduction tends to fall as the development and capability of the individual progress. "When, from lowness of organization, the ability to contend with external dangers is small, there must be great fertility to compensate for the consequent mortality; otherwise the race must die out. When, on the contrary, high endowments give much capacity for self-preservation, a correspondingly low degree of fertility is requisite," lest the rate of multiplication should outrun the supply of food.\(^{38}\) In general, then, there is an opposition of individuation and genesis, of individual development and fertility. The rule holds for groups and species more regularly than for individuals: the more highly developed the species or the group, the lower will its birth-rate be. But it holds for individuals too, on the average. For example, intellectual development seems hostile to fertility. "Where exceptional fertility exists, there is sluggishness of mind, and where there has been, during education, excessive expenditure in mental action, there frequently follows a complete or partial infertility. Hence the particular kind of further evolution which Man is hereafter to undergo, is one which, more than any other, may be expected to cause a decline in his power of reproduction."\(^{39}\) Philosophers are notorious for shirking parentage. In woman, on the other hand, the arrival of motherhood normally brings a diminution of intellectual activity;\(^{40}\) and perhaps her shorter adolescence is due to her earlier sacrifice to reproduction.

Despite this approximate adaptation of birth-

\(^{37}\)II, 459. \(^{38}\)II, 421. \(^{39}\)II, 530. \(^{40}\)Autob., i, 62.
rate to the needs of group survival, the adaptation is never complete, and Malthus was right in his general principle that population tends to outrun the means of subsistence. "From the beginning this pressure of population has been the proximate cause of progress. It produced the original diffusion of the race. It compelled men to abandon predatory habits and take to agriculture. It led to the clearing of the earth's surface. It forced men into the social state, ... and developed the social sentiments. It has stimulated to progressive improvements in production, and to increased skill and intelligence." It is the chief cause of that struggle for existence through which the fittest are enabled to survive, and through which the level of the race is raised.

Whether the arrival of the fittest is due chiefly to spontaneous favorable variations, or to the partial inheritance of characters or capacities repeatedly acquired by successive generations, is a question on which Spencer took no dogmatic stand; he accepted Darwin's theory gladly, but felt that there were facts which it could not explain, and which compelled a modified acceptance of Lamarckian views. He defended Lamarck with fine vigor in his controversy with Weismann, and pointed out certain defects in the Darwinian theory. In those days Spencer stood almost alone on the side of Lamarck; it is of some interest to note that today the neo-Lamarckians include descendants of Darwin, while the greatest contemporary English biologist gives it as the view of present-day students of genetics that Darwin's particular theory (not, of course the general theory) of evolu-

[Biology, ii. 536.]
tion must be abandoned. But let us not rush in where experts fear to tread.

V. PSYCHOLOGY: THE EVOLUTION OF MIND

The two volumes on The Principles of Psychology (1873) are the weakest links in Spencer's chain. There had been an earlier volume on the subject (1855), a youthfully vigorous defense of materialism and determinism; but age and thought revised this into a milder form, and padded it out with hundreds of pages of painstaking but unilluminating analysis. Here, even more than elsewhere, Spencer is rich in theories and poor in proofs. He has a theory of the origin of nerves out of intercellular connective tissue; and a theory of the genesis of instinct by the compounding of reflexes and the transmission of acquired characters; and a theory of the origin of mental categories out of the experience of the race; and a theory of "transfigured realism"; and a hundred other theories that have all the obfuscating power of metaphysics rather than the clarifying virtue of a matter-of-fact psychology. In these volumes we leave realistic England and go "back to Kant."

What strikes us at once is that for the first time in the history of psychology, we get here a resolutely evolutionist point of view, an attempt at genetic explanations, an effort to trace the bewildering complexities of thought down

"-Cf., address of Sir Wm. Bateson before the American Association for the Advancement of Science (Toronto, Dec. 28, 1921), in Science, Jan. 20, 1922.

Spencer means by this that although the objects of experience may very well be transfigured by perception, and be quite other than they seem, they have an existence which does not all depend upon perceiving them.—II, 494.
to the simplest of nervous operations, and finally to the motions of matter. It is true that this effort fails; but who has ever succeeded in such an attempt? Spencer sets out with a magnificent program for the unveiling of the processes whereby consciousness has been evolved; in the end he is compelled to posit consciousness everywhere,\(^4\) in order to evolve it. He insists that there has been one continuous evolution from nebula to mind, and at last confesses that matter is known only through mind. Perhaps the most significant paragraphs in these volumes are those in which the materialist philosophy is abandoned:

“Can the oscillation of a molecule be represented in consciousness side by side with a nervous shock, and the two be recognized as one? No effort enables us to assimilate them. That a unit of feeling has nothing in common with a unit of motion, becomes more than ever manifest when we bring the two into juxtaposition. And the immediate verdict of consciousness thus given, might be analytically justified; . . . for it might be shown that the conception of an oscillating molecule is built out of many units of feeling” (i. e., our knowledge of matter is built up out of units of mind—sensations and memories and ideas). “. . . Were we compelled to choose between the alternatives of translating mental phenomena into physical phenomena, or of translating physical phenomena into mental phenomena, the latter alternative would seem the more acceptable of the two.”\(^5\)

\(^4\)Autob., ii, 549.
Nevertheless there is of course an evolution of mind; a development of modes of response from simple to compound to complex, from reflex to tropism to instinct, through memory and imagination to intellect and reason. To the reader who can pass alive through these 1400 pages of physiological and psychological analysis there will come an overwhelming sense of the continuity of life and the continuity of mind; he will see, as on a retarded cinematograph, the formation of nerves, the development of adaptive reflexes and instincts, and the production of consciousness and thought through the clash of conflicting impulses. “Intelligence has neither distinct grades nor is it constituted by faculties that are truly independent, but its highest manifestations are the effects of a complication that has arisen by insensible steps out of the simplest elements.” There is no hiatus between instinct and reason; each is an adjustment of inner relations to outer relations, and the only difference is one of degree, in so far as the relations responded to by instinct are comparatively stereotyped and simple, while those met by reason are comparatively novel and complex. A rational action is simply an instinctive response which has survived in a struggle with other instinctive responses aroused by a situation; “deliberation” is merely the internecine strife of rival impulses. At bottom, reason and instinct, mind and life, are one.

