



The Philosophical Work of Herbert Spencer

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THE PHILOSOPHICAL WORK OF HERBERT SPENCER.

I DO not know whether it may have occurred to any one else to associate the work of Émile Zola in fiction and of Herbert Spencer in philosophy. I find myself, however, mentally running together the careers of these two men, different as they were in surroundings, interests, aims, and personalities. The two somehow associate themselves in my mind, at least to such an extent that I find no words of my own so apt to characterize the larger features of the work of Herbert Spencer as these borrowed from the remarkable critical appreciation by Henry James of Émile Zola, published in the August, 1903, number of the *Atlantic Monthly*. Mr. James begins by referring to "the circumstance that, thirty years ago, a young man of extraordinary brain and indomitable purpose, wishing to give the measure of these endowments in a piece of work supremely solid, conceived and sat down to *Les Rougon-Macquart*, rather than to an equal task in physics, mathematics, politics, economics. He saw his undertaking, thanks to his patience and courage, practically to a close. . . . No finer act of courage and confidence, I think, is recorded in the history of letters. The critic in sympathy with him returns again and again to the great wonder of it, in which something so strange is mixed with something so august. Entertained and carried out almost from the threshold of manhood, the high project, the work of a lifetime, announces beforehand its inevitable weakness, and yet speaks in the same voice for its admirable, its almost unimaginable, strength."

With few verbal changes, this surely sets forth the case of Mr. Spencer; and in saying the word of criticism which must inevitably shadow all mortal attempts, I again find nothing more appropriate than some further sentences of Mr. James. "It was the fortune, it was in a manner the doom, of *Les Rougon-Macquart* to deal with things almost always in gregarious form, to be a picture of *numbers*, of classes, crowds, confusions, move-

ments. . . . The individual life is, if not wholly absent, reflected in coarse and common, in generalized terms; whereby we arrive . . . at the circumstance that, looking out somewhere, and often woefully athirst, for the taste of fineness, we find it not in the fruits of our author's fancy, but in a different matter altogether. We get it in the very history of his effort, the image itself of his lifelong process, comparatively so personal, so spiritual even . . . through all its patience and pain."

The point that seems to me so significant (and, indeed, so absolutely necessary to take into the reckoning), when we balance accounts with the intellectual work of Mr. Spencer, is this sitting down to achieve a preconceived idea, — an idea, moreover, of a synthetic, deductive rendering of all that is in the Universe. The point stands forth in all its simplicity and daring every time we open our *First Principles*. We find there republished the prospectus of 1860, the program of the entire Synthetic Philosophy. And the more we compare the achievement with the announcement, the more we are struck with the way in which the whole scheme stands complete, detached, able to go alone from the very start.

Spencer and his readers are committed in advance to a definitely wrought out, a rounded and closed interpretation of the universe. Further discovery and intercourse are not to count; it remains only to fill in the *cadres*. Successive volumes are outlined; distinctive sections of each set forth. All the fundamental generalizations are at hand, which are to apply to *all* regions of the Universe with the exception of inorganic nature, attention being especially called to this exception as a gap unavoidable but regrettable. There is but one thing more extraordinary than the conception which this program embodies: the fact that it is carried out. We are so accustomed to what we call systems of philosophy; the 'systems' of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, or Hegel, that I suspect we do not quite grasp the full significance of such a project as this of Mr. Spencer's. The other systems are such after all more or less *ex post facto*. In themselves they have the unity of the *development* of a single mind, rather than of a predestined *planned achievement*. They are

systems somewhat in and through retrospect. Their completeness owes something to the mind of the onlooker gathering together parts which have grown up more or less separately and in response to felt occasions, to particular problems. Our reflection helps bind their parts into one aggregative whole. But Spencer's system *was* a system from the very start. It was a system in conception, not merely in issue. It was one by the volition of its author, complete, compact, coherent, not in virtue of a single personality which by ways mainly unconscious continually and restlessly reattempts to attain to some worthy and effective embodiment of itself. We are almost inclined to believe in the identification of conscious will with physical force as we follow the steady, unchanging momentum of Spencer's thought.

