"It is evident, too, how little Spencer knew of the class conflict of his own age, and how remote he was from the struggles and bitter antagonisms which the "peaceful" industrial order has brought into increasing prominence." (Walter Greenwood Beach, The Growth of Social Thought, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1939. P. 126)
Spencer opposed the classical-humanist tradition which emphasized the study of Greek and Latin language and culture ahead of everything else. (Auto. II, 36-7)

"By nature, I am sure, I am not an archaeologist—still less an anthropologist—the "beastly devices of the heathen" weary and disgust me." (Jane Ellen Harrison, Reminiscences of a Student's Life, Hogarth Press, London, 1925. P. 83)


"What Knowledge Is of Most Worth" "... is completely subversive of the old classical traditions." (p. 276) Spencer was "... the only education writer of that country [England] to make much impression upon the times" [The 19th century. (p. 283). (Frank Pierrepont Graves, Great Educators of Three Centuries, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1912.)

"... the floods of criticism that have swept over his [Spencer's] essay on "What Knowledge Is of Most Worth?" ... (W. S. Sutton, "Herbert Spencer's Individuality as Manifested in His Educational Thinking," Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Forty-Third Annual Meeting of the National Education Association, pp. 225-230, St. Louis, Mo., 1904. P. 227. Sutton was Professor of the Science and Art of Education at the University of Texas)

"Now, the French have very little trouble with Spencer's treatment of religious subjects, but his irreverence for the ancient classics greatly troubles them.... And so the Minister of Public Instruction in France has arranged to prepare an edition of Spencer's "Education" which the Government may approve, and in which the part dealing with science and classics is omitted." (Edward L. Youmans, "Sociology and Theology at Yale College," The Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 17, pp. 265-269, 1880. P. 269)

"Men who would blush if caught saying Iphigenia instead of Iphigenia, or would resent as an insult any imputation of ignorance respecting the fabled labours of a fabled demi-god, show not the slightest shame in confessing that they do not know where the Eustachian tubes are, what are the actions of the spinal cord, what is the normal rate of pulsation, or how the lungs are inflated." (p. 43) (Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical. D. Appleton and Company. New York, 1862.)
"The college [Harvard] is in the midst of a ferocious fight between the scientists and the classicists, the latter having become alarmed at the inroads of the former." (Letter from Edward L. Youmans to Herbert Spencer dated November 23, 1863. Quoted in John Fiske, Edward Livingston Youmans, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894. P. 164)

"The word "evolution" has acquired such a potency that the mere fact that certain philosophies like those of Spencer or Bergson use it causes them to be regarded as scientific. But as a few drops of holy water cannot transform a sinner into a saint, so a few empirical generalizations and technical terms cannot transform mythologic pictures of the universe into genuine science." (Morris R. Cohen, The Faith of a Liberal, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1946. P. 405)

"... the evolutionist philosophies, with their easy, sweeping generalizations about the totality of things based on a few inaccurately reported facts? If we look closely we can see beneath the scientific cosmetics the old shrew Theology. Instead of the old Providence, we have the struggle for existence, the social organism or the 'clan vital'; instead of the far-off divine event we have the goal of progress; instead of the triumph of the will of God we have the survival of the fittest, etc.--but the substance is the same: an elaborate system of apologetics for the powers that be." (Morris R. Cohen, The Faith of a Liberal, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1946. P. 405)

"It was Spencer who first used the argument that as thought has arisen in the biologic struggle for existence, it must serve a useful biologic purpose. Despite the fact that this argument has been accepted by Mach, Avenarius, Simmel, James, Dewey, and others, we ought to have no hesitation in denying it any force or even relevance in any discussion as to the logical nature of truth. It is but a thinly veiled form of the old theologic argument that whatever Providence or Nature brings forth must have a useful purpose." (p. 38) "Many truths are indifferent to survival-value and many that are injurious nevertheless persist.... It should also warn us against the Spencerian assumption that because thought has been evolved in the struggle for existence it must necessarily serve some use or survival value." (p. 287) (Morris R. Cohen, Reason and Nature, 2nd edition, The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1953)

"When Frazer, like Spencer and others, generalizes on the basis of myths and practices drawn from different peoples, without knowing the actual history or descent of these myths, his procedure is more absurd than that of a biologist who would generalize from the conduct of animals belonging to different phyla—e.g., the flying of bats, birds, and bees. Comparisons are not significant unless we are comparing facts of the same order; an outer likeness of legends is no guarantee of similar origin." (Morris R. Cohen, The Faith of a Liberal, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1946. Pp. 422-423)
"Nevertheless, if social evolution means anything definite, it means not only that things change but that they change in a definite direction, and Spencer is the only one who has tried to formulate that direction as one from the simple to the complex, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. The philosophic test of this is to ask, "What is inherently simple? Shall we deny that legal procedure today is simpler than in the barbarian codes, with their very elaborate and complicated rules? Shall we say that English syntax today is more complex than that of inflected Anglo-Saxon?" To ask these questions is to show the vagueness, if not the falsity, of the Spencerian formula. In the end, the adherents of the evolutionary philosophy of history justify themselves by saying that they mean only that everything in human affairs has a cause. But if this is so, what philosophy of history is not evolutionary?"
"... the badness of our conduct towards inferior races ...."

"So long as it is felt by colonists that when they aggress on natives and get into quarrels, the home government will come to their defence, and so long as men who initiate aggressive policies, which end in the annexation of territory, get titles and honours, notwithstanding their unauthorised actions and even their disobedience to orders, the filibustering policy with all its atrocities will continue."

"The experience of many other travellers similarly show us that friendly conduct on the part of uncivilized races when first visited, is very general; and that their subsequent unfriendly conduct, when it occurs, is nothing but retaliation for injuries received from the civilized." (Herbert Spencer, The Study of Sociology, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1891. P. 211)

"As indicating most clearly the state of national feeling, we have the immense popularity of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, in whose writings one-tenth of nominal Christianity is joined with nine-tenths of real paganism; who idealizes the soldier and glories in the triumphs of brute force; and who, in depicting school-life, brings to the front the barbarizing activities and feelings and shows little respect for a civilizing culture." (Herbert Spencer, Facts and Comments, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1902. P. 185)

During the Negro uprising in Jamaica: "Herbert Spencer emerged for the first time in his life, so far as I know, from the rigid seclusion of a silent student's career, and appeared in public as an active, hard-working member of a political organization. The American Civil War had drawn Mill for the first time into the public arena of politics; the Jamaica massacre made a political agitator of Herbert / Spencer. The noble human sympathies of Spencer, his austere and uncompromising love of justice, his instinctive detestation of brute, blind, despotic force, compelled him to come from his seclusion, and join those who protested against the lawless and senseless massacre of the wretched blacks in Jamaica."
"Whereas to all other evolutionary moralists the status belli has received a new consecration from the new ideas; whereas in Germany especially the "struggle for existence" has been made the baptismal formula for the most cynical assertions of brute egoism; with Mr. Spencer the same theories have bred an almost Quakerish humanitarianism and regard for peace. Frequently in these pages /The Data of Ethics/ does his indignation at the ruling powers of Britain burst forth, for their policy of conquest over lower races. Might, in his eyes, would hardly seem to be right, even when evolution is carried on by its means." (Anonymous /William James/, "Herbert Spencer's Data of Ethics," The Nation, Vol. 28, pp. 178-179, 1879. P. 179)

Spencer referred to colonialism, including British colonialism, as "... the cowardly conquest of bullet and shell over arrow and assegai, which demoralize the one side while slaughtering the other." ("Evolutionary Ethics," Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 52, pp. 497-502, 1898. P. 499.)

"You have, I doubt not, been in a chronic state of indignation daily intensified, by our doings in Afghanistan, in Zululand, in the Transvaal, and on a smaller scale in other places. There never was, I think, an opportunity for a more scathing exposure of the contrast between our Christian creed and pagan doings, our professed philanthropy and our actual savagery ...." (Letter from Herbert Spencer to Algernon Charles Swinburne, dated March 8, 1881, quoted in David Duncan, Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1980. Vol. 1, p. 293)

"Courtney's compulsory withdrawal from Parliament /he lost an election as a Liberal, opposing British policy in South Africa/ made at first but little immediate difference in his life, for owing to blocking motions the opportunities of speaking at Westminster on South African affairs had been rare. Herbert Spencer wrote to suggest that he should devote a part of his leisure to writing a book entitled How we came by our Possessions ...." (G. P. Gooch, Life of Lord /Leonard/ Courtney, Macmillan, London, 1920. P. 415)

Brinton says that for Spencer: "Monogamy as practiced in the British Isles is the fine flower of evolution." (Crane Brinton, English Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century, Ernest Benn, Ltd., London, 1933. P. 234)

"He /Spencer/ is to be remembered, further, as the man who in his age most consistently, most powerfully, and most unweariedly wrought against the criminal proclivity to wanton war—a service naturally little recognized at /home when his countrymen were collectively among the sinners ...." (J. M. Robertson, A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century, Watts & Co., London, 1929. Pp. 387-388)
Spencer was not a typical Victorian in the sense of believing in his country right or wrong. He speaks of England's "late aggressive activities" (Vol. II, p. 602). He gives examples of the increase of militancy in England (Vol. II, pp. 591-592). He compares the many violations of norms of morality by Christian Englishmen to the moral conduct of many primitive peoples (Vol. II, pp. 641-642).

Spencer was a thoroughgoing champion of freedom. He wrote scathingly of the callous, self-righteous way in which the British Empire was being extended. (See Vol. II, p. 239n.)

Spencer often takes a moral stand himself. In the chapter entitled "The Bias of Patriotism" (pp. 190-193), he presents as stinging an indictment of colonialism as can be found anywhere. (The Study of Sociology, Ann Arbor.)