Will is an abstract term which we give to the sum of our active impulses, and a volition is the natural flow of an unimpeded idea into action. An idea is the first stage of an action, an action is the last stage of an idea.

Similarly, an emotion is the first stage of an instinctive action, and the expression of the emotion is a useful prelude to the completed response; the baring of the teeth in anger gives a substantial hint of that tearing of the enemy to pieces which used to be the natural termination of such a beginning. "Forms of thought" like the perception of space and time, or the notions of quantity and cause, which Kant supposed innate, are merely instinctive ways of thinking; and as instincts are habits acquired by the race but native to the individual, so these categories are mental habits slowly acquired in the course of evolution, and now part of our intellectual heritage. All these age-long puzzles of psychology can be explained by "the inheritance of continually-accumulating modifications." It is of course just this all-pervading assumption that makes so much of these laborious volumes questionable, and perhaps vain.

VI. SOCIOLOGY: THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIETY

With sociology the verdict is quite different. These volumes, whose publication ranged over twenty years, are Spencer's masterpiece; they cover his favorite field, and show him at his best in suggestive generalization and political philosophy. From his first book, Social Statics, to the last fascicle of The Principles of Sociology, over a stretch of almost half a century, his interest was predominantly in the problems of economics and government; he begins and ends, like Plato, with discourses on moral and political justice. No man, not even Comte, founder of the science and maker of the word, has done so much for sociology.

49I, 482f; ii, 540f. 50I, 466. 51I, 491.
In a popular introductory volume, *The Study of Sociology* (1873), Spencer argued eloquently for the recognition and development of the new science. If determinism is correct in psychology, there must be regularities of cause and effect in social phenomena; and a thorough student of man and society will not be content with a merely chronological history, like Livy's, nor with a biological history like Carlyle's; he will look, in human history, for those general lines of development, those causal sequences, those illuminating correlations, which transform the wilderness of facts into the chart of science. What biography is to anthropology, history is to sociology. Of course there are a thousand obstacles that the study of society must yet overcome before it can deserve the name of science. The young study is harassed by a multitude of prejudices—personal, educational, theological, economic, political, national, religious; and by the hasty omniscience of the uninformed. "There is a story of a Frenchman who, having been three weeks here, proposed to write a book on England; who, after three months, found that he was not quite ready; and who, after three years, concluded that he knew nothing about it." Such a man was ripe to begin the study of sociology. Men prepare themselves with life-long study before becoming authorities in physics or chemistry or biology; but in the field of social and political affairs every grocer's boy is an expert, knows the solution, and demands to be heard.

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52 *The Study of Sociology*, New York, 1910; p. 52.
53 *The Principles of Ethics*, New York, 1910; i, 464. If Spencer's critics had read this passage they would not have accused him of over-rating sociology.
54 *Study*, 91.
Spencer's own preparation, in this case, was a model of intellectual conscience. He employed three secretaries to gather data for him, and to classify the data in parallel columns giving the domestic, ecclesiastical, professional, political, and industrial institutions of every significant person. At his own expense he published these collections in eight large volumes, so that other students might verify or modify his conclusions; and the publication being unfinished at his death, he left part of his little savings to complete the undertaking. After seven years of such preparation, the first volume of the Sociology appeared in 1876; not until 1896 was the last one ready. When everything else of Spencer's has become a task for the antiquarian, these three volumes will still be rich in reward for every student of society.

Nevertheless, the initial conception of the work is typical of Spencer's habit of rushing into generalizations. Society, he believes, is an organism, having organs of nutrition, circulation, co-ordination and reproduction, very much as in the case of individuals. It is true that in the individual, consciousness is localized, while in society each of the parts retains its own consciousness and its own will; but the centralization of government and authority tend to reduce the scope of this distinction. "A social organism is like an individual organism in these essential traits: that it grows; that while growing it becomes more complex; that while becoming more complex, its parts acquire increasing mutual dependence; and that its life is immense in length compared with the lives of its component units; . . .

\[55\] Cf. budding with colonization, and sexual reproduction with the intermarriage of races.
that in both cases there is increasing integration accompanied by increasing heterogeneity." 56 Thus the development of society liberally carries out the formula of evolution: the growing size of the political unit, from family to state and league, the growing size of the economic unit, from petty domestic industry to monopolies and cartels, the growing size of the population unit, from villages to towns and cities—surely these show a process of integration; while the division of labor, the multiplication of professions and trades, and the growing economic interdependence of city with country, and of nation with nation, amply illustrate the development of coherence and differentiation.