It is this fore-thought, foreclosed scheme which makes so ominous that phrase of James to the effect that 'the high project announces beforehand its inevitable weakness.' It is this which makes so unavoidable the appropriation of the phrase regarding absence of the *individual* life. It is this fact which gives jurisdiction to the further remark that "vision and opportunity reside in a personal sense, and in a personal history, and no shortcut to them has ever been discovered." It is this same fact that moves me to transfer to Spencer a further phrase, that the work went on in "the region that I qualify as that of experience by imitation." It may seem harsh to say Spencer occupies himself in any such way as to justify the phrase "experience by imitation." Or, on the other hand, one may say, however the case stands in arts and letters, that in philosophy one must perforce work in and with a region of experience which it is but praise to call "experience by imitation," since it is experience depersonalized, from which the qualities of individual contact and career, with their accidents of circumstance, and corresponding emotional entanglements, have been intentionally shut out. But whether one regard the phrase as harsh, or as defining an indispensable trait of all philosophizing, it remains true that one who announces in advance a system in all its characteristic conceptions and applications has discounted, in a way which is awful in its augustness, all individual contingencies,

all accidents of time and place, personal surroundings and personal intercourse, new ideas from new contacts and new expansions of life. It is upon the revelations that arise from the eternal mixture of voluntary endeavor with the unplanned, the unexpected, that most of us learn to depend for shaping thought and directing intellectual movement. We hang upon experience as it comes, not alone upon experience as already formulated, into which we can enter by "imitation." To assure to the world a comprehensive system of the universe, in a way which precludes further development and shapings of this personal sort, is a piece of intellectual audacity of the most commanding sort. It is this extraordinary objectivity of Spencer's work, this hitherto unheard of elimination of the individual and the subjective, which gives his philosophy its identity, which marks it off from other philosophic projects, and is the source at once of its power and of its "inevitable weakness."

The austere devotion, the singleness, simplicity, and straightforwardness of Spencer's own life, and its seclusion, its remoteness, its singular immunity from all intellectual contagion, are chapters in the same story. Here, we may well believe, is the revenge of nature. The element of individual life so lacking in the philosophy, both in its content and in its style, is the thing that strikes us in the history of Spencer's personal effort. No system, after all, has ever been more thoroughly conditioned by the intellectual and moral personality of its author. The impersonal content of the system is the register of the personal separation of its author from vital participation in the moving currents of history.

The seclusion and isolation necessary to a system like Spencer's appear from whatever angle we approach him. Doubtless his autobiography will put us in possession of one of the most remarkable educational documents the world has yet seen. But even without this, we know that his intellectual life was early formed in a certain remoteness. The relative absence of the social element in his education, and his own later conscious predilection for non-institutionalized instruction, for education of the tutorial sort apart from schools and classes, at once constitute and

reflect his aloofness from the ordinary give and take processes of development. The lack of university associations is another mark on the score. The lack of knowledge of ancient languages and comparative ignorance of modern languages and literature have to be reckoned with. Nor was Spencer (in this unlike Bacon, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and John Mill) a man of affairs, one who continually renewed the region of "experience by imitation," of formulated knowledge, by engaging in those complications of life which force a man to re-think, re-feel, and re-choose; to have, in a word, first-hand experience. It would be hard to find another intellect of first class rank so devoid of historical sense and interest as was Spencer's; incredible as is this fact taken alongside authorship of a system of evolution! Certainly the world may wait long for another example of a man who dares to conceive and has the courage and energy to execute a system of philosophy, in almost total ignorance of the entire history of thought. We have got so used to it that we hardly pause, when we read such statements as that of Spencer, that after reading the first few pages of Kant's *Critique* he laid the book down. "Twice since then the same thing has happened; for, being an impatient reader, when I disagree with the cardinal purposes of a work I can go no further."¹

It is not Spencer's ignorance to which I am calling attention. Much less am I blaming him for his failure to run hither and yon through the fields of thought; there is something almost refreshing, in these days of subjugation by the mere overwhelming mass of learning, in the naïve and virgin attitude of Spencer. What I am trying to point out is the absence in Spencer of any interest in the history of human ideas and of acts prompted by them, considered simply as history,—as affairs of personal initiation, discovery, experimentation, and struggle. His insulation from the intellectual currents of the ages as moving processes (apart, that is, from their impersonal and factual deposit in the form of 'science') is the mirror of the secludedness of his early education, and of his entire later personal life. I do not think it necessary to apologize even for referring