"Now that the white savages of Europe are overrunning the dark savages everywhere; now that the European nations are vying with one another in political burglaries; now that we have entered upon an era of social cannibalism, in which the strong nations are devouring the weaker; now that national interests, national prestige, pluck, and so forth, are alone thought of, and equity has utterly dropped out of thought, while rectitude is scorned as "unguentious;" it is useless to resist the wave of barbarism. There is a bad time coming, and civilized mankind will (morally) be uncivilized before civilization can again advance. Such a body as that which you propose, even could its members agree, would be pooh-poohed as sentimental and visionary. The universal aggressiveness and universal culture of blood-thirst will bring back military despotism, out of which, after many generations, partial freedom may again emerge." (Letter from Herbert Spencer to Moncure D. Conway dated July 17, 1898. Quoted in Moncure Daniel Conway, Autobiography, Memories and Experiences, 2 Vols., Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston, 1904. Vol. 2, p. 449)
"I had read in the printing office at Leesburg, Florida, in the year 1885-86, that Herbert Spencer had recently maintained that, according to the science of physics, it was impossible to pitch a curved ball. He knew not the seams on the ball and forgot the friction of the air. His was evidently a single-track mind. Ever after, I looked for the omitted factors, or the ones taken for granted and therefore omitted, by the great leaders in the science of economics. That was how I became an economic skeptic." (John R. Commons, Myself, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1934. P. 28)

"Every one of them [his father's cronies], in that Eastern section of Indiana [around Winchester], was a Republican, living on the battle cries of the Civil War, and everyone was a follower of Herbert Spencer, who was then the shining light of evolution and individualism. Several years later, in 1888, I was shocked, at a meeting of the American Economic Association, to hear Professor Ely denounce Herbert Spencer who had misled economists. I was brought up on Hoosierism, Republicanism, Presbyterianism, and Spencerism." (John R. Commons, Myself, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1934. P. 8)
"If societies were all of the same species and differed only in their stages of growth and structure, comparisons would disclose clearly the course of evolution; but unlikelihoods of type among them, here great and there small, obscure the results of such comparisons. Again, if each society grew and unfolded itself without the intrusion of additional factors, interpretation would be relatively easy; but the complicated processes of development are frequently re-complicated by changes in the sets of factors. Now the size of the social aggregate is all at once increased or decreased by annexation or by loss of territory; and now the average character of its units is altered by the coming in of another race as conquerors or as slaves; while, as a further effect of this event, new social relations are superposed on the old. In many cases the repeated over-runnings of societies by one another, the minglings of peoples and institutions, the breakings up and reaggregations, so destroy the continuity of normal processes as to make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to draw conclusions. ... Hence we may infer that out of the complex and confused evidence, only the larger truths will emerge with clearness. While anticipating that certain general conclusions are to be positively established, we may anticipate that more special ones can be alleged only as probable." (Principles, Vol. II, pp. 242-3. N.Y., 1899)

"Again, the comparative and analytical methods which are applicable enough to people in a primitive stage of existence, who have no history, in the proper sense, fail when we come to people who have become conscious of their common life and of the significance of it. The ancient Hellenes or the modern English can hardly be traced in the same way as "the peaceful Arafuras."" (David G. Ritchie, The Principles of State Interference, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London, 1891. P. 76)

"Thus was laid the beginning of what came to be known as the "comparative method," [speaking of Spencer's project leading to the volumes of Descriptive Sociology] which consisted in the utilization of customs and ideas gathered from many places and periods, to substantiate genetic schemes arrived at by speculation." (Alexander A. Goldenweiser, History, Psychology, and Culture, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd. London, 1935. Pp. 125-126)


Speaking of Spencer's utilization of the comparative method, Goldenweiser finds "no adequate motivation for his procedure seems extant in either biographical or auto-biographical sources." This is the method of science. Spencer had absorbed it. What does Goldenweiser want?
"Every society differs specifically, if not generically, from every other. Hence it is a peculiarity of the Social Science that parallels drawn between different societies, do not afford grounds for decided conclusions—will not, for instance, show us with certainty, what is an essential phenomenon in a given society and what is a non-essential one." (Herbert Spencer, The Study of Sociology, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1873. P. 92)

"But now before trying to explain these most involved phenomena, we must learn by inspection that the relations of co-existence and sequence in which they stand to one another. By comparing societies of different kinds, and societies in different stages, we must ascertain what traits of size, structure, function, etc., are associated. In other words, before deductive interpretation of the general truths, there must come inductive establishment of them." (Principles, Vol. I, pp. 442-3. 3rd ed. N.Y., 1910)

"Confidence in the use of ethnographic and other primitive evidence is heightened by the reflection that it produces results which have withstood the tests of reality as these have been developed in experience. These results are at the same time a justification of the science of society. The credit of this demonstration of results belongs, above all, to Herbert Spencer, and can never be taken from him. It has worked out, in brief, to a conception of society as a unified whole—as a great entity, self-maintaining and self-perpetuating, something more and greater than the sum of its parts, whose evolution and life are susceptible of investigation, whose forms pass from phase to phase, from the most primitive up to the most sophisticated ...." (William Graham Sumner and Albert Galloway Keller, The Science of Society, Vol. 3, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1929. Pp. 2193-2194)

"Here a passing reference must be made to Herbert Spencer, whose contribution to the thought of our subject [the comparative method] has been as considerable as it has been later ignored." (E. E. Evans-Pritchard, The Comparative Method in Social Anthropology, L. T. Hobhouse Memorial Trust Lecture No. 33, University of London, The Athlone Press, London, 1963. P. 6)
"A minor issue, but one that loomed large in Spencer's mind, was the question of priority. While there is no doubt about chronological priority as between Comte and Spencer, the evidence for intellectual borrowing is indecisive. It is not difficult to understand why some individuals were struck by the similarities in the two systems, and in the classifications. What is certain is that Spencer was willing to say a great deal about Comte's philosophy without any real knowledge of his works, that he appropriated various terms from Comte, and that his thinking was directly influenced by the controversy—in the development of his psychology, in his definition of evolution, and even in his choice of title for his system. His oversensitivity on questions of priority and independence and, possibly, his fear of Positivism as a competing intellectual and political synthesis gave the debate an intensely personal tone which tended to confuse the issues and annoy some of his friends." (Sydney Eisen, "Herbert Spencer and the Spectre of Comte," The Journal of British Studies, Vol. 7, pp. 48-67, 1967. P. 66)

"And here we may now see what M. Comte has not failed, though under another head [Philosophie Positive, Vol. vi, p. 612], to point out, viz., the great philosophic value of this conception as applied to true concrete science even of the most complex character, where the ideas of co-existence and sequence become the two fundamental categories to which all phenomena are assigned. Some of the readers of Herbert Spencer, who brings this conception forward prominently in his philosophy, may imagine that these categories were original with him, and may therefore be interested to know that they had been previously recognized by Comte. /Spencer was probably introduced to them by reading John Stuart Mill's A system of Logic, where they occur, undoubtedly derived from Comte./ (Lester F. Ward, Dynamic Sociology, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894. Vol. I, pp. 109-110)

"In the third volume of the Cours, Comte had adopted deBlainville's distinction between "static" and "dynamic" points of view. The first view considers elements in their relations of simultaneous connections; the second concerns the laws of their joint evolution. In Comte's sociology, these perspectives were converted to mean the conditions of existence of social structure (statics) and the movement of social progress or evolution (dynamics). It was not simple ill-fortune that Spencer's first major work was entitled Social Statics (1850). The evidence that Spencer had not read Comte before 1852 is irrefutable; but Spencer had read Mill's Principles of Political Economy (1848), which included the concepts "statics" and "dynamics" without notation, and unconsciously assimilated the term." (Robert Alun Jones, "Comte and Spencer: A Priority Dispute in Social Science," Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 6, pp. 241-254, 1970. P. 248)

"Comte, and not Mr. Spencer, was the author of the antithesis between the industrial and the militant types of society. Comte did more than merely point out this antithesis; he often developed it; he even exaggerated it." (Gabriel Tarde, The Laws of Imitation, translated from the French by Elsie Clews Parsons, Henry Holt & Company, New York, 1903. P. 303n.)
"Spencer's claim to independence[from Comte] seems justified both historically and doctrinally." (p. 217) "In short, Spencer's disclaimer of Comtian influence, though violent, was nonetheless warranted; and recent scholarship has for the most part not repeated with Spencer the mistake made, for example, in the case of Taine of inferring historical derivation from a few very general resemblances." (p. 219) (W[alter] M. Simon, European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1963)

"... they alone, of all the thinkers of the world, have the merit of having carried their generalizations from the phenomena of inorganic nature up to those of human action and social life. Of all the philosophers that humanity has brought forth, these two alone have conceived and built upon the broad principle of the absolute unity of Nature and her laws throughout all their manifestations, from the revolutions of celestial orbs to the rise and fall of empires and the vicissitudes of social customs and laws. This grand monistic conception is the final crown of human thought, and was required to round out philosophy into a form of symmetry, whose outlines, at least, admit of no further improvement." (Lester F. Ward, Dynamic Sociology, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Comp any, New York, 1894. Vol. 1, pp. 142-143)

"To find the true explanation of how Spencer came to choose Social Statics as the title of his first book it is necessary to go to the revised edition of that work published in 1892, where in a footnote to page 232 he says he met with the phrase in Mill's 'Political Economy,' Mill himself crediting it to another writer, which other writer, though Spencer did not know it, was Auguste Comte. It thus happens that, notwithstanding his strenuous efforts to disclaim all influence of Comte, three of the leading terms of his philosophy, social statics, sociology and altruism, were Comtean terms." (Lester F. Ward, "Herbert Spencer's Autobiography," Science, Vol. 19, pp. 873-879, 1904. P. 876)

"To define his own ideas upon this matter, he wrote an article on "The Classification of the Sciences," perhaps the key to his entire system. Classification at once brought him into conflict with the similar attempt of Auguste Comte. Indeed Auguste Lauge,[br]writing in La Revue des deux Mondes, described Spencer as an unconscious follower of Comte. This aspersion had to be answered; today the answer is appended to the article on classification, and rightly." (Julian M. Drachman, Studies in the Literature of Natural Science, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1930. P. 358)