The same principle of the integration of the heterogeneous applies to every field of social phenomena, from religion and government to science and art. Religion is at first the worship of a multitude of gods and spirits, more or less alike in every nation; and the development of religion comes through the notion of a central and omnipotent deity subordinating the others, and co-ordinating them into their hierarchy of special roles. The first gods were probably suggested by dreams and ghosts. 57 The word spirit was, and is, applied equally to ghosts and gods. The primitive mind believed that in death, or sleep, or trance, the ghost or spirit left the body; even in a sneeze the forces of expiration might expel the spirit, so that a protective "God bless you!"—or its equivalent—became attached to this dangerous adventure. Echoes and reflections were sounds and sights of one's ghost or double; the Basuto refuses to walk by a stream, lest a croco-

56 Autob., ii, 56.
57 Principles of Sociology, New York, 1910; i, 286.
dile should seize his shadow and consume it. God was, at first, only a permanently existing ghost." Persons who had been powerful during their earthly lives were believed to keep their power in their ghostly appearance. Among the Tannese the word for god means, literally, a dead man. "Jehovah" meant "the strong one," "the warrior"; he had been a local potentate, perhaps, who was worshipped after his death as the "god of hosts." Such dangerous ghosts had to be propitiated: funer al rites grew into worship, and all the modes of currying favor with the earthly chief were applied to the ceremonial of prayer and the appeasement of the gods. Ecclesiastical revenues originated in gifts to the gods, just as state revenues began as presents to the chief. Obeisances to kings became prostration and prayer at the altar of the god. The derivation of the god from the dead king shows clearly in the case of the Romans, who deified rulers before their death. In such ancestor-worship all religion seems to have its origin. The power of this custom may be illustrated by the story of the chief who refused baptism because he was not satisfied with the answer to his query as to whether he would meet his (unbaptized) ancestors in heaven. (Something of this belief entered into the bravery of the Japanese in the war of 1905; death was made easier for them by the thought that their ancestors were looking down upon them from the skies.)

Religion is probably the central feature in the life of primitive men; existence is so pre-

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65I, 296. 55I, 303. 60I, 284, 422; Encycl. Brit., art. "Ancestor-worship."
carious and humble among them that the soul lives rather in the hope of things to come than in the reality of things seen. In some measure, supernatural religion is a concomitant of militarist societies; as war gives way to industry, thought turns from death to life, and life runs out of the grooves of reverent authority into the open road of initiative and freedom. Indeed, the most far-reaching change that has taken place in all the history of western society is the gradual replacement of a military by an industrial regime. Students of the state habitually classify societies according as their governments are monarchical, aristocratic, or democratic; but these are superficial distinctions; the great dividing line is that which separates militant from industrial societies. Nations that live by war from those that live by work.

The military state is always centralized in government, and almost always monarchical; the co-operation it inculcates is regimental and compulsory; it encourages authoritarian religion, worshiping a warrior god; it develops rigid class distinctions and class codes; it props up the natural domestic absolutism of the male. Because the death rate in warlike societies is high, they tend to polygamy and a low status of women. Most states have been militant because war strengthens the central power and makes for the subordination of all interests to those of the state. Hence "history is little more than the Newgate calendar of nations," a record of robbery, treachery, murder and national suicide. Cannibalism is the shame of primitive societies; but some modern societies are sociophagous, and enslave and consume whole peoples. Until war is outlawed and overcome, civilization is a precarious interlude between catastrophies; "the possibility
of a high social . . . state fundamentally depends on the cessation of war."\(^61\)

The hope of such a consummation lies not so much in the spiritual conversion of the hearts of men (for men are what the environment makes them), as in the development of industrial societies. Industry makes for democracy and peace: as life ceases to be dominated by war, a thousand centers of economic development arise, and power is beneficently spread over a large portion of the members of the group. Since production can prosper only where initiative is free, an industrial society breaks down those traditions of authority, hierarchy, and caste, which flourish in military states, and under which military states flourish. The occupation of the soldier ceases to be held in high repute; and patriotism becomes a love of one's country rather than a hatred of every other.\(^62\) Peace at home becomes the first need of prosperity, and as capital becomes international, and a thousand investments cross every frontier, international peace becomes a necessity as well. As foreign war diminishes, domestic brutality decreases; monogamy replaces polygamy because the life-tenure of men becomes almost equal to that of women; the status of women rises, and the "emancipation of women" becomes a matter of course.\(^63\) Superstitious religions give way to liberal creeds whose focus of effort is the amelioration and ennoblement of human life and character on this earth. The mechanisms of industry teach men the mechanisms of the universe, and the notion of invariable sequences in cause and effect; exact investigation of natural causes replaces the easy resort

\(^{61}\) II, 663. \(^{62}\) II, 624-5. \(^{63}\) I, 681.
to supernatural explanation.\textsuperscript{61} History begins to study the people at work rather than the kings at war; it ceases to be a record of personalities and becomes the history of great inventions and new ideas. The power of government is lessened, and the power of productive groups within the state increases; there is a passage "from status to contract," from equality in subordination to freedom in initiative, from compulsory co-operation to co-operation in liberty. The contrast between the militant and the industrial types of society is indicated by "inversion of the belief that individuals exist for the benefit of the State into the belief that the State exists for the benefit of the individuals."\textsuperscript{65}

While protesting vigorously against the growth of an imperialistic militarism in England, Spencer chose his country as a type of approach to the industrial society, and pointed to France and Germany as instances of the militant state.

"From time to time newspapers remind us of the competition between Germany and France in their military developments. The body politic, in either case, expends most of its energies in growths of teeth and claws—every increase on the one side prompting an increase on the other. . . . Recently the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, referring to Tunis, Tongking, the Congo, and Madagascar, enlarged on the need there had been for competing in political burglaries with other nations; and held that, by taking forcible possession of territories owned by inferior peoples, 'France has regained a certain portion of

\textsuperscript{61}II, 599. \textsuperscript{65}I, 575.
the glory which so many noble enterprises during previous centuries had insured her.'

