

relation, save possibly in one case. They harmed themselves at the fire of his soul, and he told them truths without accommodation. "You 're farther off from God than any woman I ever heard of." "Nay, if you believe in a protective tariff, you 're in hell already, though you may not know it." "You had a fine hysterical time last night, didn't you, when Miss B was brought up from the ravine with her dislocated shoulder." To Miss B he said: "I don't pity you. It served you right for being so ignorant as to go there at that hour." Seldom, strange to say, did the recipients of these deliverances seem to resent them.

What with Davidson's warmth of heart and sociability, I used to wonder at his never marrying. Two years before his death he told me the reason--an unhappy youthful love-affair in Scotland. Twice in later life, he said, temptation had come to him, and he had had to make his decision. When he had come to the point, he had felt each time that the tie with the dead girl was prohibitive. "When two persons have known each other as we did," he said, "neither can ever fully belong to a stranger. So it would n't do." "It would n't do, it would n't do!" he repeated, as we lay on the hillside, in a tone so musically tender that it chimes in my ear now as I write down his confession. It can surely be no breach of confidence to publish it--it is too creditable to the profundity of Davidson's affections. As I knew him, he was one of the purest of human beings.

If one asks, now, what the *value* of Thomas Davidson was, what was the general significance of his life, apart from his particular books and articles, I have to say that it lay in the example he set to us all of how, even in the midst of this intensely worldly social system of ours, in which each human interest is organized so collectively and so commercially, a single man may still be a knight-errant of the intellectual life, and preserve full freedom in the midst of sociability. Extreme as was his need of friends, and faithful as he was to them, he yet lived mainly in reliance on his private inspiration. Asking no man's permission, bowing the knee to no tribal idol, renouncing the conventional channels of recognition, he showed us how a life devoted to purely intellectual ends could be beautifully wholesome outwardly, and overflow with inner contentment. Fortunately this type of man is recurrent, and from generation to generation, literary history preserves examples. But it is infrequent enough for few of us to have known more than one example--I count myself happy in knowing two and a half! The memory of Davidson will always strengthen my faith in personal freedom and its spontaneities, and make me less unqualifiedly respectful than ever of "Civilization," with its herding and branding, licensing and degree-giving, authorizing and appointing, and in general regulating and administering by system the lives human beings. Surely the individual, the person in the singular number, is the more fundamental phenomenon, and the social institution, of whatever grade, is but secondary and ministerial. Many as are the interests which social systems satisfy, always unsatisfied interests remain over, and among them are interests to which system, as such, does violence whenever it lays its hand upon us. The best Commonwealth will always be the one that most cherishes the men who represent the residual interests, the one that leaves the largest scope to their peculiarities.

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[1] First published in *McClure's Magazine* for May, 1905.

[2] "The Education of the Wage-Earners." Boston, Ginn & Company, 1904.

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## VI

### HERBERT SPENCER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY[1]

"God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform." If the greatest of all his wonders be the human individual, the richness with which the specimens thereof are diversified, the limitless variety of outline, from gothic to classic or flowing arabesque, the contradictory nature of the filling, composed of little and great, of comic, heroic, and pathetic elements blended inextricably, in personalities all of whom can *go*, and *go* successfully, must surely be reckoned the supreme miracle of creative ingenuity. Rarely has Nature performed an odder or more Dickens-like feat than when she deliberately designed, or accidentally stumbled into, the personality of Herbert Spencer. Greatness and smallness surely never lived so closely in one skin together.

The opposite verdicts passed upon his work by his contemporaries bear witness to the extraordinary mingling of defects and merits in his mental character. Here are a few, juxtaposed:--

"A philosophic saw-mill."--"The most capacious and powerful thinker of all time.

"The Arry' of philosophy."--"Aristotle and his master were not more beyond the pygmies who preceded them than he is beyond Aristotle."

"Herbert Spencer's chromo-philosophy."--"No other man that has walked the earth has so wrought and written himself into the life of the world."