"In living beings, ... Structure and Activity are bound up with each other within the due limits of intensity and duration peculiar to each case. Their structure is only developed, and indeed is only preserved, by the appropriate degree of activity. The extent and the complexity of the one correspond to those of the other, as we rise through the scale of beings." (Auguste Comte, System of Positive Polity, 4 Vols., translated by John Henry Bridges, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1875. Vol. 2, p. 277)
"Tell Cara she is pronounced to be quite wrong about Miss Martin­
tineau's rendering of Comte. Herbert Spencer, who never praises but
upon compulsion and who has no knowledge of the original to help
him, 4 (This confirms Spencer's statement that he knew nothing of
Comte when writing Social Statics, 1850. He protested against be­
ing considered an adherent of Comte both in "The Genesis of Science,"
British Quarterly Review, 20 (July 1854), 108-162, and in The Clas­
sification of the Sciences, a pamphlet published in 1864; the latter
was the cause of a brief coolness between Spencer and GHL.)
says that it appears to him perfectly lucid, and that the difficul­
ty lies in the matter, not in the form." (Letter from George Eliot
to Charles Bray dated February 6, 1854. Quoted in Charles S. Haight,
The George Eliot Letters, 7 Vols., Yale University Press, New Haven,

"On the other hand it is hard to agree entirely with Spencer
in his attempt to prove his complete independence of Comte and his
fundamental divergence from the views of the latter. Rather it seems
that one may accept the verdict of Michel L'Ide de l'Etat, p. 462/ that,
"Il ne suit pas que les Principes de Sociologie puissent être
sincèrement regardés comme un livre original, par quiconque a lu
les Opuscules /i.e., early essays/ de Comte. Toutes les idées, dir­
ectrices, et jusqu'à la méthode de Spencer se trouvent dans les
Opuscules. Comte a tracé les cadres: Spencer n'a fait que les rem­
plir."" (Harry Elmer Barnes, "Some Typical Contributions of English
Sociology to Political Theory," The American Journal of Sociology,
Vol. 27, pp. 289-324, 1921. P. 292)

"That Comte made so slight an impression on the mind of New
England was due, no doubt, to the current influence of transcen­
dentalism with its metaphysical backgrounds. Although eager young
intellectuals like John Fiske might accept it while awaiting a more
adequate evolutionary philosophy, the country was not yet ripe for
Positivism. When that time came it was Spencer rather than Comte
who became the master of American intellectuals--Spencer and in a
lesser degree John Stuart Mill." (Vernon L. Parrington, Main Cur­
rents in American Thought, Vol. 3: The Beginnings of Critical Re­
alism in America: 1860-1920, Harcourt, Brace & Co., Inc., New York,
1930, P. 197)

"I was amused by the applause of the Comtists. It is droll to
see them taking the proof that religions have all arisen from an­
cestor worship as justification of the "religion of humanity." Here­
after I shall have to point out how odd it is that Comte should have
proposed a rehabilitation of ancestor worship at the very time when
our emancipation from it is becoming tolerably complete!" (Letter
from Herbert Spencer to Edward L. Youmans dated September 9, 1877,
P. 337) Quoted in John Fiske, Edward Livingston Youmans

"To me he does not seem to make it at all clear that in his
admitted early reading of Mill's "Logic" he cannot have seen the
sections which set forth Comte's attitude on sociology." (J. M.
Robertson, Modern Humanists Reconsidered, Watts & Co., London,
1927. P. 195)
"The disciples of M. Comte think that I am much indebted to him; and so I am, but in a way widely unlike that which they mean. Save in the adoption of his word 'altruism,' which I have defended, and in the adoption of his word 'sociology,' because there was no other available word (for both which adoptions I have been blamed), the only indebtedness I recognize is the indebtedness of antagonism." (Auto. I, 445-6)

"Harrison's reply restates his belief in Comte's influence on Spencer: "The aim, the method, the ground plan of both are practically the same." The terms "sociology," "social statics," "synthesis," and "social organism," introduced by Comte and used by Spencer, are cited." (Robert Alun Jones, "Comte and Spencer: A Priority Dispute in Social Science," Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 6, pp. 241-254, 1970. P. 251)

"Spencer's claim to independence [from Comte] seems justified both historically and doctrinally." (p. 217) "In short, Spencer's disclaimer of Comtian influence, though violent, was nonetheless warranted; and recent scholarship has for the most part not repeated with Spencer the mistake made, for example, in the case of Taine of inferring historical derivation from a few very general resemblances." (p. 219) (W. M. Simon, European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1963)

"We have, therefore, in the writings of Comte the primary division of the laws of social physics into the two great sub-sciences, social statics and social dynamics, the former of which studies the laws of co-existence--the status of society--while the latter studies those of succession--its movement." (Vol. 1, p. 128). "... he [Comte] regards the study of what he denominates the development or evolution of society as the main object of sociology." (Vol. I, p. 129) (Lester F. Ward, Dynamic Sociology, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894)

"Comte employed an organismic analogy, the basis of most previous and succeeding functionalist positions, to elaborate his description of social statics. In this connection he introduced the terms "social anatomy," "social organism," and "social organization," [Znaniecki attributes this introduction to Spencer] ...." "In Politique Positive Comte succumbed, as Spencer was to do a number of years later, to the temptation to render the biological analogy in terms of specific (and quite incomparable) structures." (Marvin Harris, The Rise of Anthropological Theory, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1968. P. 63)

"Previous to writing his "Study of Sociology," Mr. Spencer seems to have acquainted himself better with the Comtean system, and, as a consequence, he speaks of certain parts of it in a much more respectful tone (chap. xiv)." (Lester F. Ward, Dynamic Sociology, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894. Vol. 1, p. 144n.)
"The economic and political theories of the radical group that founded the Westminster Review had a fascination for him, a fascination which is illustrated by his refutations of them as well as by his adoption of many of their attitudes and methods. So, too, he was gripped by the overweening ambition of Comte's attempt to revise life, knowledge, and philosophy from the ground up. His associates -- John Stuart Mill, George Eliot, George Henry Lewes, Harriet Martineau -- were all more or less Comtists." (Julian M. Drachman, Studies in the Literature of Natural Science, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1930. P. 354)


"It requires only a little thoughtful attention to the speculations of Mr. Spencer and M. Comte to see that they are radically unlike, not only in the details of doctrine, but in their ostensible aims." (Chauncey Wright, "The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer," in Philosophical Discussions, pp. 43-96, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1877. P. 91. First appeared in The North American Review, April, 1865)

Spencer, speaking of the notion that he was a Comtean: "... for, though I am quite ready to encounter the prejudices raised by opinions which I hold, I do not like to bear the odium of opinions which I do not hold." (Letter from Herbert Spencer to E. L. Youmans dated October 28, 1863. Quoted in John Fiske, Edward Livingston Youmans, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894. P. 152)

"It will be remembered that Comte fathered sociology to guide men in the construction of a better society; Spencer, in contrast, wanted sociology to demonstrate that men should not interfere with the natural processes going on in society." (Nicholas S. Timasheff, Sociological Theory; Its Nature and Growth, third edition, Random House, New York, 1967. P. 41)

"... il ne suit pas que les Principes de Sociologie puissent être sincèrement regardés comme un livre original, par quiconque a lu les Opuscules de Comte. Toutes les idées directrices, et jusqu'à la méthode de Spencer se trouvent dans ces Opuscules. Comte a tracé les cadres: Spencer n'a fait que les remplir." (Henry Michel, L'Idée de l'État, Librairie Hachette et Cie., Paris, 1895. P. 462)

Jean Delvolvé, Réflexions sur la pensée comtienne, Paris, 1932. (Said by W. M. Simon to have connected Spencer to Comte via John Stuart Mill)
"... the usual French regard for symmetry and disregard for fact ...." (Herbert Spencer, statement to be used for publication in the U.S. included in a letter from Spencer to Edward L. Youmans dated January 3, 1864. Quoted in John Fiske, Edward Livingston Youmans, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894. Pp. 174-75)

"Herbert Spencer, tho he is very largely indebted to Comte for many of his views, and especially in their application to Sociology, has emphasized his dissent from him ...." (Noah Porter, "Herbert Spencer's Theory of Sociology: A Critical Essay," The Princeton Review, Vol. 56 (6 n.s.), pp. 268-296, 1880. P. 270)


"Spencer (Principles of Sociology) attempted to work out a system of sociology in the spirit of Comte's suggestion." (James Mark Baldwin, History of Psychology, 2 Vols., G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1913. Vol. 2, p. 100n.)


"M. Comte asserts as his first principle, that the causes of phenomena are beyond the reach of the human faculties, and that all which is accessible to us is their LAWS, or as he explains the term, their constant relations of succession or of similarity." (John Stuart Mill, A System of Logic, Harper & Brothers, Publishers, New York, 1846. P. 209)
"What is Comte's professed aim? To give a coherent account of the progress of human conceptions. What is my aim? To give a coherent account of the progress of the external world. Comte proposes to describe the necessary, and the actual, filiation of ideas. I propose to describe the necessary, and the actual, filiation of things. Comte professes to interpret the genesis of our knowledge of nature. My aim is to interpret, as far as it is possible, the genesis of the phenomena which constitute nature. The one end is subjective. The other is objective. How then can the one be the originator of the other?" (Auto. II, 488)

"... writers whose philosophy had its legitimate parent in Hume, or in themselves, were labeled “Comtists” or “Positivists” by public writers, even in spite of vehement protests to the contrary. It has cost Mr. Mill hard rubbings to get that label off; and I watch Mr. Spencer, as one regards a good man struggling with adversity, still engaged in eluding its adhesiveness, and ready to tear away skin and all, rather than let it stick.” (Thomas Henry Huxley, Lay Sermons, Addresses, and Reviews. D. Appleton and Company. New York, 1895. P. 150)
"We find, then, that rules of behaviour are not results of conventions at one time or other deliberately made, as people tacitly assume. Contrariwise, they are natural products of social life which have gradually evolved." (Herbert Spencer, The Principles of Sociology, Vol. 2, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1899. P. 216)


CONTRADICTIONS

The Principles of Sociology. Vol. 1, third edition, p. 595; see also Vol. 2, pp. 600-601. This inconsistency between theory and practice brings to mind Leslie White's contention, which he amply documents, that while members of the Boas school were opposed, in their theoretical pronouncements, to the rating of cultures, in their actual writings they did so repeatedly. ("Evolutionary Stages, Progress, and the Evaluation of Cultures." Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, Vol. 3, pp. 165-192, 1947. Pp. 168-169, 187-191.)