. . . Hence we see why, in France, as in Germany, a scheme of social re-organization under which each citizen, while maintained by the community, is to labor for the community, has obtained so wide an adhesion as to create a formidable political body—why among the French, St. Simon, Fourier, Proudhon, Cabet, Louis Blanc, Pierre Leroux, now by word and now by deed, have sought to bring about some form of communistic working and living.

. . . Verification by contrast meets us on observing that in England, where the extent of ownership by others has been less than in France and Germany, alike under its military form and under its civil form, there has been less progress in sentiment and idea towards that form of ownership by others which socialism implies.'

As this passage indicates, Spencer believes that socialism is a derivative of the militant and feudal type of state, and has no natural affiliation with industry. Like militarism, socialism involves the development of centralization, the extension of governmental power, the decay of initiative, and the subordination of the individual. "Well may Prince Bismarck display leanings towards State Socialism." "It is the law of all organization that as it becomes complete it becomes rigid." Socialism would be in industry what a rigid instinctive equipment is in animals; it would produce a community of human ants and bees, and would

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68Sociology, i, 571.
issue in a slavery far more monotonous and hopeless than the present condition of affairs.

"Under the compulsory arbitration which socialism would necessitate, . . . the regulators, pursuing their personal interests, . . . would not be met by the combined resistance of all workers; and their power, unchecked as now by refusals to work save on prescribed terms, would grow and ramify and consolidate until it became irresistible. . . . When from regulation of the workers by the bureaucracy we turn to the bureaucracy itself, and ask how it is to be regulated, there is no satisfactory answer. . . . Under such conditions there must arise a new aristocracy, for the support of which the masses would toil; and which, being consolidated, would wield a power far beyond that of any past aristocracy."^{69}

Economic relationships are so different from political relationships, and so much more complex, that no government could regulate them all without such an enslaving bureaucracy. State interference always neglects some factor of the intricate industrial situation, and has failed whenever tried; note the wage-fixing laws of medieval England, and the price-fixing laws of Revolutionary France. Economic relations must be left to the automatic self-adjustment (imperfect though it may be) of supply and demand. What society most wants it will pay for most heavily; and if certain men, or certain functions, receive great rewards it is because they have taken, or have involved, exceptional risks or pains. Men as now constituted will not tolerate a compulsory equality.

^{69}III, 588.
Until an automatically-changed environment automatically changes human character, legislation enacting artificial changes will be as futile as astrology.\textsuperscript{70}

Spencer was almost made sick by the thought of a world ruled by the wage-earning class. He was not enamored of trade-union leaders so far as he could know them through the refractory medium of the London \textit{Times}.\textsuperscript{71} He pointed out that strikes are useless unless most strikes fail; for if all workers should, at various times, strike and win, prices would presumably rise in accord with the raised wages, and the situation would be as before.\textsuperscript{72} “We shall presently see the injustices once inflicted by the employing classes paralleled by the injustices inflicted by the employed classes.”\textsuperscript{73}

Nevertheless his conclusions were not blindly conservative. He realized the chaos and brutality of the social system that surrounded him, and he looked about with evident eagerness to find a substitute. In the end he gave his sympathies to the co-operative movement; he saw in this the culmination of the passage from status to contract in which Sir Henry Maine had found the essence of economic history. “The regulation of labor becomes less coercive as society assumes a higher type. Here we reach a form in which the coerciveness has diminished to the smallest degree consistent with combined action. Each member is his own master in respect of the work he does; and is subject only to such rules, established by majority of the members, as are needful for maintaining order. The transition from the compulsory co-operation of militancy to the voluntary co-operation of industrialism is com-

\textsuperscript{70}Cf. \textit{The Man vs. the State}.
\textsuperscript{71}III, 589. \textsuperscript{72}III, 545. \textsuperscript{73}\textit{Autob.}, ii, 433.
He doubts if human beings are yet honest and competent enough to make so democratic a system of industry efficient; but he is all for trying. He foresees a time when industry will no longer be directed by absolute masters, and men will no longer sacrifice their lives in the production of rubbish. “As the contrast between the militant and the industrial types is indicated by inversion of the belief that individuals exist for the benefit of the state into the belief that the state exists for the benefit of individuals; so the contrast between the industrial type and the type likely to be evolved from it is indicated by inversion of the belief that life is for work into the belief that work is for life.”

VII. ETHICS: THE EVOLUTION OF MORALS

So important does this problem of industrial reconstruction seem to Spencer that he devotes to it again the largest section of *The Principles of Ethics* (1893)—“this last part of my task . . . to which I regard all the preceding parts as subsidiary.” As a man with all the moral severity of the mid-Victorian, Spencer was especially sensitive to the problem of finding a new and natural ethic to replace the moral code which had been associated with the traditional faith. “The supposed supernatural sanctions of right conduct do not, if rejected, leave a blank. There exist natural sanctions no less pre-emptory, and covering a much wider field.”

The new morality must be built upon biology. “Acceptance of the doctrine of organic evolution determines certain ethical conceptions.” Huxley, in his Romanes lecture at Oxford in

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74III, 572. 75I, 575. 76Ethics, vol. i, p. xiii. 77I, 7. 78I, 25.
1893, argued that biology could not be taken as an ethical guide; that "nature red in tooth and claw" (as Tennyson was phrasing it) exalted brutality and cunning rather than justice and love; but Spencer felt that a moral code which could not meet the tests of natural selection and the struggle for existence, was from the beginning doomed to lip-service and futility. Conduct, like anything else, should be called good or bad as it is well adapted, or mal-adapted, to the ends of life; "the highest conduct is that which conduces to the greatest length, breadth, and completeness of life."\(^7\) Or, in terms of the evolution formula, conduct is moral according as it makes the individual or the group more integrated and coherent in the midst of a heterogeneity of ends. Morality, like art, is the achievement of unity in diversity; the highest type of man is he who effectively unites in himself the widest variety, complexity, and completeness of life.