"The touch of his mind takes the living flavor out of everything."--"He is as much above and beyond all the other great philosophers who have ever lived as the telegraph is beyond the carrier-pigeon, or the railway beyond the sedan chair."

"He has merely combined facts which we knew before into a huge fantastic contradictory system, which hides its nakedness and emptiness partly under the veil of an imposing terminology, and partly in the primeval fog."--"His contributions are of a depth, profundity, and magnitude which have no parallel in the history of mind. Taking but one--and one only--of his transcendent reaches of thought,--namely, that referring to the positive sense of the Unknown as the basis of religion,--it may unhesitatingly be affirmed that the analysis and synthesis by which he advances to the almost supernal grasp of this mighty truth give a sense of power and reach verging on the preternatural."

Can the two thick volumes of autobiography which Mr. Spencer leaves behind him explain such discrepant appreciations? Can we find revealed in them the higher synthesis which reconciles the contradictions? Partly they do explain, I think, and even justify, both kinds of judgment upon their author. But I confess that in the last resort I still feel baffled. In Spencer, as in every concrete individual, there is a uniqueness that defies all formulation. We can feel the touch of it and recognize its taste, so to speak, relishing or disliking, as the case may be, but we can give no ultimate account of it, and we have in the end simply to admire the Creator.

Mr. Spencer's task, the unification of all knowledge into an articulate system, was more ambitious than anything attempted since St. Thomas or Descartes. Most thinkers have confined themselves either to generalities or to details, but Spencer addressed himself to everything. He dealt in logical, metaphysical, and ethical first principles, in cosmogony and geology, in physics, and chemistry after a fashion, in biology, psychology, sociology, politics, and aesthetics. Hardly any subject can be named which has not at least been touched on in some one of his many volumes. His erudition was prodigious. His civic conscience and his social courage both were admirable. His life was pure. He was devoted to truth and usefulness, and his character was wholly free from envy and malice (though not from contempt), and from the perverse egoisms that so often go with greatness.

Surely, any one hearing this veracious enumeration would think that Spencer must have been a rich and exuberant human being. Such wide curiosities must have gone with the widest sympathies, and such a powerful harmony of character, whether it were a congenital gift, or were acquired by spiritual wrestling and eating bread with tears, must in any case have been a glorious spectacle for the beholder. Since Goethe, no such ideal human being can have been visible, walking our poor earth.

Yet when we turn to the "Autobiography," the self-confession which we find is this: An old-maidish personage, inhabiting boarding-houses, equable and lukewarm in all his tastes and passions, having no desultory curiosity, showing little interest in either books or people. A petty fault-finder and stickler for trifles, devoid in youth of any wide designs on life, fond only of the more mechanical side of things, yet drifting as it were involuntarily into the possession of a world-formula which by dint of his extraordinary pertinacity he proceeded to apply to so many special cases that it made him a philosopher in spite of himself. He appears as

modest enough, but with a curious vanity in some of his deficiencies,—his lack of desultory interests, for example, and his nonconformity to reigning customs. He gives a queer sense of having no emotional perspective, as if small things and large were on the same plane of vision, and equally commanded his attention. In spite of his professed dislike of monotony, one feels an awfully monotonous quality in him; and in spite of the fact that invalidism condemned him to avoid thinking, and to saunter and potter through large parts of every day, one finds no twilight region in his mind, and no capacity for dreaminess or passivity. All parts of it are filled with the same noonday glare, like a dry desert where every grain of sand shows singly, and there are no mysteries or shadows.

"Look on this picture and on that," and answer how they can be compatible.

For one thing, Mr. Spencer certainly writes himself *down* too much. He complains of a poor memory, of an idle disposition, of a general dislike for reading. Doubtless there have been more gifted men in all these respects. But when Spencer once buckled to a particular task, his memory, his industry, and his reading went beyond those of the most gifted. He had excessive sensibility to stimulation by a challenge, and he had preëminent pertinacity. When the notion of his philosophic system once grasped him, it seemed to possess itself of every effective fibre of his being. No faculty in him was left unemployed,—nor, on the other hand, was anything that his philosophy could contain left unstated. Roughly speaking, the task and the man absorbed each other without residuum.