"He [Spencer] denies free will, as a matter of course; he despises hero-worship and the tendency to ascribe social changes to individual initiative rather than to "general conditions," and in every way tends to minimize the particular concrete man. Society drags the unit along in its fatal tow. Yet in the political writings of Mr. Spencer, with their intense and absolute reliance on individuals, we find the very opposite of this." (William James, "Herbert Spencer," The Critic, Vol. 44, pp. 21-24, 1904. P. 23)

"... the whole course of modern physiological discovery tends to show, with more and more clearness, that the vascular system, or apparatus for distributing commodities in the animal organism, is eminently under the control of the cerebro-spinal nervous centres--a fact which, unless I am again mistaken, is contrary to one of Mr. Spencer's fundamental assumptions. In the animal organism, Government does meddle with trade, and even goes so far as to tamper a good deal with the currency." (Thomas Henry Huxley, Preface to Critiques and Addresses, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1873. P.vi11)

"However, Spencer's organismic view of society stood in disharmony with his ideology of extreme 'laissez-faire' in all matters (be it economics or educational policy or public health) because the organic analogy suggests the inevitability (if not desirability) of centralisation of control, and of the subjugation of the parts (that is to say, individuals) to the interests of the whole as perceived by the central organ. Spencer's theory of society should have led him to espouse some form of authoritarian collectivism, rather than a fundamental liberalism ..." (Stanislaw Andreski, Review of Herbert Spencer, The Man versus The State, ed. by Donald Macrae, Man, Vol. 6, p. 313, 1971. P. 313)

D. G. Ritchie, in his book, The Principles of State Interference, is said to put forward "... an unaswerable confutation of Mr. Spencer on his own ground, as set forth in The Man versus the State, in this matter of actual political change. In the same breath he protests that societies cannot be changed by purposive action, and that modern legislators are really making such changes." (Reference to Ritchie, p. 47) (John M. Robertson, Modern Humanists, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London, 1891. P. 254n.)
"Spencer, as everyone knows, protested with vehemence against this legislation [restraining competition between parts of society], but I have never been able to comprehend the biological grounds on which he based his protest. For if society is in reality an organism, society must apply restraints on the undue growth of its parts analogous to that co-ordinating mechanism which controls the growth of organs in the body." (William Bateson, "Biological Fact and the Structure of Society," The Herbert Spencer Lecture, Oxford, 1912. In William Bateson, F.R.S., Naturalist: His Essays & Addresses, by Beatrice Bateson, pp. 354-355, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1928. P. 349)

"If Governments "grow" very big and strong and fierce, why blame them? "For 'tis their nature to." They cannot help it, when they growl and fight and take to legislating in excess. You need not blame the legislators / nor the constitution-makers, because on your own thesis [he's addressing Spencer] they cannot make constitutions, however much they try. All is a growth. You might as well say to a man, "You must really make your head smaller; it is far too big for the rest of your body."" (David G. Ritchie, The Principles of State Interference, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London, 1891. Pp. 46-47)

"Here then is the dilemma: (1) If the Government is a part of the organic structure of society, and if the social organism is altogether an organism, and strictly grows, and cannot be made, Governments, like everything else, must, by necessity, be left to fight it out. The fittest will survive. If the Government is fittest, it will get the better of the individual (to assume for the moment Mr. Spencer's antithesis between them); if the individual is fittest, he will get the better of Government. Societies with much developed Governments must fight it out with stunted Governments. The fittest will survive. Whatever is, is right; and the legislator can have no sins, because he is only a part of the great movement ...." (David G. Ritchie, The Principles of State Interference, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London, 1891. P. 47)

"... interference is spoken of [by Spencer] as if Government was something outside the natural structure." (p. 48) "Here then is the dilemma: (1) If the Government is a part of the organic structure of society, and if the social organism is altogether an organism, and strictly grows, and cannot be made, Government, like everything else, must, by necessity, be left to fight it out. The fittest will survive. If the Government is fittest, it will get the better of the individual (to assume for the moment Mr. Spencer's antithesis between them); if the individual is fittest, he will get the better of Government. Societies with much developed Governments must fight it out with stunted Governments. The fittest will survive. Whatever is, is right ...." (p. 47) (David G. Ritchie, The Principles of State Interference, 4th edition, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Limited, London, 1902)
"Mr. Spencer/s final general position, as is well known, is that, as it was put by Mackintosh, "Constitutions are not made, but grow." There prevails an erroneous opinion, he says, "that society is a manufacture, whereas it is a growth." As Mr. [David G.] Ritchie points out [in The Principles of State Interference], this doctrine quashes the whole of Mr. Spencer's own impeachment of modern legislative tendencies, which is one continuous protest that men are manufacturing a constitution. If all society is a growth, and if growth is independent of the efforts of legislators, then over-legislation is a "growth," and there is no more to be said. There is no escaping this dilemma; and Mr. Spencer must just reconstruct his formula."


"... Spencer, with all his logic and philosophic poise, never had his feelings under complete subjection to his reason. But secondarily, in the case of topics appealing to the feelings he unfortunately imbibed a whole series of prejudices during his early youth from which he was never able to free himself. Indeed, they were so strong that he did not attempt to overcome them, but rather gloried in them to the end of his life. This, however, was not the worst consequence. They blinded him to everything that was taking place in the world around him, to the extent that social movements, which, could he have seen it, were the natural outcome of the cosmical principles he had laid down, were regarded by him as the signs and omens of social degeneracy and as portending a relapse into barbarism." (Lester F. Ward, "The Career of Herbert Spencer," The Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 74, pp. 5-18, 1909. Pp. 7-8)

"In repelling Matthew Arnold's old charge against the English, of being lacking in ideas, he reprehends the "notion that effectual practice does not depend on superiority of ideas. This," he says, "is an erroneous notion. Methods that answer are preceded by thoughts that are true." (The Study of Sociology, p. 220) In another chapter of the same book, criticising Comte, he writes thus: "When, for instance, he (Comte) speaks of 'the intellectual anarchy which is the main source of our moral anarchy'--when he thus discloses the faith ... that true theory would bring right practice; it becomes clear that the relation between the attributes of citizens and the phenomena of societies is incorrectly seen by him: the relation is far too deep a one to be changed by mere change of ideas." (The Study of Sociology, p. 329.) .... But here we find Spencer in one book falling into ... a contradiction, laying it down in one chapter that right or effectual practice results from true ideas, and in another that true ideas in no way ensure right practice." (John M. Robertson, Modern Humanists, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London, 1891. Pp. 250-251)
"Spencer viewed society from the point of organic analogy, which lent no support whatsoever to his individualistic liberalism, and which should have led him to espouse some form of authoritarianism, whether of socialist or conservative variety." (Stanislav Andreski, *The Uses of Comparative Sociology*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969. Pp. 173-174)

"He [Spencer] was dominated by two leading ideas which he expressed, iterated, and reiterated with almost fanatical zeal during sixty years of authorship. These two ideas were, first, in the sphere of politics, Liberty; secondly, in the sphere of science, Evolution. Such inconsistencies as marked his thought were due to the clashings of the corollaries of these two disparate principles. Of the two, his first love was Liberty; with this love he was born, and his early environment tended to foster it. His intellectual passion for Evolution was later and an acquired characteristic. He saw in Evolution the veritable tree of knowledge; but to him Liberty was the incomparably superior tree of life." (F. J. C. Hearnshaw, "Herbert Spencer and the Individualists," in *The Social & Political Ideas of Some Representative Thinkers of the Victorian Age*, ed. by F. J. C. Hearnshaw, pp. 53-53, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London, 1933. P. 60)
"To every problem that Spencer handled he imparted some new aspect of order." (J. M. Robertson, Modern Humanists Reconsidered, Watts & Co., London, 1927. P. 171)

An anonymous reviewer of Spencer's Autobiography wrote: "... an intellectual system ... that has entered into the very fibre of the age ...." (Anonymous, "Review of Herbert Spencer's An Autobiography, The Athenaeum, No. 3993, pp. 583-584, May 7, 1904. P. 583)

"... the vast contributions of Spencer to philosophy and science which have had such a large share in making the evolutionary standpoint dominant everywhere." (James McKeen Cattell, "The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer," The Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 73, pp. 283-285, 1908. P. 285)

"Within their own sphere the results of Mr. Herbert Spencer are far from sterile—the application of Biology to Political Economy is already revolutionizing the Science." (Henry Drummond, Natural Law in the Spiritual World, James Pott & Co., Publishers, New York, 1887. Pp. xiii-xiv)

"In newness of conception, unity of purpose, subtlety of analysis, comprehensive grasp, thoroughness of method, and sustained force of execution, this series of labors, I believe, may challenge comparison with the highest mental work of any age." (Edward L. Youmans, "Herbert Spencer and the Doctrine of Evolution," The Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 6, pp. 20-48, 1874-75. P. 42.)