This is a rather vague definition, as it must be; for nothing varies so much, from place to place and from time to time, as the specific necessities of adaptation, and therefore the specific content of the idea of good. It is true that certain forms of behavior have been stamped as good—as adapted, in the large, to the fullest life—by the sense of pleasure which natural selection has attached to these preservative and expansive actions. The complexity of modern life has multiplied exceptions, but normally, pleasure indicates biologically useful, and pain indicates biologically dangerous, activities.\(^8\) Nevertheless, within the broad bounds of this principle, we find the most diverse, and apparently the most hostile, conceptions of the

\(^7\) I. 22, 26; ii, 3.
\(^8\) I, 98.
good. There is hardly any item of our Western moral code which is not somewhere held to be immoral; not only polygamy, but suicide, murder of one's own countrymen, even of one's parents, finds in one people or another a lofty moral approbation.

"The wives of the Fijian chiefs consider it a sacred duty to suffer strangulation on the deaths of their husbands. A woman who had been rescued by Williams 'escaped during the night, and, swimming across the river, and presenting herself to her own people, insisted on the completion of the sacrifice which she had in a moment of weakness reluctantly consented to forego'; and Wilkes tells of another who loaded her rescuer 'with abuse.' and ever afterwards manifested the most deadly hatred towards him."81 "Livingstone says of the Makololo women, on the shores of the Zambesi, that they were quite shocked to hear that in England a man had only one wife: to have only one was not 'respectable.' So, too, in Equatorial Africa, according to Reade, 'If a man marries, and his wife thinks that he can afford another spouse, she pesters him to marry again; and calls him a 'stingy fellow' if he declines to do so."82

Such facts, of course, conflict with the belief that there is an inborn moral sense which tells each man what is right and what is wrong. But the association of pleasure and pain, on the average, with good or evil conduct, indicates a measure of truth in the idea; and it may very well be that certain moral conceptions, acquired by the race, become hereditary with the individual.83 Here Spencer uses his

81I, 469. 82I, 327. 83I, 471.
favorite formula to reconcile the intuitionist and the utilitarian, and falls back, once more upon the inheritance of acquired characters.

Surely, however, the innate moral sense, if it exists, is in difficulties today; for never were ethical notions more confused. It is notorious that the principles which we apply in our actual living are largely opposite to those which we preach in our churches and our books. The professed ethic of Europe and America is a pacifistic Christianity; the actual ethic is the militaristic code of the marauding Teutons from whom the ruling strata, almost everywhere in Europe, are derived. The practice of duelling, in Catholic France and Protestant Germany, is a tenacious relic of the original Teutonic code.84 Our moralists are kept busy apologizing for these contradictions, just as the moralists of a later monogamic Greece and India were hard put to it to explain the conduct of gods who had been fashioned in a semi-promiscuous age.85

Whether a nation develops its citizens on the lines of Christian morality or the Teutonic code depends on whether industry or war is its dominant concern. A militant society exalts certain virtues and condones what other peoples might call crimes; aggression and robbery and treachery are not so unequivocally denounced among peoples accustomed to them by war, as among peoples who have learned the value of honesty and non-aggression through industry and peace. Generosity and humanity flourish better where war is infrequent and long periods of productive tranquillity inculcate the advantages of mutual aid.86 The patriotic member of a militant society will look upon bravery and strength as the highest virtues of a man; upon

84I, 323. 85M, 458. 86I, 391f.
obedience as the highest virtue and upon silent submission to the will of the citizen; as the highest virtue of multiple mother-Kaiser thought of God as of a woman. The German army, and followed up his approval. The North American Indians "regarded the use of the bow and arrow, the war-club and spear, looked upon as degrading employments of man. . . . They as degrading agricultural and mechanical labor. Only during recent times more and more dependent on superior powers that national welfare is becoming rising into respectability." Now war is merely wholesale cannibalism; and there is no reason why it should not be classed with cannibalism and unequivocally denounced. "The sentiment and the idea of justice can grow only as fast as the external antagonisms of societies decrease, and the internal harmonious co-operations of their members increase." How can this harmony be promoted? As we have seen, it comes more readily through freedom than through regulation. The formula of justice should be: "Every man is free to do that which he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man." This is a formula hostile to war, which exalts authority, regimentation and obedience; it is a formula favorable to peaceful industry, for it provides a maximum of stimulus with an absolute equality of opportunity; it is conformable to Christian morals, for it holds every person sacred, and frees him from aggression; and it has the sanction of that ultimate judge

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87 Cf. the philosophy of Nietzsche.
natural selection—because it opens up the resources of the earth on equal terms to all, and permits each organism and individual to prosper according to its ability and its work.

Liberty contends with Evolution for priority in Spencer's affections; and Liberty wins. He thinks that as war decreases, the control of the individual by the state loses most of its excuse; and in a condition of permanent peace the state would be reduced within Jeffersonian bounds, acting only to prevent breaches of equal freedom. Such justice should be administered without cost, so that wrong-doers might know that the poverty of their victims would not shield them from punishment; and all the expenses of the state should be met by direct taxation, lest the invisibility of taxation should divert public attention from governmental extravagance. But "beyond maintaining justice, the state cannot do anything else without transgressing justice"; for it would then be protecting inferior individuals from that natural apportionment of reward and capacity, penalty and incapacity, on which the survival and improvement of the group depend.