Compare this type of mind with such an opposite type as Ruskin's, or even as J. S. Mill's, or Huxley's, and you realize its peculiarity. Behind the work of those others was a background of overflowing mental temptations. The men loom larger than all their publications, and leave an impression of unexpressed potentialities. Spencer tossed all his inexpressibilities into the Unknowable, and gladly turned his back on them forever. His books seem to have expressed all that there was to express in his character.

He is very frank about this himself. No *Sturm und Drang Periode*, no problematic stage of thought, where the burden of the much-to-be-straightened exceeds the powers of straightening.

When George Eliot uttered surprise at seeing no lines on his forehead, his reply was:—"I suppose it is because I am never puzzled."—"It has never been my way," he continues, "to set before myself a problem and puzzle out an answer. The conclusions at which I have from time to time arrived, have not been arrived at as solutions of questions raised; but have been arrived at unawares—each as the ultimate outcome of a body of thought which slowly grew from a germ. Some direct observation, or some fact met with in reading, would dwell with me; apparently because I had a sense of its significance. . . . A week afterwards, possibly, the matter would be remembered; and with further thought about it, might occur a recognition of some wider application: new instances being aggregated with those already noted. Again, after an interval," etc., etc. "And thus, little by little, in unobtrusive ways, without conscious intention or appreciable effort, there would grow up a coherent and organized theory" (vol. i, page 464).

A sort of mill, this, wound up to grind in a certain way, and irresponsive otherwise.

"To apply day after day merely with the general idea of acquiring information, or of increasing ability, was not in me." "Anything like passive receptivity is foreign to my nature; and there results an unusually small tendency to be affected by others' thoughts. It seems as though the fabric of my conclusions had in all cases to be developed from within. Material which could be taken in and organized so as to form part of a coherent structure, there was always a readiness to receive. But ideas and sentiments of alien kinds, or unorganizable kinds, were, if not rejected, yet accepted with indifference, and soon dropped away." "It has always been out of the question for me to go on reading a book the fundamental principles of which I entirely dissent from. I take it for granted that if the fundamental principles are wrong the rest cannot be right; and thereupon cease reading—being, I suspect, rather glad of an excuse for doing so." "Systematic books of a political or ethical kind, written from points of view quite unlike my own, were either not consulted at all, or else they were

glanced at and thereafter disregarded" (vol. i, pages 215, 277, 289, 350).

There is pride rather than compunction in these confessions. Spencer's mind was so narrowly systematized, that he was at last almost incapable of believing in the reality of alien ways of feeling. The invariable arrogance of his replies to criticisms shows his absolute self-confidence. Every opinion in the world had to be articulately right or articulately wrong,--so proved by some principle or other of his infallible system.

He confesses freely his own inflexibility and censoriousness. His account of his father makes one believe in the fatality of heredity. Born of old nonconformist stock, the elder Spencer was a man of absolute punctuality. Always he would step out of his way to kick a stone off the pavement lest somebody should trip over it. If he saw boys quarrelling he stopped to expostulate; and he never could pass a man who was ill-treating a horse without trying to make him behave better. He would never take off his hat to any one, no matter of what rank, nor could he be induced to address any one as "Esquire" or as "Reverend." He would never put on any sign of mourning, even for father and mother; and he adhered to one style of coat and hat throughout all changes of fashion. Improvement was his watchword always and everywhere. Whatever he wrote had to be endlessly corrected, and his love of detail led all his life to his neglecting large ends in his care for small ones. A good heart, but a pedantic conscience, and a sort of energetically mechanical intelligence.

Of himself Herbert Spencer says: "No one will deny that I am much given to criticism. Along with exposition of my own views there has always gone a pointing out of defects in those of others. And if this is a trait in my writing, still more is it a trait in my conversation. The tendency to fault-finding is dominant--disagreeably dominant. The indicating of errors in thought and speech made by those around has all through life been an incurable habit--a habit for which I have often reproached myself, but to no purpose."

