

PART III—RECANTATION

Equity therefore does not permit property in land. ... Not only have present land tenures an indefensible origin, but it is impossible to discover any mode in which land can become private property. ... Ethical truth is as exact and as peremptory as physical truth; and that in this matter of land tenure the verdict of morality must be distinctly aye or nay. Either men have a right to make the soil private property, or they have not. There is no medium. We must choose one of the two positions. There can be no half-and-half opinion. In the nature of things the fact must be either one way or the other—

Herbert Spencer, 1850.

Chapter I—

The Fate Of *Social Statics*

We now come to the purpose for which the preceding lengthy examination has been made: the consideration of Mr Spencer's present opinions on the land question, as set forth with all the weight of the "Synthetic Philosophy" in its author's most recent volume, *Justice*, which bears date of June, 1891, and was published somewhat later in that year.

But it will be best to break the chronological order, and record here the fate of *Social Statics*. Even after Mr Spencer had made *The Times* and Mr Greenwood believe that he had suppressed it years before, that book still continued to be published by Mr Spencer's authorised publishers, D. Appleton & Co., and their edition of *Justice*, published in October, 1891, contains an advertisement of it in its original form. But now, at last, it has been done for. It has not been killed outright; that would be mercy compared with its present fate. It has—and I cannot but feel that *Progress and Poverty*, the Edinburgh reviewer, and Mr John Laidler of Newcastle, have been innocent causes of its fate—it has been disembowelled, stuffed, mummified, and then set up in the gardens of the Spencerian philosophy, where it may be viewed with entire complacency by Sir John and his Grace.

Soberly, the original volume has with this year been withdrawn from publication, to give place to a new *Social Statics*, dated January, 1892, and published in February. This volume, which is, of course, now to pass in the publisher's lists as *Social Statics*, has for full title, *Social Statics, abridged and revised*, together with *The Man versus the State*. It consists of disjointed fragments of the old *Social Statics*,

which, in order to make some approach to the bulk of the original, is padded out with the magazine articles before referred to. In the preface Mr. Spencer says:

My first intention was to call this volume, or, rather, part of a volume, *Fragments from Social Statics*, and afterwards, *Selections from Social Statics*. Both of these titles, however, seemed to indicate a much less coherent assemblage of parts than it contains. On the other hand, to call it an abridgement is somewhat misleading, since the word fails to imply that large and constructively important parts are omitted. No title, however, appears appropriate, and I have at length decided that *Social Statics*, abridged and revised, is the least inappropriate.

If appropriateness was what Mr. Spencer sought, it does seem as if a title much less inappropriate might have been found. For the only discernible principle of revision is the chopping out of all that might imply a God or offend vested interests, in the same fashion that Russian censors revise distasteful works, the result being a Hamlet from which not only Hamlet himself, but the Ghost, the Queen Mother, and Ophelia, have gone. The "First Principle" is left, but everything large or small relating to land is omitted. The only allusion to land is in the cavilling at Locke, which is retained, and that what was originally Section 3, Chapter X, now converted into a chapter, headed "Socialism," is left by careless editing to begin, as in the original:

The doctrine that all men have equal rights to the use of the earth seems at first sight to countenance a species of social organization at variance with that from which the right of property has just been deduced.*

The foot-note indicated by this asterisk is:

*Referring to an omitted part of the last chapter, the argument of which, with modifications, will now be found in Part IV of the *Principles of Ethics*.

Thus revised, *Social Statics* no further concerns us. All that Mr. Spencer originally said about the relation between men and the earth having now been definitely withdrawn, we are referred for his present opinions to the book we are about to consider.

But the advertising of the revised *Social Statics* is worth noting, as by some blunder it lays before the American reader what was originally intended for English circulation only, and brings to mind the fiction about the suppression of *Social Statics*, which did duty in the *St. James's Gazette* and the *London Times*. Here is the advertise-

ment as published at the head of D. Appleton & Co.'s announcements in May, 1892:

SOCIAL STATICS. BY HERBERT SPENCER. New and revised edition, including "The Man versus the State," a series of essays on political tendencies heretofore published separately. 12mo. 420 pages. Cloth, \$2.00.

Having been much annoyed by the persistent quotation from the old edition of *Social Statics*, in the face of repeated warnings, of views which he had abandoned, and by the misquotation of others which he still holds, Mr. Spencer some ten years ago stopped the sale of the book in England and prohibited its translation. But the rapid spread of communistic theories gave new life to these misrepresentations; hence Mr. Spencer decided to delay no longer a statement of his mature opinions on the rights of individuals and the duty of the State.

This is a queer statement to come from D. Appleton & Co., who have been publishing and advertising the old edition of *Social Statics* up to this year, without the slightest warning to purchasers that the author had changed his views otherwise than as stated in the prefaces and notes, which, as I have before said, made no reference to any change on the land question. It is strange to hear from them, that the annoyed Mr. Spencer ten years ago stopped the sale of his book in England, when it had not been in print for over twenty years, serenely leaving it to be sold in the only country where it was in print, and that he also at the same time prohibited its translation. Why is Mr. Spencer so careful of what Englishmen in the little home island and even the "foreigner" may read, yet so careless of what is read by Americans, Canadians and Australians? And why have D. Appleton & Co., for nearly ten years, been passing off on their great constituency a book that its author would not allow to be sold in his own home or in foreign countries? These are questions this advertisement suggests but does not answer.