¹ *Essays Scientific, Political, and Speculative*, Vol. III, p. 206, note.

to the little device by which, when wearied of conversation, he closed his ears and made himself deaf to what was going on about him. There are not two facts here, but only one. His isolation was necessary in carrying out his gigantic task, not merely as a convenience for securing the necessary leisure, protection against encroachment, and the nursing of inadequate physical strength against great odds ; but it was an organic precondition of any project which assigns the universe to volumes in advance, and then proceeds steadily, irresistibly, to fill them up chapter by chapter. Such work is possible only when one is immune against the changing play of ideas, the maze of points of view, the cross-currents of interests, which characterize the world historically viewed, — seen in process as an essentially moving thing.

We have to reckon with the apparent paradox of Spencer's rationalistic, deductive, systematic habit of mind over against all the traditions of English thought. How could one who thought himself the philosopher of experience *par excellence*, revive, under the name of a "universal postulate," the fundamental conception of the formal rationalism of the Cartesian school, which even the philosophers whom Spencer despised as purely *a priori*, had found it necessary, under the attacks of Kant (whom Spencer to his last day regarded as a sort of belated supernaturalist), long since to abandon? It is too obvious to need mention that Spencer is in all respects a thoroughgoing Englishman, — indeed what, without disrespect and even with admiration, we may term a 'Britisher.' But how could the empirical and inductive habit of the English mind so abruptly, so thoroughly, without any shadow of hesitation or touch of reserve, cast itself in a system whose professed aim was to deduce all the phenomena of life, mind, and society from a single formula regarding the redistribution of matter and motion?

Here we come within sight of the problem of the technical origins and structure of Spencer's philosophy, a problem, however, which may still be approached from the standpoint of Spencer's own personal development. We must not forget that Spencer was by his environment and education initiated into all the

characteristic tenets of English political and social liberalism, with their individualistic connotations. It is significant that Spencer's earliest literary contribution, — written at the age of twenty-two, — was upon the proper sphere of government, and was intended (I speak only from second-hand information, never having seen the pamphlet) to show the restrictions upon governmental action required in the interests of the individual. I know no more striking tribute to the thoroughness and success with which earlier English philosophic thought did its work than the fact that Spencer was completely saturated with, and possessed by, the characteristic traditions of this individualistic philosophy, simply, so to speak, by absorption, by respiration of the intellectual atmosphere, with a minimum of study and reflective acquaintance with the classic texts of Hobbes, Hume, and (above all) John Locke. So far as we can tell, Spencer's ignorance of the previous history of philosophy extended in considerable measure even to his own philosophic ancestry; and I am inclined to believe that even such reading as he did of his predecessors left him still with a delightful unconsciousness that in them were the origin and kin of his own thought. The solid body and substantiality of Spencer's individualism is made not less but more comprehensible on the supposition that it came to him not through conscious reading and personal study, but through daily drafts upon his intellectual environment; the results being so unconsciously and involuntarily wrought into the fibre of his being that they became with him an instinct rather than a reflection or theory.

It is this complete incorporation of the results of prior individualistic philosophy, accompanied by total unconsciousness that anything was involved in the way of philosophic preliminaries or presuppositions, which freed Spencer from the lurking scepticism regarding systems and deductive syntheses which permeate the work of Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and John Stuart Mill. It was this thoroughgoing unconscious absorption that gave him a confident, aggressive, dogmatic individualism, — which enabled him to employ individualism as a deductive instrument, instead of as a point of view useful in the main for

criticising undue intellectual pretensions, and for keeping the ground cleared for inductive, empirical inquiries. The eighteenth century, indeed, exhibits to us the transformation of the sceptically colored individualism of the seventeenth century, taking effect mainly in a theory of the nature and limits of human knowledge, and employed most effectively to get rid of dogma in philosophy, theology, and politics, — the transformation of this, I say, into an individualism which aims at social reform, and thereby is becoming positive, constructive, rationalistic, optimistic.