The "Autobiography" abounds in illustrations of the habit. For instance:--

"Of late I have observed sundry cases in which, having found the right, people deliberately desert it for the wrong. . . . A generation ago salt-cellars were made of convenient shapes--either ellipses or elongated parallelograms: the advantage being that the salt-spoon, placed lengthwise, remained in its place. But for some time past, fashion has dictated circular salt-cellars, on the edges of which the salt-spoon will not remain without skilful balancing: it falls on the cloth. In my boyhood a jug was made of a form at once convenient and graceful. . . . Now, however, the almost universal form of jug in use is a frustum of a cone with a miniature spout. It combines all possible defects. When anything like full, it is impossible to pour out a small quantity without part of the liquid trickling down beneath the spout; and a larger quantity cannot be poured out without exceeding the limits of the spout and running over on each side of it. If the jug is half empty, the tilting must be continued a long time before any liquid comes; and then, when it does come, it comes with a rush; because its surface has now become so large that a small inclination delivers a great deal. To all which add that the shape is as ugly a one as can well be hit upon. Still more extraordinary is the folly of a change made in another utensil of daily use"--and Spencer goes on to find fault with the cylindrical form of candle extinguisher, proving by a description of its shape that "it squashes the wick into the melted composition, the result being that when, next day, the extinguisher is taken off, the wick, imbedded in the solidified composition, cannot be lighted without difficulty" (vol. ii, page 238).

The remorseless explicitness, the punctuation, everything, make these specimens of public fault-finding with what probably was the equipment of Mr. Spencer's latest boarding-house, sound like passages from "The Man versus the State." Another example:--

"Playing billiards became 'my custom always of the afternoon.' Those who confess to billiard-playing commonly make some kind of an excuse. . . . It suffices to me that I like billiards, and the attainment of the pleasure given I regard as a sufficient motive. I have for a long time deliberately set my face against that asceticism which makes it an offence to do a thing for the pleasure of doing it; and have habitually contended that, so long as no injury is inflicted on others, nor any ulterior injury on self, and so long as the various duties

of life have been discharged, the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake is perfectly legitimate and requires no apology. The opposite view is nothing else than a remote sequence of the old devil worship of the barbarian, who sought to please his god by inflicting pains upon himself, and believed his god would be angry if he made himself happy" (vol. ii, page 263).

The tone of pedantic rectitude in these passages is characteristic. Every smallest thing is either right or wrong, and if wrong, can be articulately proved so by reasoning. Life grows too dry and literal, and loses all aërial perspective at such a rate; and the effect is the more displeasing when the matters in dispute have a rich variety of aspects, and when the aspect from which Mr. Spencer deduces his conclusions is manifestly partial.

For instance, in his art-criticisms. Spencer in his youth did much drawing, both mechanical and artistic. Volume one contains a photo-print of a very creditable bust which he modelled of his uncle. He had a musical ear, and practiced singing. He paid attention to style, and was not wholly insensible to poetry. Yet in all his dealings with the art-products of mankind he manifests the same curious dryness and mechanical literality of judgment--a dryness increased by pride in his non-conformity. He would, for example, rather give a large sum than read to the end of Homer's Iliad,--the ceaseless repetition of battles, speeches, and epithets like well-greaved Greeks, horse-breaking Trojans; the tedious enumeration of details of dresses, arms, and chariots; such absurdities as giving the genealogy of a horse while in the midst of a battle; and the appeals to savage and brutal passions, having soon made the poem intolerable to him (vol. i, page 300). Turner's paintings he finds untrue, in that the earth-region is habitually as bright in tone as the air-region. Moreover, Turner scatters his detail too evenly. In Greek statues the hair is falsely treated. Renaissance painting, even the best, is spoiled by unreal illumination, and non-rendering of reflected light in the shadows. Venetian gothic sins by meaningless ornamentation. St. Mark's Church may be precious archaeologically, but is not aesthetically precious. Of Wagner's music he admires nothing but the skilful specialization of the instruments in the orchestra.