"... Mr. Herbert Spencer's masterly elucidation of the chief phenomena of Life has placed philosophy and science under many obligations ...." (Henry Drummond, Natural Law in the Spiritual World, James Pott & Co., Publishers, New York, 1887. P. 146)

"... Mr. Spencer has given the world an amount of original exposition and of new and valuable truth that are probably without a parallel in the history of human thought." (Remarks prepared by Edward L. Youmans for the Spencer Farewell Dinner, but not uttered for lack of time, pp. 67-76. In Edward L. Youmans, editor, Herbert Spencer on the Americans and The Americans on Herbert Spencer, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1883. P. 68)
"Before the days of Spencer the world of scientific thought was mostly without form and void. ... Guided by the pole star of Evolution, Spencer sailed out alone on the ocean of Speculation and discovered a new empire of Law." (George Jacob Holyoake, Bygones Worth Remembering, 2 Vols., T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1905. Vol. 2, pp. 34-35)

"Mill had made popular the theory of science as empirical. Spencer put content into this empirical view. Moreover, Spencer gave men a vista into infinite time and space. He really replaced the old religion since he told us where we come from, how we have developed, and what is the ultimate goal of civilization. In addition, he found in this country enthusiastic disciples. And John Fiske made the gospel of evolution respectable with his two heavy tomes on Cosmic Philosophy (1874) and his repeated exposition of that gospel." (Morris Raphael Cohen, American Thought: A Critical Sketch, Collier Books, New York, 1962. P. 89. [first published by The Free Press, 1954])

"Accordingly, his Spencer's great contribution and his brilliance, which dazzled the generation which corresponds to the last third of his life and filled the world with his fame, consisted not so much in the new concepts and epoch-making ideas which he brought into the world as in the infinite detail, the surprising richness of analysis and synthesis, ever improved by a most happy diction, with which he illumined every idea which he touched." (L. L. Bernard, "Herbert Spencer's Work in the Light of His Life," The Monist, Vol. 31, pp. 1-35, 1921. P. 6)

"... from the depths of his Spencer's own mind, he has formulated the laws of the universe, not merely in the simpler and better known departments of astronomy and physics, but throughout the new and unexplored realms of life, mind, and action." (Remarks prepared by Lester F. Ward for the Spencer Farewell Dinner, but left unspoken because of lack of time--the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, who preceded Ward on the program, spoke longer than expected.) Quoted in Edward L. Youmans, editor, Herbert Spencer on The Americans and the Americans on Herbert Spencer, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1883. P. 77)

"Again, it is quite safe to say that his Spencer's system represents probably the most impressive production of a single human mind since the time of Aristotle .... When compared with the arid metaphysics of an Aquinas, a Kant, or a Hegel, its content and method appear most gratifying.... Further, there can be little doubt that for original productivity of mind Spencer is quite unequalled." (Harry Elmer Barnes, "Some Typical Contributions of English Sociology to Political Theory," The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 27, pp. 289-324, 1921. P. 294)
"His system is not a digest, but an organon; not merely an analytic dissection, but a grand synthetic construction; not a science, but a coordination of the sciences; not a metaphysical elaboration, but a positive body of doctrine conforming to verifiable facts, and based upon the most comprehensive principle of Nature yet arrived at by the human mind." (Edward L. Youmans, "Herbert Spencer and the Doctrine of Evolution." The Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 6, pp. 20-48, 1874-75. P. 43.)

"No man ever formulated so large a number of new and brilliant truths; no man ever correlated all the facts of the universe, physical and spiritual, into so magnificent, so consistent, and so profound a synthesis." (Grant Allen, "Personal Reminiscences of Herbert Spencer." The Forum, Vol. 35, pp. 610-628, 1904. P. 611)

"It was he [Spencer], after all, who elevated evolution to the dignity of a validated hypothesis in philosophic thought." (H. J. L. Harold J. Laski, "Herbert Spencer," review of Herbert Spencer by Hugh Elliott [sic], The New Republic, Vol. 11, No. 138, pp. 224-225, June 23, 1917. P. 224)


"We did not begin to understand ourselves as social beings until Herbert Spencer discovered the principle of social evolution and until Charles Darwin wrote his Descent of Man." (Thomas Nixon Carver and Henry Bass Hall, Human Relations, An Introduction to Sociology. D. C. Heath and Company, Boston, 1923. P. 21)

"The brilliancy of this concept [Spencer's formulation of evolution] and the comprehensive knowledge which Spencer brought to its defense, made a profound impression upon the intellectual world. It modified not only the thinking of scientists, but of theologians and literary men as well." (Thomas Nixon Carver, The Essential Factors of Social Evolution. Harvard Sociological Studies, Vol. 1, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1935. P. 105)

"Mr Spencer was also probably the first who defined in mechanical terms, applicable to cosmical, lifeless, and living phenomena alike, the process of development, adopting the term evolution." (John Theodore Merz, A History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century, 6 Vols., William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh, 1912. Vol. 2, p. 355n.)
"Passing on to positive considerations, it may be said that what we of today value most in him [Spencer] is the rich an ordered abundance of concrete data, of facts concerning the beginnings of social life." (Leopold von Wiese, Systematic Sociology on the Basis of the Beziehungslehre and Gebildelehre, adapted and amplified by Howard Becker, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1932. P. 689)

Spencer "made greater additions to the sum of human knowledge than have ever been made by any other man since the beginning of the world ...." (John Fiske, Excursions of an Evolutionist. Houghton, Mifflin and Company. Boston, 1894. P.284.)

"The whole panorama [of universal evolution] is resplendent for variety and inclusiveness, and has aroused an admiration for philosophy in minds that never admired philosophy before." (William James, Memories and Studies. Longmans, Green, and Co., New York, 1911. Pp. 131-132)

"Above all, he [Spencer] has reduced the phenomena of life, of mind, of human thought and society and action, to common factors with all the rest of organic and inorganic nature." (Grant Allen, "The Gospel According to Herbert Spencer," Part I, The Pall Mall Gazette, April 26, 1890, pp. 1-2. P. 2)

"No man of his [Spencer's] generation, or perhaps of his century, started a greater number of fruitful scientific theories in the most varied fields." (Arthur Kenyon Rogers, English and American Philosophy Since 1800, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1922. P. 150)

"... his [Spencer's] genius for broad generalization and his tremendous capacity for stating abstract truth in concrete form enabled him to bring together into one articulate system ideas, doctrines, domains of experience, which had developed independently and had stood apart. This synthesis of the sciences brought to consciousness new problems and new clues. The broader relations thus revealed by mutual cross-reference between phases of experience hitherto isolated gave to scientific activity at once a new stimulus and a new leverage." (W. Rose, "Herbert Spencer as a Philosopher," Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Forty-Third Annual Meeting of the National Education Association, pp. 231-235, 1904. P. 233)

"... this doctrine of organic development and change or metamorphic evolution, which was, with its originators, Wallace and Darwin, a purely biological doctrine, was transported to the field of sociology by Spencer and applied with great power to all human institutions, legal, moral, economic, religious, etc. Spencer has taught the world that all social institutions are fluid and not fixed." (Robert Rives La Monte, Socialism: Positive and Negative, Charles H. Kerr & Company, Chicago, 1912. P. 19)
"He fills no chair in any great university, he bears no title from the English crown, he holds no high post of public honor, he boasts no classical scholarship, he speaks no language but his mother tongue, and yet, by a complete mastery of that tongue, and by the sheer power of vigorous and organized thought applied to an 'encyclopedic' acquaintance with all that is worth knowing in the world, he has forced his way into every department of human thought and action. He has invaded science, art, philosophy, literature, morals, and religion in a way and with an authority that have commanded respect and attention, until to-day the eyes of the whole thinking world are centered upon him." (Lester F. Ward, "Spencer-smashing at Washington," The Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 44, pp. 856-857, 1893-94. P. 587)

"Gibbon lived to relinquish his pen in triumph at the end of years of devotion to his "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"--Mr. Spencer planned the history of the rise and growth of a mightier, a more magnificent, and more beneficent Empire--that of Universal Law--and for forty years he pursued his mighty story in every vicissitude of strength with unflagging purpose, and lived to complete it amid the applause of the world and the gratitude of all who have the grand passion to understand Nature, and advance the lofty destiny of humanity." (George Jacob Holyoake, Bygones Worth Remembering, 2 Vols., T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1905. Vol. 2, pp. 22-23)

"Up to that moment, science was a mere collection of facts and rules, with no coherent body of governing truths, while the new conception of the unity of nature bound all these facts together in a web of causation. It seemed possible to write nature's history back to the primitive chaos, and one saw that all its phenomena, instead of being unrelated and produced by the Creator's personal whim, were parts of an unbroken chain of cause and effect. Suns and stars, plants and animals had followed one law of development from a common source, and man was also a part of this cosmic drama. Through all the vast sweep of time, from the primordial vapour to the multiform world one knew today, one saw the various forms of nature evolving from previous forms.... Such was the great Spencerian vision that Fiske expounded at Harvard, with his own interpretations and amplifications." (Van Wyck Brooks, New England: Indian Summer, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., New York, 1965. P. 114)

"We are standing now on heights which his struggles and his labors won for us," wrote Durant, and "we seem to be above him because he has raised us on his shoulders." 179

"Again, it is quite safe to say that his [Spencer's] system represents probably the most impressive production of a single human mind since the time of Aristotle .... When compared with the arid metaphysics of an Aquinas, a Kant, or a Hegel, its content and method appear most gratifying.... Further, there can be little doubt that for original productivity of mind Spencer is quite unequalled." (Harry Elmer Barnes, "Some Typical Contributions of English Sociology to Political Theory," The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 27, pp. 289-324, 1921. P. 294)

"Spencer was not without honour in his own country, yet our national indifference to philosophy and to all systematic thinking, and the subserviency of a great part of our professed philosophers to the great German metaphysicians, have undoubtedly prevented his receiving from his countrymen during his lifetime the full measure of recognition that is due to his splendid services to science and philosophy." (Anonymous, "Herbert Spencer" Obituary, Nature, Vol. 69, pp. 155-156, 1903. P. 155)

"Mr. Spencer is one of the fortunate writers who, after spending years with the patience of a Benedictine friar in preparing enormous learned compendiums, can yet wield, as if for sport, a facile pen in the composition of sparkling articles for reviews." (Gabriel Compayré, Herbert Spencer and Scientific Education, translated from the French by Maria E. Findalyson, Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., New York, 1907. P. 18)

"There is hardly a general observation in all evolutionary theory which cannot be credited to Spencer." (Irving Goldman, "Evolution and Anthropology," Victorian Studies, Vol. 3, pp. 55-75, 1959. P. 58)

"Oppenheimer's judgment that Spencer "steered / the young science back into the channel of the shallowest rationalism" (Oppenheimer, System der Soziologie, Vol. 1, p. 54) is indeed not wholly false, but it is prejudiced and too severe. True, Spencer avoided or even scorned every profound investigation. He who judges the value of intellectual work by its profundity and its anticipations of ineffable truth must find the philosopher of Derby trivial; he always remains on the surface. But how magnificently the elements of this superficial survey are integrated, how synthetically the cosmic is viewed in relation to vital processes, to psychical and social life!"/By which I take von Wiese to mean that Spencer habitually explained social phenomena in terms of readily evident and tangible factors instead of recondite ones like "absolute ideas," "zeitgeists," and the like.--RLC (Leopold von Wiese, Systematic Sociology on the Basis of the Beziehungslehre and Gebildelehre, adapted and amplified by Howard Becker, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1932. Pp. 687-688)