The principle of justice would require common ownership of land, if we could separate the land from its improvements. In his first book, Spencer had advocated nationalization of the soil, to equalize economic opportunity; but he withdrew his contention later (much to the disgust of Henry George, who called him "the perplexed philosopher"), on the ground that land is carefully husbanded only by the family that owns it, and that can rely on transmitting to its own descendants the effects of the labor put into it. As for private property, it derives

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91Elliott, *Herbert Spencer*, p. 81.
95I, 148, 420. 96II, 200. 97II, 222. 98II, 81.
immediately from the law of justice, for each man should be equally free to retain the products of his thrift. The justice of bequests is not so obvious; but the "right to bequeath is included in the right of ownership, since otherwise the ownership is not complete." Trade should be as free among nations as among individuals; the law of justice should be no merely tribal code, but an inviolable maxim of international relations.

These are, in outline, the real "rights of man" —the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness on equal terms with all. Beside these economic rights, political rights are unimportant unrealities. Since only economic rights avail, women are misled when they spend so much time seeking the franchise. Spencer fears that the maternal instinct for helping the helpless may lead women to favor a paternalistic state. There is some confusion in his mind on this point; he argues that political rights are of no importance, and then that it is very important that women should not have them; he denounces war, and then contends that women should not vote because they do not risk their lives in battle—a shameful argument for any man to use who has been born of woman. He is afraid of women because they may be too altruistic; and yet the culminating conception of his book is that industry and peace will develop altruism to the point where it will balance egoism and so evolve the spontaneous order of a philosophic anarchism.

The conflict of egoism and altruism (this word, and something of this line of thought, Spencer takes, more or less unconsciously, from

99II, 120. 100II, 192-3. 101II, 196-7. 102II, 166.
Comte) results from the conflict of the individual with his family, his group, and his race. Presumably egoism will remain dominant; but perhaps that is desirable. If everybody thought more of the interests of others than of his own we should have a chaos of curtsies and retreats; and probably "the pursuit of individual happiness within the limits prescribed by social conditions is the first requisite to the attainment of the greatest general happiness." 103

What we may expect, however, is a great enlargement of the sphere of sympathy, a great development of the impulses to altruism. Even now the sacrifices entailed by parentage are gladly made; "the wish for children among the childless, and the occasional adoption of children, show how needful for the attainment of certain egoistic satisfactions are these altruistic activities." 104 The intensity of patriotism is another instance of the passionate preference of larger interests to one's immediate concerns. Every generation of social living deepens the impulses to mutual aid. 105 "Unceasing social discipline will so mould human nature that eventually, sympathetic pleasures will be spontaneously pursued to the fullest extent advantageous to all." 106 The sense of duty, which is the echo of generations of compulsion to social behavior, will then disappear; altruistic actions, having become instinctive through their natural selection for social utility, will, like every instinctive operation, be performed without compulsion, and with joy. The natural evolution of human society brings us ever nearer to the perfect state.

103 196, 190.
104 242-3.
105 166.
106 250.
The intelligent reader, in the course of this brief analysis, will have perceived certain difficulties in the argument, and will need no more than some scattered reminders as to where the imperfections lie. Negative criticism is always unpleasant, and most so in the face of a great achievement; but it is part of our task to see what time has done to Spencer's synthesis.

1. First Principles

The first obstacle, of course, is the Unknowable. We may cordially recognize the probable limitations of human knowledge; we cannot quiteathom that great sea of existence of which we are merely a transient wave. But we must not dogmatize on the subject, since in strict logic the assertion that anything is unknowable already implies some knowledge of the thing. Indeed, as Spencer proceeds through his ten volumes, he shows "a prodigious knowledge of the unknowable." As Hegel put it: to limit reason by reasoning is like trying to swim without entering the water. And all this logic-chopping about "inconceivability"—how far away that seems to us now, how like those sophomoric days when to be alive was to de-

107The analysis, of course, is incomplete. "Space forbids" (the author has often smiled at this cloak for laziness, but must offer it here) a discussion of the Education, the Essays, and large sections of the Sociology. The lesson of the Education has been too well learned; and we require today some corrective of Spencer's victorious assertion of the claims of science as against letters and the arts. Of the essays, the best are those on style, laughter, and music. Hugh Elliott's Herbert Spencer is an admirable exposition.

108Browne: Kant and Spencer, p. 253.
bate! And for that matter, an unguided machine is not much more conceivable than a First Cause, particularly if, by this latter phrase, we mean the sum total of all causes and forces in the world. Spencer, living in a world of machines, took mechanism for granted; just as Darwin, living in an age of ruthless individual competition, saw only the struggle for existence.

What shall we say of that tremendous definition of evolution? Does it explain anything? "To say, 'first there was the simple and then the complex was evolved out of it,' and so on, is not to explain nature."*109* Spencer, says Bergson, repieces, he does not explain;*110* he misses, as he at last perceives, the vital element in the world. The critics, evidently, have been irritated by the definition; its Latinized English is especially arresting in a man who denounced the study of Latin, and defined a good style as that which requires the least effort of understanding. Something must be conceded to Spencer, however; no doubt he chose to sacrifice immediate clarity to the need of concentrating in a brief statement the flow of all existence. But in truth he is a little too fond of his definition; he rolls it over his tongue like a choice morsel, and takes it apart and puts it together again interminably. The weak point of the definition lies in the supposed "instability of the homogeneous." Is a whole composed of like parts more unstable, more subject to change, than a whole composed of unlike parts? The heterogeneous, as more complex, would presumably be more unstable than the homogeneously simple. In ethnology and politics it is taken for granted that hetero-