The fault-finding in all these cases rests on observation, true as far as it goes; but the total absence of genial relations with the entirety of the phenomenon discussed, the clutching at some paltry mechanical aspect of it that lends itself to reasoned proof by *a plus b*, and the practical denial of everything that only appeals to vaguer sentiment, show a mind so oddly limited to ratiocinative and explicit processes, and so wedded to the superficial and flagrantly *insufficient*, that one begins to wonder whether in the philosophic and scientific spheres the same mind can have wrought out results of extraordinary value.

Both "yes" and "no" are here the answer. Every one who writes books or articles knows how he must flounder until he hits upon the proper opening. Once the right beginning found, everything follows easily and in due order. If a man, however narrow, strikes even by accident, into one of these fertile openings, and pertinaciously follows the lead, he is almost sure to meet truth on his path. Some thoughts act almost like mechanical centres of crystallization; facts cluster of themselves about them. Such a thought was that of the gradual growth of all things, by natural processes, out of natural antecedents. Until the middle of the nineteenth century no one had grasped it *wholesale*; and the thinker who did so earliest was bound to make discoveries just in proportion to the exclusiveness of his interest in the principle. He who had the keenest eye for instances and illustrations, and was least divertible by casual side-curiosity, would score the quickest triumph.

To Spencer is certainly due the immense credit of having been the first to see in evolution an absolutely universal principle. If any one else had grasped its universality, it failed at any rate to grasp him as it grasped Spencer. For Spencer it instantly became "the guiding conception running through and connecting all the concrete sciences" (vol. ii, page 196). Here at last was "an object at once large and distinct enough" to overcome his "constitutional idleness." "With an important and definite end to achieve, I could work" (vol. i, page 215). He became, in short, the victim of a vivid obsession, and for the first time in his life seems to have grown genuinely ambitious. Every item of his experience, small or great, every idea in his mental storehouse, had now to be considered with reference to its bearing on the new universal principle. On pages 194-199 of

volume two he gives an interesting summary of the way in which all his previous and subsequent ideas moved into harmonious coördination and subordination, when once he had this universal key to insight. Applying it wholesale as he did, innumerable truths unobserved till then had to fall into his gamebag. And his peculiar trick, a priggish infirmity in daily intercourse, of treating every smallest thing by abstract law, was here a merit. Add his sleuth-hound scent for what he was after, and his untiring pertinacity, to his priority in perceiving the one great truth and you fully justify the popular estimate of him as one of the world's geniuses, in spite of the fact that the "temperament" of genius, so called, seems to have been so lacking in him.

In one sense, then, Spencer's personal narrowness and dryness were not hindering, but helping conditions of his achievement. Grant that a vast picture *quelconque* had to be made before the details could be made perfect, and a greater richness and receptivity of mind would have resulted in hesitation. The quality would have been better in spots, but the extensiveness would have suffered.

Spencer is thus the philosopher of vastness. Misprised by many specialists, who carp at his technical imperfections, he has nevertheless enlarged the imagination, and set free the speculative mind of countless doctors, engineers, and lawyers, of many physicists and chemists, and of thoughtful laymen generally. He is the philosopher whom those who have no other philosopher can appreciate. To be able to say this of any man is great praise, and gives the "yes" answer to my recent question.

Can the "no" answer be as unhesitatingly uttered? I think so, if one makes the qualitative aspect of Spencer's work undo its quantitative aspect. The luke-warm equable temperament, the narrowness of sympathy and passion, the fondness for mechanical forms of thought, the imperfect receptivity and lack of interest in facts as such, dissevered from their possible connection with a theory; nay, the very vividness itself, the keenness of scent and the pertinacity; these all are qualities which may easily make for second-rateness, and for contentment with a cheap and loosely woven achievement. As Mr. Spencer's "First Principles" is the book which more than any other has spread his popular reputation, I had perhaps better explain what I mean by criticising some of its peculiarities.

I read this book as a youth when it was still appearing in numbers, and was carried away with enthusiasm by the intellectual perspectives which it seemed to open. When a maturer companion, Mr. Charles S. Peirce, attacked it in my presence, I felt spiritually wounded, as by the defacement of a sacred image or picture, though I could not verbally defend it against his criticisms.