"In Spencer's case it is too early to speak thus definitely, but all things point to the complete rejection of his political ethics as outlined in "Social Statics" and perfected in his "Principles of Ethics" and "Man Versus the State," while his cosmic philosophy, which he regarded as little more than a / foundation for the other, grows more solid with time, and is clearly seen to be too massive for the flimsy superstructure that he sought to erect upon it." (Lester F. Ward, "The Career of Herbert Spencer," The Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 74, pp. 5-18, 1909. Pp. 16-17)

"His mastery of all branches of human knowledge has been justly styled "encyclopedic." His causality has never been equaled. To him were thus secured the two essential conditions for accomplishing the permanent object of philosophy--the synthesis of science. Without the comprehensive survey which his laborious investigations have secured for him, his great combining powers would have been profitless; without those powers, no museum of facts, however well learned, would have yielded the broad principles of a cosmic philosophy." (Lester Frank Ward, Dynamic Sociology, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1883. Vol. 1, p. 142)

Leopold von Wiese wrote in the preface of his Beziehungslehre (1924): "Shortly after receiving my doctorate (University of Berlin, 1902), I made a thorough study of Spencer in an effort to present his system critically" (Leopold von Wiese, Zur Grundlegung der Gesellschaftslehre: eine kritische Untersuchung von Herbert Spencers System der synthetischen Philosophie (Jena: Fischer, 1906), and in conscious opposition to his all-inclusive, 'cosmic,' social philosophy, I conceived the principles fundamental to this work--just twenty years ago. Even at that time my goal was to show systematically the interconnections of human society, the mutual dependence of human beings, and how one man becomes Destiny, as it were, to another." (Leopold von Wiese, Systematic Sociology on the Basis of the Beziehungslehre and Gebildelehre, adapted and amplified by Howard Becker, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1932. Pp. 710, 710n.)
CRITICISMS

"... the synthetic system of Mr. Herbert Spencer—that colossal edifice slowly and painfully (and surely to its own detriment) constructed by the author apart from and almost independent of the professional learning of the schools—..." (Benjamin Kidd, Nineteenth Century, February, 1895)

"... the exponents of philosophy in England live in an old world of thought which has scarcely been affected by the influx of knowledge which the advancement of the lower sciences has brought." (Benjamin Kidd, Nineteenth Century, February, 1895)

"Herbert Spencer is second only to Chambers in the degree to which historians have denigrated his "scientific" status." (Robert M. Young, Darwin's Metaphor, Nature's Place in Victorian Culture, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985. P. 91)

"The official thinker, we have seen, is swayed to evasion; but even the freelance runs the risk of being cowed into a semblance of conformity." (J. M. Robertson, A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century, Watts & Co., London, 1920. P. 214)


"It is no slight task to demonstrate that from force and matter have been evolved design, order, life, thought, emotion, will—the universe. It is no slight task to suppress the very protests of the human soul. The man who makes this first Herculean labor a mere preliminary of his enterprise must be in his own estimation a young god." (Anonymous, Review of Herbert Spencer's The Study of Sociology, International Review, Vol. 1, pp. 407-413, 1874. P. 409)

At Tufts College, between 1906 and 1909, "I found the clerk at the corner drugstore an interesting young medical student, who was prepared to discuss my scientific reading with me and who seemed to be acquainted with the whole of the writings of Herbert Spencer. I have since found Herbert Spencer to be one of the most colossal bores of the nineteenth century, but at that time I held him in esteem." (Norbert Wiener, Ex-Prodigy; My Childhood and Youth, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1953. P. 103)
"... Spencer does not deserve the neglect he has fallen into; many of his ideas are now being served up anew with only a patronizing nod by way of acknowledgement ...." (Peter B. Medawar, The Art of the Soluble, Methuen & Co Ltd, London, 1967. P. 7)

"Spencer's criticisms of intellectualizing accounts of primitive thought, such as Tylor's, read somewhat like those of Evans-Pritchard and Gluckman, who, however include Spencer among the intellectualists." (J. D. Y. Peel, "Spencer and the Neo-Evolutionists," Sociology, Vol. 3, pp. 173-191, 1969. P. 189n.)


"It is a pity that Spencer is remembered almost exclusively for what his contemporaries objected to." (Philip Abrams, The Origins of British Sociology: 1834-1914, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968. P. 152)

"Spencer's conceptions were rightly rejected as incompatible with evolutionary theories /by the succeeding generation/, and as misconceived formulations." (Ann Low-Beer, Herbert Spencer, Educational Thinkers Series, The Macmillan Company, London, 1969. P. 13)


Even one of Spencer's severest critics, Noah Porter, conceded ....: "We believe that most of the currency and plausibility which Spencer's materialistic Evolutionism and his antitheistic Agnosticism have gained with his confiding and admiring disciples has been reflected back from the imposing array of facts and instances that he has marshalled from his enormous reading and the brilliant hierarchies of his generalization. [Sic] It is beyond all question that he has devised the most comprehensive and shortest way of answering many questions that has recently been invented, and therefore is admirably fitted to addle the weak and empty-headed and even intoxicate heads that are strong and self-confident." (Noah Porter, "Herbert Spencer's Theory of Sociology: A Critical Essay," The Princeton Review, Vol. 56 (6 n.s.), pp. 268-296, 1880. P. 293)
"The works of Mr. Herbert Spencer have probably aroused more opposition and elicited more criticism than those of any other living writer." (Charles Mercier, "Mr. H. Spencer's Classification of Cognitions," Mind, Vol. 8, pp. 260-267, 1883. P. 260)

I am inclined to believe that you will be accused of praising Spencer highly while you tend to overlook or play down some of his shortcomings. As a matter of fact, I feel this way myself about your paper (if you have leaned toward praise rather than adverse criticism it would be understandable; I have been criticized for doing the same thing with regard to Morgan). I felt that you had not given statements like the following the critical attention that I think they deserve: L. A. White

"But let us look at the ideas [of Herbert Spencer] with a straight face, even though this is never entirely an easy matter when dealing with one so full of his self-worth as Spencer." (Michael Ruse, Taking Darwin Seriously, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986. P. 38)

Of Spencer's philosophy Medawar said: "... it is a philosophy for an age of steam ...." (Peter B. Medawar, The Art of the Soluble, Methuen & Co Ltd, London, 1967. P. 40)

By the 1890s "Herbert Spencer had reached the stage of being much quoted and little read." (E. T. Raymond, Portraits of the Nineties, T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., London, 1921. P. 111)

Haddon classed Spencer with the speculative writers. "But all these earlier attempts to discover a social science [including Spencer's] were speculative. The solid foundations of inductive sociology were laid by Bachofen, Morgan, McLennan, and notably by Rivers. (Alfred C. Haddon, History of Anthropology, The Thinker's Library, No. 42, Watts & Co., London, 1945. P. 126)

"At the time of their publication, the evolutionary pseudo-explanations of Spencer were obviously quite attractive to speculative intellects, but they proved useless as guides to scientific research." (Michael T. Ghiselin, The Triumph of the Darwinian Method. Dover Publications, Inc. Mineola, N.Y., 2003. P. 211)
"Thus, while Spencer held that each successive stage in the sequence of the family or in the ideology of ghosts is a result of a materialist process of selection, the selective factors do not necessarily or preponderantly act through the techno-economic, techno-environmental parameters." (This is false. Cf., for example, Spencer's account of the rise of democracy in Greece, or the origin of polygyny out of monogamy, for counter examples.) (Marvin Harris, The Rise of Anthropological Theory, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1968. P. 215)

"The question is, whether he was a cultural materialist, that is, whether he systematically elaborated a theory which accounted for cultural differences and similarities in terms of techno-economic and techno-environmental conditions. Although Spencer came closer than Morgan to such a viewpoint, he failed ultimately to achieve it because at each approach, the principle of biological reductionism interceded ...." (Marvin Harris, The Rise of Anthropological Theory, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1968. P. 215)
Re Victorianism: After speaking of slavery and the important role that slave labor played in the rise of civilization, Spencer remarks: "... we must abandon the point of view which our form of social life has accustomed us, and look at the facts from other points of view proper to other forms of social life." (Vol. 3, p. 465).

"Layer after layer of human perfection separates me from the central Africans who pursued Stanley with cries of "meat, meat!" (William James, "The Importance of Individuals," The Open Court, Vol. 4, pp. 2437-2440, 1890-91. P. 2438)

Spencer traces out the thread of successive differentiations and specializations in all aspects of culture.

As it seems to me, Spencer never did (or at least so far as my reading has gone and my memory serves me) really grasp the concept of culture. You state that by superorganic Spencer meant social. You also show that S. regarded the superorganic in the human species as "immensely transcending" the s. of other species. Somehow, it seems to me that you are "letting Spencer off too easily," here. He had, as you point out, Tylor's "The Science of Culture" at his disposal, not to mention the German tradition of kultur (Klemm's Culturwissenschaft of the 1850s). Also, I cannot help but wish that you had told present day anthropologists to stop using the term superorganic as synonymous with culture.

L. A. White

While he almost never uses the word culture, it is evident that he is dealing with it. Unlike Tylor, who was interested in discrete culture traits, their origin, distribution, etc., and sometimes in the associations ("adhesions") between traits, Spencer was more interested in socio-cultural systems, their structure, function, and evolution.
Did Spencer avoid the use of the word culture because Tylor had coined and used it in 1871? Spencer apparently does not even mention Tylor in his Autobiography. Spencer used the word 'culture' in the Tylorian sense in Vol. 3, p. 501, but generally avoided it.