Spencer is the heir not of the psychological individualism of Locke direct, but of this individualism after exportation and reimportation from France. It was the individualism of the French Encyclopedist, with its unwavering faith in progress, in the ultimate perfection of humanity, and in 'nature' as everywhere beneficently working out this destiny, if only it can be freed from trammels of church and state, which in Spencer mingles with generalizations of science, and is thereby reawakened to new life. Seen in this way, there is no breach of continuity. The paradox disappears. Spencer's work imposes itself upon us all precisely because it so remarkably carries over the net result of that individualism which (contend against it as we may) represents the fine achievement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It preserves it in the only way in which it could be conserved, by carrying it over, by translating it into the organic, the systematic, the universal terms which report the presence of the nineteenth century spirit. And if a certain constitutional incoherency results, if the compound of individualism and organicism shows cleavages of fundamental contradictions, none the less without this restatement the old would have been lost, and a certain thinness and remoteness would characterize the new. The earlier and more thorough-going formulations of the organic standpoint in post-Kantian thought were, and had to remain, transcendental (in the popular, if not technical sense of the term) in language and idea just because the expression, though logically more adequate, was socially and psychologically premature. It did not and could not at once take up into itself the habits of thought and feeling

characteristic of earlier individualism and domesticate them in the social and moral attitude of the modern man.

In the struggle of adjustment, Spencer is without a rival as a mediator, a vehicle of communication, a translator. It is, as we shall see, the successful way in which he exercises this function that gives him his hold upon the culture of our day, and which makes his image stand out so imposingly that to many he is not one creator with many others of the theory of evolution, but its own concrete incarnation. In support of the idea that Spencer's work was essentially that of carrying over the net earlier social and ethical individualism into the more organic conceptions characteristic of the nineteenth century science and action, we can here only refer to the *Social Statics* of 1850,—this being in my judgment one of the most remarkable documents, from the standpoint of tracing the origins of an intellectual development, ever produced. This book shows with considerable detail the individualistic method of the English theory of knowledge in process of transformation into something which is no longer a method of regulating belief, but is an attained belief in a method of action, and hence itself a substantial first principle, an axiom, an indisputable, absolute truth, having within itself substantial resources which may in due order—that is, by use of a deductive method—be delivered and made patent. It shows the individualistic creed dominant, militant; no longer a principle of criticism, but of reform and construction in social life, and, therefore, of necessity a formula of construction in the intellectual sphere. In this document, the world-formula of 'evolution' of later philosophy appears as the social formula of 'progress.' It repeats as an article of implicit faith the creed of revolutionary liberalism in the indefinite perfectibility of mankind. "Man has been, is, and will long continue to be, in process of adaptation, and the belief in human perfectibility merely amounts to the belief that in virtue of these processes, man will eventually become completely suited to his mode of life. Progress, therefore, is not an accident, but a necessity."¹

In this characteristic sentence we have already present the

¹ *Social Statics*, pp. 31 f., edn. of 1892.

conception : first, of evolution ; second, of the goal of the evolution as adaption of human life to certain conditions beyond itself ; and third (although implicitly — the notion, however, being made explicit in other portions of the same book), the conception that it is the conditions to which life is to be adapted which are the causally operating forces in bringing about the adaptation, and hence the progress. The ‘organism’ of the Synthetic Philosophy is the projection of the individual man of the thought of 1850. The ‘environment’ of the latter system appears in the earlier sketch as ‘conditions of life.’ The ‘evolution’ of later systematic philosophy is the ‘progress’ figuring in the early social creed as the continual adaptation of human life to the necessities of its outward conditions. In all, and through all, runs the idea of ‘nature,’ — that nature to which the social and philosophical reformation of the eighteenth century appealed with such unhesitating and sublime faith. Load down the formula by filling ‘nature’ with the concrete results of physical and biological science, and the transformation scene is complete. The years between 1850 and 1862 (the date of the *First Principles*) are the record of this loading. ‘Nature’ never parts with its eighteenth century function of effecting approximation to a goal of ultimate perfection and happiness, but nature no longer proffers itself as a pious reminiscence of the golden age of Rousseau, or a prophetic inspiration of the millenium of Condorcet, but as that most substantial, most real of all forces guaranteed and revealed to us at every turn by the advance of scientific inquiry. And ‘science’ is in turn but the concrete rendering of the ‘reason’ of the Enlightenment.