Later I have used it often as a text-book with students, and the total outcome of my dealings with it is an exceedingly unfavorable verdict. Apart from the great truth which it enforces, that everything has evolved somehow, and apart from the inevitable stimulating effect of any such universal picture, I regard its teachings as almost a museum of blundering reasoning. Let me try to indicate briefly my grounds for such an opinion.

I pass by the section on the Unknowable, because this part of Mr. Spencer's philosophy has won fewer friends than any other. It consists chiefly of a rehash of Mansel's rehash of Hamilton's "Philosophy of the Conditioned," and has hardly raised its head since John Mill so effectively demolished it. If criticism of our human intellectual constitution is needed, it can be got out of Bradley to-day better than out of Spencer. The latter's way of reconciling science and religion is, moreover, too absurdly *naïf*. Find, he says, a fundamental abstract truth on which they can agree, and that will reconcile them. Such a truth, he thinks, is that *there is a mystery*. The trouble is that it is over just such common truths that quarrels begin. Did the fact that both believed in the existence of the Pope reconcile Luther and Ignatius Loyola? Did it reconcile the South and the North that both agreed that there were slaves? Religion claims that the "mystery" is interpretable by human reason; "Science," speaking through Spencer, insists that it is not. The admission of the mystery is the very signal for the quarrel. Moreover, for nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand the sense of mystery is the sense of *more-to-be-known*, not the sense of a More, *not* to be known.

But pass the Unknowable by, and turn to Spencer's famous law of Evolution.

"Science" works with several types of "law." The most frequent and useful type is that of the "elementary law,"--that of the composition of forces, that of gravitation, of refraction, and the like. Such laws declare no concrete facts to exist, and make no prophecy as to any actual future. They limit themselves to saying that if a certain character be found in any fact, another character will co-exist with it or follow it. The usefulness of these laws is proportionate to the extent to which the characters they treat of pervade the world, and to the accuracy with which they are definable.

Statistical laws form another type, and positively declare something about the world of actuality. Although they tell us nothing of the elements of things, either abstract or concrete, they affirm that the resultant of their actions drifts preponderantly in a particular direction. Population tends toward cities; the working classes tend to grow discontented; the available energy of the universe is running down--such laws prophesy the real future *en gros*, but they never help us to predict any particular detail of it.

Spencer's law of Evolution is of the statistical variety. It defines what evolution means, and what dissolution means, and asserts that, although both processes are always going on together, there is in the present phase of the world a drift in favor of evolution. In the first edition of "First Principles" an evolutive change in anything was described as the passage of it from a state of indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity. The existence of a drift in this direction in everything Mr. Spencer proves, both by a survey of facts, and by deducing it from certain laws of the elementary type, which he severally names "the instability of the homogeneous," "the multiplication of effects," "segregation," and "equilibration." The two former insure the heterogeneity, while "segregation" brings about the definiteness and coherence, and "equilibration" arrests the process, and determines when dissolutive changes shall begin.

The whole panorama is resplendent for variety and inclusiveness, and has aroused an admiration for philosophy in minds that never admired philosophy before. Like Descartes in earlier days, Spencer aims at a purely mechanical explanation of Nature. The knowable universe is nothing but matter and motion, and its history is nothing but the "redistribution" of these entities. The value of such an explanation for scientific purposes depends altogether on how consistent and exact it is. Every "thing" must be interpreted as a "configuration," every "event" as a change of configuration, every predicate ascribed must be of a geometrical sort. Measured by these requirements of mechanics Spencer's attempt has lamentably failed. His terms are vagueness and ambiguity incarnate, and he seems incapable of keeping the mechanical point of view in mind for five pages consecutively.

"Definite," for example, is hardly a physical idea at all. Every motion and every arrangement of matter is definitely what it is,--a fog or an irregular scrawl, as much so as a billiard ball or a straight line. Spencer means by definiteness in a thing any character that makes it arrest our attention, and forces us to distinguish it from other things. The word with him has a human, not a physical connotation. Definite things, in his book, finally appear merely as *things that men have made separate names for*, so that there is hardly a pretence of the mechanical view being kept. Of course names increase as human history proceeds, so "definiteness" in things must necessarily more and more evolve.