"And after having caused, as it ultimately must, the due peopling of the globe, and the bringing of all its habitable parts into the highest state of culture ... the pressure of population ...." (Herbert Spencer, "A Theory of Population, Deduced from the General Law of Animal Fertility," The Westminster Review, Vol. 57, pp. 468-501, 1852. P. 501)

"All organized results of social action--all supernorganic structures, pass through parallel phases. Being, as they are, objective products of subjective processes, ...." (Herbert Spencer, First Principles, FOURTH edition, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1890. P. 374)

Writing from Szczuki, Poland, when she was 19 and working as a governess to the Szczuki family, Marie Curie/Marya Sklodovska/Manya Sklodowska/Marija Sklodovska/Maria Sklodowska/Manya Sklodovska/Marija Sklodovska/Marya Sklodovska/Marya Sklodovska said: "At the moment I am reading: 1) Daniel's Physics, of which I have finished the first volume; 2) Spencer's Sociology, in French; 3) Paul Bert's Lessons on Anatomy and Physiology, in Russian." (Letter from Manya Sklodowska/Marie Curie/Marija Sklodovska/Marya Sklodovska/Marija Sklodovska/Marya Sklodovska to Henrietta Michalowska/Later Mme. Jean Perrin dated December, 1886. Quoted in Eve Curie, Madame Curie, Translated by Vincent Sheean, Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1938. P. 72)
"Such books as Tyler's "Primitive Culture," Lysle's "Geology," Draper, Lecky, Winwood Reade, Buckle, Tyndall, and Spencer all were among my father's shelves, and later were on mine, and most of them I had read. They had long been my companions." (Clarence Darrow, The Story of My Life, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1932. P. 250)
"I have now read the last No. of H. Spencer. The last volume, or last installment, of Principles of Biology I do not know whether to think it better than the previous number, but it is wonderfully clever, and I dare say mostly true. I feel rather mean when I read him: I could bear, and rather enjoy feeling that he was twice as ingenious and clever as myself, but when I feel that he is about a dozen times my superior, even in the master art of wriggling, I feel aggrieved. If he had trained himself to observe more, even if at the expense, by the law of balancement, of some loss of thinking power, he would have been a wonderful man." (Letter from Charles Darwin to Joseph D. Hooker dated December 10, 1866. Quoted in The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, edited by His Son, Francis Darwin, 2 Vols., Basic Books, Inc., New York, 1959. Vol. 2, p. 239)

"I beg permission to thank you sincerely for your very kind present of your Essays. Essays, Scientific, Political, and Speculative. I have already read several of them with much interest. Your remarks on the general argument of the so-called development theory seems to me admirable. I am at present preparing an Abstract of The Origin of Species of a larger work on the changes of species; but I treat the subject simply as a naturalist, and not from a general point of view, otherwise, in my opinion, your argument could not have been improved on, and might have been quoted by me with great advantage." (Letter from Charles Darwin to Herbert Spencer dated November 25, 1858. Quoted in The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, edited by His Son, Francis Darwin, Basic Books, Inc., New York, 1959. Vol. 1, p. 497)

"Morgan also wrote to Darwin in disparagement of Spencer's work; and the ever friendly Darwin, busy with his plants, replied in a letter dated July 9, 1877, from Down, Beckenham, Kent: "I thank you kindly for your very kind, long and interesting letter. I write in fact merely to thank you, for I have nothing else to say. I have lately been working so hard on plants, that I have not had time yet to glance at H. Spencer's recent work, and hardly to do more than glance at your last work. ... I am as great an admirer as any man can be of H. Spencer's genius; but his deductive style of putting almost everything never satisfies me, and the conclusion which I eventually draw is that "here is a grand suggestion for many years' work."") (Bernhard J. Stern, Lewis Henry Morgan: Social Evolutionist, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1931. P. 28)

"I always feel a malicious pleasure when a priori conclusions are knocked on the head: and therefore I felt somewhat like a devil when I read your remarks of Herbert Spencer." "The discovery that nerves have been developed from processes of epithelial cells gives a very different conception of their genesis to that of Herbert Spencer, which makes them originate from the passage of nervous impulses through a track of mingled colloids ....." (F. M. Balfour, A Treatise on Comparative Embryology, 2 Vols., London, 1880. Vol. ?, p. 644) (Letter from Charles Darwin to F. M. Balfour dated September 4, 1880. Quoted in Francis Darwin, editor, More Letters of Charles Darwin, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1903. Vol. 2, pp. 424-425)
"Trollope in one of his novels gives as a maxim of constant use by a brickmaker---"It is dogged as does it"---Tell 'ee what, Master Crawley;---and yer reverence mustn't think as I means to be preaching; there ain't nowt a man can't bear if he'll only be dogged. You go whome, Master Crawley, and think 'o that, and maybe it'll do ye a good yet. It's dogged as does it. It ain't thinking about it." (Giles Hoggett, the old Brickmaker, in The Last Chronicle of Barset, Vol. II, 1867, p. 188)---and I have often and often thought that this is the motto for every scientific worker." (Letter from Charles Darwin to George J. Romanes, 1877. Quoted in More Letters of Charles Darwin, edited by Francis Darwin, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1903. Vol. 1, pp. 370-371)

"I thank you very sincerely for your kind present of your First Principles. I earnestly hope that before long I may have the strength to study the work as it ought to be studied, for I am certain to find or re-find much that is deeply interesting. In many parts of your Principles of Biology I was fairly astonished at the prodigality of your original views." (Letter from Charles Darwin to Herbert Spencer dated December 9, 1867. Quoted in Francis Darwin, editor, More Letters of Charles Darwin, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1903. Vol. 2, p. 442)

"It has also pleased me to see how thoroughly you appreciate (and I do not think that this is general with the men of science) H. Spencer; I suspect that hereafter he will be looked at as by far the greatest living philosopher in England; perhaps equal to any that have lived." (Letter from Charles Darwin to E. Ray Lankester dated March 15, 1870. In The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, edited by His Son, Francis Darwin, 2 Vols., Basic Books, Inc., New York, 1959. Vol. 2, p. 301)

"In my 'Origin of Species' I have given a brief abstract of the facts bearing on this point, and have shown the influence of light on the colours of birds, and of residence near the sea on the lurid tints, of insects, and on the succulency of plants. Mr. Herbert Spencer has recently discussed with much ability this whole subject on general grounds." "The Principles of Biology,' vol. ii., 1866. The present chapters were written before I had read Mr. Herbert Spencer's work, so that I have not been able to make so much use of it as I should otherwise probably done." (Charles Darwin, The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication, 2nd ed., 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1892. Vol. 2, p. 270, 270n.)

"Herbert Spencer's conversation seemed to me very interesting, but I did not like him particularly, and did not feel that I could easily have become intimate with him. I think that he was extremely egotistical. After reading any of his books, I generally feel enthusiastic admiration for his transcendent talents, and have often wondered whether in the distant future he would rank /with such great men as Descartes, Leibnitz, etc., about whom, however, I know very little. Nevertheless I am not conscious of having profited in my own work by Spencer's writings. His inductive manner of treating every subject is wholly opposed to my frame of mind. His conclusions never convince me; and over and over again I have said to myself, after reading one of his discussions, "Here would be a fine subject for half-a-dozen years' work." His fundamental generalisations (which have been compared in importance by some persons with Newton's laws!) -- which I daresay may be very valuable under a philosophical point of view, are of such a nature that they do not seem to me to be of any strictly scientific use. They partake more of the nature of definitions than of laws of nature. They do not aid one in predicting what will happen in any particular case. Anyhow they have not been of any use to me." (The Autobiography of Charles Darwin, edited by his grand-daughter, Nora Barlow, Collins, London, 1958. Pp. 108-109)

In a paragraph added to the second edition of The Origin of Species which, in the Appleton edition (New York, 1864), was meant to be inserted on page 420, but which appeared instead as an addendum on pages 431-432, Darwin wrote: "... I should infer that probably all the organic beings which have ever lived on this earth have descended from some one primordial form, into which life was first breathed by the Creator."

"I have almost finished the last number of H. Spencer, and am astonished at its prodigality of original thought. But the reflection constantly recurred to me that each suggestion, to be of real value to science, would require years of work." (Letter from Charles Darwin to Joseph D. Hooker dated June 30, 1866. Quoted in Francis Darwin, More Letters of Charles Darwin, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1903. Vol. 2, p. 235)

"All forces throughout nature, as Mr. Herbert Spencer remarks, tend towards an equilibrium ...." "Mr. Spencer has fully and ably discussed this whole subject in his 'Principles of Biology,' 1864, vol. ii. ch. x." (Charles Darwin, The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication, 2nd ed., 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1892. Vol. 2, p. 130, 130n.)

"One of Darwin's most brilliant popularizers, Herbert Spencer, transformed Darwin's biological laws into social "laws" that made science say precisely what every conservative wanted said." (Eric F. Goldman, Rendezvous with Destiny, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1963. P. 91)
"Though very shy, Wallace opened his own heart [to Darwin], and confessed a broken engagement. Between inquiries about East Indian pigs and Amazonian butterflies, Darwin administered comfort. Later Wallace married, and at length announced the birth of a son, whom he named "Herbert Spencer." Darwin congratulated him, hoped that "Herbert Spencer" would write better than his namesake, and in the next sentence begged Wallace to note down the date at which the child began to secrete tears." (William Irvine, Apes, Angels, and Victorians, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1955. P. 186)

In the first edition of First Principles (1862) Spencer had made no reference to several earlier articles of his whose ideas had been incorporated and elaborated in that book. "No clear evidence to the contrary standing in the way, there has been very generally uttered and accepted the belief that this work, and the works following it, originated after, and resulted from, the special doctrine contained in Mr. Darwin's "Origin of Species." (p. 111) Spencer goes on to point out that in "Progress: Its Law and Cause," published in the Westminster Review for April, 1857, and in "The Ultimate Laws of Physiology," published in the National Review for October, 1857, he had largely foreshadowed the evolutionism that was fully elaborated in First Principles, and that he had done so before the publication of The Origin of Species. But he concluded by saying: "I do not make this explanation in the belief that the prevailing misapprehension will thereby soon be rectified; for I am conscious that, once having become current, wrong beliefs of this kind long persist—all disproofs notwithstanding. Nevertheless, I yield to the suggestion that unless I state the facts as they stand I shall continue to countenance the misapprehension, and cannot expect it to cease." (p. iv) (Herbert Spencer, Preface to the 4th edition of First Principles, written in May, 1880, A. L. Burt Company, New York, n.d.)