Spencer’s faith in this particular article of the creed never faltered. Eighteenth century liberalism, after the time of Rousseau, was perfectly sure that the only obstacles to the fulfillment of the beneficent purpose of nature in effecting perfection have their source in institutions of state and church, which, partly because of ignorance, and partly because of the selfishness of rulers and priests, have temporarily obstructed the fulfillment of nature’s benign aims. The *laissez-faire* theory and its extreme typical expression, anarchism, did not originate in the accidents of com-

mercial life, much less in the selfish designs of the trading class to increase its wares at the expense of other sections of society. Whether right or wrong, whether for good or for evil, it took its origin from profound philosophical conceptions; the belief in nature as a mighty force, and in reason as having only to coöperate with nature, instead of thwarting it with its own petty, voluntary devices, in order to usher in the era of unhindered progress. Spencer's insistent and persistent opposition to the extension of the sphere of governmental action beyond that of police duty, preventing the encroachment of one individual upon another, goes back to this same sublime faith in nature. The goal of evolution of Spencer's ethics, the perfect individual adapted to the perfect state of society, is but the enlarged projection of the ideal of a fraternal society, which made its way into the *Social Statics* from the same creed of revolutionary liberalism. His "Absolute Ethics," deductively derived from a first law of life, has in its origin nothing to do with science, but everything to do with the reason and nature of the Enlightenment. It has, of course, been often enough pointed out that the main features of Spencer's later ethics were already well along before he came to that conception of evolution upon which his sociology and ethics are professedly based. This point has, however, generally been employed as a mode of casting suspicion upon the content of his moral system, suggesting that after all it has no very intimate connection with the theory of evolution as such. But I am not aware that attention has been called to this converse fact of greater moment: that Spencer's entire evolutionary conception and scheme is but the projection upon the cosmic screen of the spectrum of the buoyant *a priori* ideals of the later eighteenth century liberalism.

Certain essays, now mostly reprinted in three volumes, entitled *Essays Scientific, Political, and Speculative*, put before our eyes the links of the transformation, the instruments of the projection. We may refer particularly to the essays on "Progress: Its law and Cause," "Transcendental Physiology" (both dated 1857); "The Genesis of Science" (1854), and "The Nebular Hypothesis" (1858), together with "The Social Organism" (1860). What we find exposed in these essays is the increasingly definite and solid

body of scientific particulars and generalizations, getting themselves read into the political and social formula, and thereby effecting transformation into the system outlined by the prospectus of 1860. This fusion is, indeed, already foreshadowed in the *Social Statics* itself.

This is not the time or place to go into detail, but I think I am well within the bonds of verifiable statement when I say that Spencer's final system of philosophy took shape through his bringing into intimate connection with each other the dominating conception of social progress, inherited from the Enlightenment, certain larger generalizations of physiology (particularly that of growth as change from homogeneity to heterogeneity, and of 'physiological division of labor' with accompanying interdependence of parts) and the idea of cosmic change derived from astronomy and geology, — particularly as formulated under the name of the nebular hypothesis. Social philosophy furnished the fundamental ideals and ideas; biological statements provided the defining and formulating elements necessary to put these vague and pervasive ideals into something like scientific shape; while the physical-astronomic speculations furnished the causal, efficient machinery requisite for getting the scheme under way, and supplied still more of the appearance of scientific definiteness and accuracy. Such, at least, is my schematic formula of the origin of the Spencerian system.¹

¹ If our main interest here were in the history of thought, it would be interesting to note the dependence of the development of Spencer's thought, as respects the second of the above factors, upon factors due to the post-Kantian philosophy of Germany. I can only refer in passing to some pages of the *Social Statics* (255 to 261), in which, after making the significant statement that "morality is essentially one with physical truth — is, in fact, a species of transcendental physiology," he refers in support of his doctrine to "a theory of life developed by Coleridge." This theory is that of tendency towards individuation, conjoined with increase of mutual dependence, — a fundamental notion, of course, of Schelling. An equally significant foot-note (page 256) tells us that it was in 1864, while writing "The Classification of the Sciences," that Spencer himself realized that this truth has to do with "a trait of all evolving things, inorganic as well as organic." In his essay on "Transcendental Physiology," Spencer refers to the importance of carrying over distinctions first observed in society into physiological terms, so that they become points of view for interpretation and explanation there. The conception also dominates the essay on "The Social Organism." In fact, he makes use of the idea of division of labor, originally worked out in political economy, in his biological speculations, and then in his cos-