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*Ritchie: Darwin and Hegel, p. 60.
*110*Creative Evolution, p. 64,
geneity makes for instability, and that the fusion of immigrant stocks into one national type would strengthen a society. Tarde thinks that civilization results from an increase of similarity among the members of a group through generations of mutual imitation; here the movement of evolution is conceived as a progress towards homogeneity. Gothic architecture is surely more complex than that of the Greeks; but not necessarily a higher stage of artistic evolution. Spencer was too quick to assume that what was earlier in time was simpler in structure; he underrated the complexity of protoplasm, and the intelligence of primitive man\textsuperscript{111}. Finally, the definition fails to mention the very item which in most minds today is inalienably associated with the idea of evolution—namely, natural selection. Perhaps (imperfect though this too would be) a description of history as a struggle for existence and a survival of the fittest—of the fittest organisms, the fittest societies, the fittest moralities, the fittest languages, ideas, philosophies—would be more illuminating than the formula of incoherence and coherence, of homo- and heterogeneity, of dissipation and integration?

"I am a bad observer of humanity in the concrete," says Spencer, "being too much given to wandering into the abstract."\textsuperscript{112} This is dangerous honesty. Spencer's method, of course, was too deductive and \textit{a priori}, very different from Bacon's ideal or the actual procedure of scientific thought. He had, says his secretary, "an inexhaustible faculty of developing \textit{a priori} and \textit{a posteriori}, inductive and deductive, arguments in support of any imaginable proposition;\textsuperscript{113} and the \textit{a priori} arguments were prob-

\textsuperscript{111}Cf. Franz Boas: \textit{The Mind of Primitive Man.}
\textsuperscript{112}\textit{Autob.}, i., 461.
\textsuperscript{113}Royce, 194.
ably prior to the others. Spencer began, like a scientist, with observation; he proceeded, like a scientist, to make hypotheses; but then, unlike a scientist, he resorted not to experiment, nor to impartial observation, but to the selective accumulation of favorable data. He had no nose at all for "negative instances." Contrast the procedure of Darwin, who, when he came upon data unfavorable to his theory, hastily made note of them, knowing that they had a way of slipping out of the memory a little more readily than the welcome facts!

2. Biology and Psychology

In a foot-note to his essay on "Progress," Spencer candidly confesses that his ideas of evolution were based on Lamarck's theory of the transmissibility of acquired characters, and were not really an anticipation of Darwin, whose essential idea was the theory of natural selection. He is rather the philosopher of Lamarckianism, then, than the philosopher of Darwinism. He was almost forty when the *Origin of Species* appeared; and at forty one's categories are hardened into immutability.

Aside from lesser difficulties, like the failure to reconcile his illuminating principle—that reproduction decreases as development advances—with such facts as the higher rate of reproduction in civilized Europe as compared with savage peoples, the major defects of his biological theory are his reliance on Lamarck and his failure to find a dynamic conception of life. When he confesses that life "cannot be conceived in physico-chemical terms," the "admission is fatal to his formula of evolution, to his definition of life, and to the coherence of the Synthetic Philosophy." The secret of life

\[114\] *Biology*, i, 120.

might better have been sought in the power of mind to adjust external to internal relations than in the almost passive adjustment of the organism to the environment. On Spencer’s premises, complete adaptation would be death.

The volumes on psychology formulate rather than inform. What we knew is reshaped into an almost barbarously complex terminology, which obscures where it should clarify. The reader is so fatigued with formulas and definitions and questionable reductions of psychological facts to neural structures that he may fail to observe that the origin of mind and consciousness is left quite unexplained. It is true that Spencer tries to cover up this gaping chasm in his system of thought by arguing that mind is the subjective accompaniment of nerve processes evolved mechanically, somehow, out of the primeval nebula; but why there should be this subjective accompaniment in addition to the neural mechanism, he does not say. And that, of course, is just the point of all psychology.

3. Sociology and Ethics

Magnificent as the Sociology is, its 2,000 pages give many an opening for attack. Running through it is Spencer’s usual assumption that evolution and progress are synonymous, whereas it may well be that evolution will give to insects and bacteria the final victory in their relentless war with man. It is not quite evident that the industrial state is either more pacific or more moral than the “militant” feudalism that preceded it. Athens’ most destructive wars came long after her feudal lords had yielded power to a commercial bourgeoisie; and the countries of modern Europe seem to make war with blithe indifference as to whether they are industrial or not; industrial imperialism may be as militaristic as
land-hungry dynasties. The most militaristic of modern states was one of the two leading industrial nations of the world. Further, the rapid industrial development of Germany seems to have been aided, rather than impeded, by state control of certain phases of transport and trade. Socialism is obviously a development not of militarism but of industrialism. Spencer wrote at a time when the comparative isolation of England made her pacifist (in Europe), and when her supremacy in commerce and industry made her a firm believer in free trade; he would have been shocked had he lived to see how readily the free trade theory would disappear along with commercial and industrial supremacy, and how the pacifism would disappear as soon as Germany's assault on Belgium threatened English isolation. And of course Spencer exaggerated the virtues of the industrial regime; he was almost blind to the brutal exploitation that flourished in England before the state interfered to mitigate it; all that he could see "in the middle of our century, especially in England," was "a degree of individual freedom greater than ever before existed."  

No wonder that Nietzsche reacted in disgust from industrialism, and exaggerated, in his turn, the virtues of the military life.  

The analogy of the social organism would have driven Spencer into state socialism had his logic been more powerful than his feelings; for state socialism represents, in a far higher degree than a laissez-faire society, the integration of the heterogeneous. By the yard-stick of his own formula Spencer would have been

116 Sociology, iii, 607. Cf. The Study of Sociology, p. 335: "The testimony is that higher wages commonly result only in more extravagant living or in drinking to greater excess."  