"Coherent," again. This has the definite mechanical meaning of resisting separation, of sticking together; but Spencer plays fast and loose with this meaning. Coherence with him sometimes means *permanence in time*, sometimes such *mutual dependence of parts* as is realized in a widely scattered system of no fixed material configuration; a commercial house, for example, with its "travellers" and ships and cars.

An honestly mechanical reader soon rubs his eyes with bewilderment at the orgy of ambiguity to which he is introduced. Every term in Spencer's fireworks shimmers through a whole spectrum of meanings in order to adapt itself to the successive spheres of evolution to which it must apply. "Integration," for instance. A definite coherence is an Integration; and examples given of integration are the contraction of the solar nebula, the formation of the earth's crust, the calcification of cartilage, the shortening of the body of crabs, the loss of his tail by man, the mutual dependence of plants and animals, the growth of powerful states, the tendency of

human occupations to go to distinct localities, the dropping of terminal inflexions in English grammar, the formation of general concepts by the mind, the use of machinery instead of simple tools, the development of "composition" in the fine arts, etc., etc. It is obvious that no one form of the motion of matter characterizes all these facts. The human ones simply embody the more and more successful pursuit of certain ends.

In the second edition of his book, Mr. Spencer supplemented his first formula by a unifying addition, meant to be strictly mechanical. "Evolution," he now said, "is the progressive integration of matter and dissipation of motion," during which both the matter and the motion undergo the previously designated kinds of change. But this makes the formula worse instead of better. The "dissipation of motion" part of it is simple vagueness,--for what particular motion is "dissipated" when a man or state grows more highly evolved? And the integration of matter belongs only to stellar and geologic evolution. Neither heightened specific gravity, nor greater massiveness, which are the only conceivable integrations of matter, is a mark of the more evolved vital, mental, or social things.

It is obvious that the facts of which Spencer here gives so clumsy an account could all have been set down more simply. First there is solar, and then there is geological evolution, processes accurately describable as integrations in the mechanical sense, namely, as decrease in bulk, or growth in hardness. Then Life appears; and after that neither integration of matter nor dissipation of motion play any part whatever. The result of life, however, is to fill the world more and more with things displaying *organic unity*. By this is meant any arrangement of which one part helps to keep the other parts in existence. Some organic unities are material,--a sea-urchin, for example, a department store, a civil service, or an ecclesiastical organization. Some are mental, as a "science," a code of laws, or an educational programme. But whether they be material or mental products, organic unities must *accumulate*; for every old one tends to conserve itself, and if successful new ones arise they also "come to stay." The human use of Spencer's adjectives "integrated," "definite," "coherent," here no longer shocks one. We are frankly on teleological ground, and metaphor and vagueness are permissible.

This tendency of organic unities to accumulate when once they are formed is absolutely all the truth I can distill from Spencer's unwieldy account of evolution. It makes a much less gaudy and chromatic picture, but what there is of it is exact.

Countless other criticisms swarm toward my pen, but I have no heart to express them,--it is too sorry an occupation. A word about Spencer's conception of "Force," however, insists on being added; for although it is one of his most essential, it is one of his vaguest ideas.

Over all his special laws of evolution there reigns an absolutely general law, that of the "persistence of force." By this Spencer sometimes means the phenomenal law of conservation of energy, sometimes the metaphysical principle that the quantity of existence is unalterable, sometimes the logical principle that nothing can happen without a reason, sometimes the practical postulate that in the absence of any assignable difference you must call a thing the same. This law is one vast vagueness, of which I can give no clear account; but of his special vaguenesses "mental force" and "social force" are good examples.