We are now, I think, in a position not only to understand the independence of Spencer's and Darwin's work in relation to each other, but the significance of this independence. Because Spencer's thought descended from the social and political philosophy of the eighteenth century (which in turn was a rendering of a still more technical philosophy), and employed the conceptions thus derived to assimilate and organize the generalized conceptions of geology and biology, it needed no particular aid from the specialized order of scientific methods and considerations which control the work of Darwin. But it was a tremendous piece of luck for both the Darwinian and Spencerian theories that they happened so nearly to coincide in the time of their promulgation. Each

mological, in very much the same way in which Darwin borrowed the Malthusian doctrine of population. The social idea first found biological form for itself, and then was projected into cosmological terms. I have no doubt that this represents the general course of Spencer's ideas. In the essay on "Progress," Spencer specifically refers to the law of the evolution of the individual organism as established "by the Germans — the investigations of Wolff, Goethe, and von Baer." The law referred to here is that development consists in advance from homogeneity to heterogeneity. He there transfers it from the life history of the individual organism to the record of all life; while, in the same essay, he expressly states that, if the nebular hypothesis could be established, then we should have a single formula for the universe as a whole, inorganic as well as organic. And upon page 36 he speaks of that "which determines progress of every kind — astronomic, geologic, organic, ethnological, social, economic, artistic."

One need only turn to some of the methodological writings of Spencer to see how conscious he was of the method which I have attributed to him. The little essay entitled "An Element in Method," and certain portions of his essay entitled, "Professor Tait on the Formula of Evolution," are particularly significant. The latter indicates the necessity of making a synthesis of deductive reasoning, as exhibited in mathematical physics, with the inductive empiricism characteristic of the biological sciences; and charges both physicist and zoölogist with one-sidedness. The former essay indicates that, in forming any generalization which is to be used for deductive purposes, we ought to take independent groups of phenomena which appear unallied, and which certainly are very remote from each other. I am inclined to think that Spencer's method of taking groups of facts, apparently wholly unlike each other, such as those of the formation of solar systems, on one side, and facts of present social life, on the other, with a view to discovering what he calls "some common trait," has, indeed, more value for philosophic method than is generally recognised. In a way, he has himself justified the method, since his Synthetic Philosophy is, speaking from the side of method, precisely this sort of thing, astronomy and sociology forming the extremes, and biology the mean term. But, of course, Spencer's erection of the "common trait" into a force, or law, or cause, which can immediately be used deductively to explain other things, is quite another matter from this heuristic or methodological value. But this note has already spun itself out too long.

got the benefit not merely of the disturbance and agitation aroused by the other, but of psychological and logical reinforcement, as each blended into and fused with the other in the minds of readers and students. It is an interesting though hopeless speculation to wonder what the particular fate of either would have been, if it had lacked this backing up at its own weak point, a support all the more effective because it was so surprisingly unplanned, — because each in itself sprang out of, and applied to, such different orders of thought and fact.

This explains, in turn, the identification of the very idea of 'evolution,' with the name of Spencer. The days are gone by when it was necessary to iterate that the conception of evolution is no new thing. We know that upon the side of the larger philosophic generalizations, as well as upon that of definite and detailed scientific considerations, evolution has an ancient ancestry. From the time of the Greeks, when philosophy and science were one, to the days of Kant, Goethe, and Hegel, on one side, and of Lamarck and the author of *The Vestiges of Creation*, on the other, the idea of evolution has never been without its own vogue and career. The idea is too closely akin both to the processes of human thinking and to the obvious facts of life not to have always some representative in man's schemes of the universe. How, then, are we to account for the peculiar, the unique position occupied by Spencer? Is this thorough-going identification in the popular mind of Spencer's system with the very idea and name of evolution an illusion of ignorance? I think not. So massive and pervasive an imposition of itself is accountable for only in positive terms. The genesis of Spencer's system in fusion of scientific notions and philosophic considerations gives the system its actual hold, and also legitimates it.