117 Cf. The Joyful Wisdom, sect. 10
compelled to acclaim Germany as the most highly evolved of modern states. He tried to meet this point by arguing that heterogeneity involves the freedom of the parts, and that such freedom implies a minimum of government; but this is quite a different note than that which we heard in "coherent heterogeneity." In the human body integration and evolution leave rather little freedom to the parts. Spencer replies that in a society consciousness exists only in the parts, while in the body consciousness exists only in the whole. But social consciousness—consciousness of the interests and processes of the group—is as centralized in society as personal consciousness is in the individual. Spencer helped to save us from a regimental state socialism, but only by the sacrifice of his consistency and his logic.

And only by individualistic exaggerations. We must remember that Spencer was caught between two eras; that his political thinking had been formed in the days of laissez-faire, and under the influence of Adam Smith; while his later years were lived in a period when England was struggling to correct, by social control, the abuses of her industrial regime. He never tired of reiterating his arguments against state-interference; he objected to state-financed education, or to governmental protection of citizens against fraudulent finance;¹¹⁸ at one time he argued that even the management of war should be a private, and not a state, concern;¹¹⁹ he wished, as Wells put it, "to raise public shiftlessness to the dignity of a national policy." He carried his MSS. to the printer himself, having too little confidence in a government institution to entrust them to the Post

¹¹⁸ Autoib., ii, 5.
¹¹⁹ I. 239.
Office. He was a man of intense individuality, irritably insistent on being let alone; and every new act of legislation seemed to him an invasion of his personal liberty. He could not understand Benjamin Kidd's argument, that since natural selection operates more and more upon groups, in class and international competition, and less and less upon individuals, a widening application of the family-principle (whereby the weak are aided by the strong) is indispensable for the maintenance of group unity and power. Why a state should protect its citizens from unsocial physical strength and refuse protection against unsocial economic strength is a point which Spencer ignores. He scorned as childish the analogy of government and citizen with parent and child; but the real analogy is with brother and brother. His politics were more Darwinian than his biology.

But enough of these criticisms. Let us turn back to the man again, and see in fairer perspective the greatness of his work.

IX. CONCLUSION

*First Principles* made Spencer almost at once the most famous philosopher of his time. It was soon translated into most of the languages of Europe; even in Russia, where it had to face and defeat a government prosecution. He was accepted as the philosophic exponent of the spirit of the age; and not only did his influence pass everywhere into the thought of Europe, but it strongly affected the realistic movement in literature and art. In 1869 he was astounded to find that *First Principles* had been adopted as a text-book at Oxford. More marvelous still, his books began, after 1870, to

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120 Collier, in Royce, 221. 121 Autob., ii, 242.
bring him returns that made him financially secure. In some cases admirers sent him substantial gifts, which he always returned. When Czar Alexander II visited London, and expressed to Lord Derby a desire to meet the distinguished savants of England, Derby invited Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, etc. The others attended, but Spencer declined. He associated with only a few intimates. "No man is equal to his book," he wrote. "All the best products of his mental activity go into his book, where they come separated from the mass of inferior products with which they are mingled in his daily talk." When people insisted on coming to see him he inserted stopping into his ears, and listened placidly to their inaudible conversation.

Strange to say, his fame vanished almost as suddenly as it had come. He outlived the height of his own repute, and was saddened, in his last years, by seeing what little power his tirades had to stop the tide of "paternalistic" legislation. He had become unpopular with almost every class. Scientific specialists whose privileged fields he had invaded damned him with faint praise, ignoring his contributions and emphasizing his errors; and bishops of all creeds united in consigning him to an eternity of punishment. Laborites who liked his denunciations of war turned from him in anger when he spoke his mind on socialism and on trade-union politics; while conservatives who liked his views on socialism shunned him because of his agnosticism. "I am more Tory than any Tory and more radical than any Radical," he said, wistfully. He was incorrigibly sincere, and offended every group by speaking candidly on every subject: after sympathizing

122 Autob., i, 423. 123 II, 431.
with the workers as victims of their employers, he added that the workers would be as domi-
neering if positions were reversed; and after sympathizing with women as victims of men, he did not fail to add that men were the vic-
tims of women so far as the women could man-
age it. He grew old alone.

As he aged he became more gentle in opposi-
tion, and more moderate in opinion. He had always laughed at England's ornamental king, but now he expressed the view that it was no more right to deprive the people of their king than it was to deprive a child of its doll.124 So in religion he felt it absurd and unkind to disturb the traditional faith where it seemed a beneficent and cheering influence.125 He be-
gan to realize that religious beliefs and politi-
cal movements are built upon needs and im-
pulses beyond the reach of intellectual attack; and he reconciled himself to seeing the world roll on without much heeding the heavy books he hurled in its direction. Looking back over his arduous career, he thought himself foolish for having sought literary fame instead of the simpler pleasures of life.126 When he died, in 1903, he had come to think that his work had been done in vain.127

We know now, of course, that it was not so. The decay of his repute was part of the Eng-
lish Hegelian reaction against positivism; the revival of liberalism will raise him again to his place as the greatest English philosopher of his century. He gave to philosophy a new contact with things, and brought to it a realism which made German philosophy seem, beside it,

124 Elliott, p. 66.
125 Autob., ii, 547.
126 II, 534.
127 Thomson, p. 51.
weakly pale and timidly abstract. He summed up his age as no man had ever summed up any age since Dante; and he achieved so masterly a co-ordination of so vast an area of knowledge that criticism is almost shamed into silence by his achievement. We are standing now on heights which his struggles and his labors won for us; we seem to be above him because he has raised us on his shoulders. Some day, when the sting of his opposition is forgotten, we shall do him better justice.