These manifestations of the universal force, he says, are due to vital force, and this latter is due to physical force, both being proportionate to the amount of physical force which is "transformed" into them. But what on earth is "social force"? Sometimes he identifies it with "social activity" (showing the latter to be proportionate to the amount of food eaten), sometimes with the work done by human beings and their steam-engines, and shows it to be due ultimately to the sun's heat. It would never occur to a reader of his pages that a social force proper might be anything that acted as a stimulus of social change,--a leader, for example, a discovery, a book, a new idea, or a national insult; and that the greatest of "forces" of this kind need embody no more "physical force" than the smallest. The measure of greatness here is the effect produced on the environment, not a quantity antecedently absorbed from physical nature. Mr. Spencer himself is a great social force; but he ate no more than an average man, and his body, if cremated, would disengage no more energy. The effects he exerts are of no nature of *releases*,--his words pull triggers in certain kinds of brain.



The fundamental distinction in mechanics between forces of push-and-pull and forces of release is one of which Mr. Spencer, in his earlier years, made no use whatever. Only in his sixth edition did he show that it had seriously arrested his attention. In biology, psychology, and sociology the forces concerned are almost exclusively forces of release. Spencer's account of social forces is neither good sociology nor good mechanics. His feeble grasp of the conception of force vitiates, in fact, all his work.

But the task of a carper is repugnant. The "Essays," "Biology," "Psychology," "Sociology," and "Ethics" are all better than "First Principles," and contain numerous and admirable bits of penetrating work of detail. My impression is that, of the systematic treatises, the "Psychology" will rank as the most original. Spencer broke new ground here in insisting that, since mind and its environment have evolved together, they must be studied together. He gave to the study of mind in isolation a definitive quietus, and that certainly is a great thing to have achieved. To be sure he overdid the matter, as usual, and left no room for any mental structure at all, except that which passively resulted from the storage of impressions received from the outer world in the order of their frequency by fathers and transmitted to their sons. The belief that whatever is acquired by sires is inherited by sons, and the ignoring of purely inner variations, are weak points; but to have brought in the environment as vital was a master stroke.

I may say that Spencer's controversy over use-inheritance with Weismann, entered into after he was sixty, seems to me in point of quality better than any other part of his work. It is genuine labor over a puzzle, genuine research.

Spencer's "Ethics" is a most vital and original piece of attitude-taking in the world of ideals. His politico-ethical activity in general breathes the purest English spirit liberty, and his attacks on over-administration and criticisms on the inferiority of great centralized systems are worthy to be the textbooks of individualists the world over. I confess that it is with this part of his work, in spite of its hardness and inflexibility of tone, that I personally sympathize most.

Looking back on Mr. Spencer as a whole, as this admirably truth-telling "Autobiography" reveals him, he is a figure unique for quaint consistency. He never varied from that inimitable blend of small and vast mindedness, of liberality and crabbedness, which was his personal note, and which defies our formulating power. If an abstract logical concept could come to life, its life would be like Spencer's,--the same definiteness of exclusion and inclusion, the same bloodlessness of temperament, the same narrowness of intent and vastness of extent, the same power of applying itself to numberless instances. But he was no abstract idea; he was a man vigorously devoted to truth and justice as he saw them, who had deep insights, and who finished, under terrible frustrations from bad health, a piece of work that taken for all in all, is extraordinary. A human life is greater than all its possible appraisers, assessors, and critics. In comparison with the fact of Spencer's actual living, such critical characterization of it as I have been at all these pains to produce seems a rather unimportant as well as a decidedly graceless thing.

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[1] Written upon the publication of Herbert Spencer's "Autobiography." Published in the *Atlantic Monthly* for July, 1904.

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## VII

### FREDERIC MYERS' SERVICES TO PSYCHOLOGY[1]

On this memorial occasion it is from English hearts and tongues belonging, as I never had the privilege of belonging, to the immediate environment of our lamented President, that discourse of him as a man and as a friend must come. It is for those who participated in the endless drudgery of his labors for our Society to tell of the high powers he showed there; and it is for those who have something of his burning interest in the problem of our human destiny to estimate his success in throwing a little more light into its dark recesses. To me it has been deemed best to assign a colder task. Frederic Myers was a psychologist who worked upon lines