Spencer's work is rightfully entitled to the place it occupies in the popular imagination. Philosophy is naturally and properly technical and remote to the mass of mankind, save as it takes shape in social and political philosophy, — in a theory of conduct which, being more than individual, serves as a principle of criticism and reform in corporate affairs and community welfare. But even social and political philosophy remain more or less

speculative, romantic, Utopian, or 'ideal,' when couched merely in terms of a program of criticism and reconstruction; only 'science' can give it body. Again, the specializations of science are naturally and properly remote and technical to the interests of the mass of mankind. When we have said they are specialized, we have described them. But to employ the mass of scientific material, the received code of scientific formulations, to give weight and substance to philosophical ideas which are already operative, is an achievement of the very first order. Spencer took two sets of ideas, in themselves abstract and isolated, and by their fusion put them in a shape where their net result became available for the common consciousness. By such a fusion Spencer provided a language, a formulation, an imagery, of a reasonable and familiar kind to the masses of mankind for ideas of the utmost importance, and for ideas which, without such amalgamation, must have remained out of reach.

Even they who — like myself — are so impressed with the work of the philosophers of Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century as to believe that they have furnished ideas which in the long run are more luminous, more fruitful, possessed of more organizing power, than those which Spencer has made current, must yet remember that the work of German philosophy is done in an outlandish and alien vocabulary. Now, this is not a mere incident of the use of language, — as if a man happened to choose to speak in Greek rather than in French. The very technicality of the vocabulary means that the ideas used are not as yet naturalized in the common consciousness of man. The 'transcendental' character of such philosophy is not an inherent, eternal characteristic of its subject-matter, but is a sign and exponent that the values dealt in are not yet thoroughly at home in human experience, have not yet found themselves in ordinary social life and popular science, are not yet working terms justifying themselves by daily applications.

Spencer furnished the common consciousness of his day with terms and images so that it could appropriate to its ordinary use in matters of "life, mind, and society," the most fundamental generalizations which had been worked out in the abstract

regions of *both* philosophy and science. He did *this* even though he failed to deduce "life, mind, and society" from a single formula regarding 'force.' This is a work great enough for any man, — even though we are compelled to add that the gross obviousness with which it was done shows that Spencer after all measured up to the level of the intellectual life of his time rather than, through sympathy with more individualized and germinal forces, initiated a new movement. Here, again, Spencer's own aloofness, his own deliberate self-seclusion counts. Spencer is a monument, but, like all monuments, he commemorates the past. He presents the achieved culmination of ideas already in overt and external operation. He winds up an old dispensation. Here is the secret of his astounding success, of the way in which he has so thoroughly imposed his idea that even non-Spencerians must talk in his terms and adjust their problems to his statements. And here also is his inevitable weakness. Only a system which formulates the accomplished can possibly be conceived and announced in advance.

Any deductive system means by the necessity of the case the organization of a vast amount of material in such a way as to dispose of it. The system *seems* to fix the limits of all further effort, to define its aims and to assign its methods. But this is an illusion of the moment. In reality this wholesale disposal of material clears the ground for new, untried initiatives. It furnishes capital for hitherto unthought of speculations. Its deductive finalities turn out but ships of adventure to voyage on undiscovered seas.

To speak less metaphorically, Spencer's conception of evolution was always a confined and bounded one. Since his 'environment' was but the translation of the 'nature' of the metaphysicians, its workings had a fixed origin, a fixed quality, and a fixed goal. Evolution still tends in the minds of Spencer's contemporaries to "a single, far-off, divine event," — to a finality, a fixity. Somehow, there are fixed laws and forces (summed up under the name 'environment') which control the movement, which keep it pushing on in a definite fashion to a certain end. Backwards, there is found a picture of the time when all this was set agoing, when the homogeneous began to differentiate. If evolution is conceived of as in and of itself *con-*

stant, it is yet evolution by cycles, — a never-ending series of departures from, and returns to, a fixed point. I doubt not the time is coming when it will be seen that whatever all this is, it is *not* evolution. A thoroughgoing evolution must by the nature of the case abolish all fixed limits, beginnings, origins, forces, laws, goals. If there be evolution, then all these also evolve, and are what they are as points of origin and of destination relative to some special portion of evolution. They are to be defined in terms of the process, the process that now and always is, not the process in terms of them. But the transfer from the world of set external facts and of fixed ideal values to the world of free, mobile, self-developing, and self-organizing reality would be unthinkable and impossible were it not for the work of Spencer, which, shot all through as it is with contradictions, thereby all the more effectually served the purpose of a medium of transition from the fixed to the moving. A fixed world, a world of movement between fixed limits, a moving world, such is the order.

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