"Now, however, that you have given the facts of the origin of the theory of evolution in their narrative form in a lecture to the Liberal Club in New York(?) in 1874, referring to the sources and their dates, there will be, one would think, no gainsaying your general assertion—presumably, that Spencer preceded Darwin in formulating the theory of evolution—though, indeed, one must expect that with the usual perversity many will go on saying what they did before spite of its demonstrated untruth." (Letter from Herbert Spencer to Edward L. Youmans dated June 20, 1874. Quoted in John Fiske, Edward Livingston Youmans, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894. P. 326)

"I have yours of October 8th, regarding the lecture in the [Popular Science] Monthly. I see many indications that it is doing pretty effectual work. It seems to have gone counter to current opinions regarding yourself and Darwin much more strongly than I was prepared for. I have had many letters and messages acknowledging indebtedness for its statements." (Letter from Edward L. Youmans to Herbert Spender dated November 24, 1874. Quoted in John Fiske, Edward Livingston Youmans, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894. P. 326)
"In the common speech of the day the word Darwinism is almost invariably employed as if it were absolutely synonymous with the word evolution: the word evolution: the one is treated as being at all points not only coextensive but also cointensive with the other. Two noteworthy results of this indiscrimination are: first, that Darwin is habitually regarded as the author of the modern doctrine of evolution at large; and, secondly, that this doctrine has, ever since the publication of his great work on the Origin of Species, become so intimately bound up with the special views therein contained, that by the correctness or incorrectness of those special views the whole theory of evolution is supposed to stand or fall." (William Henry Hudson, "Herbert Spencer and the Synthetic Philosophy," The Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 41, pp. 1-16, 1892. Pp. 11-12)

"For example, we find the London Saturday Review remarking, in the course of an article on Prof. Tyndall's famous Belfast address, that "what Darwin has done for physiology (!) in the original Spencer would do for psychology, by applying to the nervous system particularly the principles which his teacher had already enunciated for the physical system generally."") (William Henry Hudson, "Herbert Spencer and the Synthetic Philosophy," The Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 41, pp. 1-16, 1892. P. 12)

"Not only is he Spencer thus reduced to the position of a mere aide-de-camp of Darwin ...." (William Henry Hudson, "Herbert Spencer and the Synthetic Philosophy," The Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 56, pp. 1-16, 1892. P. 12n.)

"Thus it appears that if any one man is to be looked upon as the immediate progenitor of a doctrine which, in common phraseology, may be said to have been to some extent in the air, that man is not he who first elucidated one factor of its process in one domain of phenomena—the biological; but rather he who first seized upon it as a universal law, underlying all the phenomena of creation; in a word, it is not Charles Darwin, but Herbert Spencer." (William Henry Hudson, "Herbert Spencer and the Synthetic Philosophy," The Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 41, pp. 1-16, 1892. P. 15)

The Saturday Review, in commenting on an address by John Tyndall, perpetuated the general misconception by saying: "What Darwin has done for physiology, Spencer would do for psychology by applying to the nervous system particularly the principles which his teacher (!) has already enunciated for the physical system generally." (Quoted in John Fiske, Edward Livingston Youmans, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894. P. )

" ... he Spencer extends Darwin's hypothesis to the totality of phenomena ...." (Count Goblet d'Alviella, The Contemporary Evolution of Religious Thought in England, America and India, translated by J. Moden, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1886. P. 40)
"Most people imagine, I gather, that Mr. Spencer is a philosopher who has put into a higher and more abstract form Darwin's discoveries and theories. In short, they regard him as a disciple of Darwin.... Nothing could be more absurdly untrue than to regard Mr. Spencer as in any way or in either department [organic evolution or evolution in general] a disciple of Darwin's. In the first place, as regards organic evolution, he was an avowed evolutionist long before the publication of Darwin's first hint on the subject."


"Thus so far is it from being true that Mr. Spencer is a disciple of Darwin that he had actually arrived at the idea of organic evolution and of evolution in general, including cosmic evolution, planetary evolution, geological evolution, organic evolution, human evolution, psychological evolution, sociological evolution, and linguistic evolution, before Darwin had published one word upon the subject." (p. 825) "It [Spencer's Synthetic Philosophy] certainly covered a vast world of thought which Darwin never even attempted to enter." (p. 826) (Grant Allen, "Spencer and Darwin," Appleton's Popular Science Monthly, Vol. 50, pp. 815-827, 1896-97. [reprinted from Fortnightly Review])

"He felt somewhat bitterly, though silently, in later life the injustice done him by the world, which accepted his word 'Evolution'—entirely his own, not in any way Darwin's—as well as individual phrases of his invention, such as "the survival of the fittest," and implicitly ascribed the whole credit of them to Darwin." (Grant Allen, "Personal Reminiscences of Herbert Spencer," The Forum, Vol. 35, pp. 610-628, 1904. P. 622)

"... of the men one thinks of instinctively as above all things writers and among the foremost of living writers, there were not many [at Darwin's funeral]. I saw neither Mr. Tennyson nor Mr. Browning, neither Mr. Froude nor Mr. Trevelyan, neither Mr. Ruskin nor Mr. Matthew Arnold. When I have mentioned Mr. Lecky, Mr. John Morley, and Sir Henry Maine, I have named all whom I saw who can be described as in the front rank. The exception to this remark is again that of a man at least as eminent in the domain of science as of literature, Mr. Herbert Spencer. That Mr. Spencer should take any part in, or even be present at, a religious ceremony might well surprise his friends. But his personal attachment to Darwin, his loyal admiration for him as a teacher, his strong wish to leave no mark of reverence unshown, overcame in the end his well-known scruples against ecclesiastical observances." (George W. Smalley, London Letters and Some Others, 2 Vols., Macmillan and Co., London, 1890. Vol. 1, p. 84)

"... When Herbert Spencer was trying to extend ideas derived from Darwin ...." (Sir Oliver Lodge, Evolution and Creation, George H. Doran Company, New York, 1926. P. 21)
Charles Darwin

Darwin had explicitly recognized a primeval creation of life at the beginning of evolution: "Therefore I should infer that probably all the organic beings which have ever lived on this earth have descended from some one primordial form, into which life was first breathed by the Creator." (The Origin of Species, /what edition?/, p. 431 [see also p. 424 for creationism]. Quoted in Abbot, p. 385. See also Darwin's Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication, Vol. 1, p. 24.) Surely this was special creation, Abbot pointed out, and pressed the inconsistency: "If the arguments against special creation on which the development theory relies have any validity or logical force whatever, they are valid against the special creation of the primordial form or forms. The development theory is philosophically worthless, if it cannot altogether dispense with the help of that kind of agency, the assumption of which is its chief objection to the antagonistic theory." (p. 386) In reading Spencer's Principles of Biology, Abbot was unable to find in it a satisfactory account of how life began. He wrote: "When, however, we come to inquire what reply Mr. Spencer has really given to the first great question which a philosophical biology must answer, namely, What is the origin of life in the first instance? we find no definite reply of any sort in the volumes before us. There being but two conceivable replies to this question, special creation and spontaneous generation /did Spencer later show the speciousness of this dichotomy in the "Letter"?/, we are bewildered to find that Mr. Spencer unequivocally repudiates the former, and somewhat evasively repudiates the latter, thus rejecting not only the popular view, but also the view necessitated by his own philosophy. Instead of trying to solve the problem of the first origin of life, he, like Mr. Darwin, ignores it altogether, --a procedure perfectly legitimate in the "scientist," but wholly illegitimate in the philosopher." (p. 389) It was in response to this challenge of his views regarding the origin of life in this review that Spencer wrote the "Letter" which was denied publication in the North American Review, but which Spencer later appended to subsequent editions of Principles of Biology. (See Francis Ellingwood Abbot, "Philosophical Biology," (a review of Herbert Spencer's Principles of Biology), The North American Review, Vol. 107, pp. 377-422, 1858)

In 1883, when Boas first turned his attention to ethnology, "The theory of evolution had just passed its majority /meaning that The Origin of Species had been published 21 years before, in 1852/, while its application to man was only twelve years old /The Descent of Man having been published in 1871." (Ashley Montagu evidently had no idea of Spencer's "Progress, Its Law and Cause," published in 1857.) (M. F. Ashley Montagu, "Karl Pearson and the Historical Method in Ethnology," Isis, Vol. 34, pp. 211-214, 1942-43. P. 211)

"Mr. Darwin will remain the illustrious Reformer /of biology and the most distinguished naturalist of the age, but with Mr. Spencer will abide the honor of complete originality in developing this greatest conception of modern times, if not, indeed of all time." (Remarks prepared by Edward L. Youmans for the Spencer Farewell Dinner, but not spoken for lack of time, pp. 67-76. In Edward L. Youmans, editor, Herbert Spencer on The Americans and The Americans on Herbert Spencer, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1883. Pp. 75-76)
"In his introduction to the General Principles [sic] Spencer complained that Darwin had received credit for establishing biologic evolution, although, in fact, he had already revealed the truth several years before. And of course a great many people, particularly in the United States, believed him. Yet Spencer has all but disappeared from contemporary culture while the current scientific theory of biological evolution still has a firm, if partial, place for Darwin’s theory of natural selection and admits and insists that the Origin was the foundation for all subsequent work. Scientifically, Spencer’s theories on the subject were of no importance; they are entirely metaphysical, more complicated than Chambers’ but no less naive. Spencer uttered a Law of Evolution; Darwin proposed a theory of the origin of species from pre-existent species.” (Morse Peckham, "Darwinism and Darwinicism," Victorian Studies, Vol. 3, pp. 19-40, 1959. P. 26. Peckham is Associate Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, and is editor of the new Variorum edition of The Origin of Species.)

"Since the publication of Darwin’s Descent of Man there has been a great sensation about the theory of the development of mind—essays in the magazines on Darwinism and Religion, Darwinism and Morals, Philosophy and Darwinism, all having reference to the question of mental evolution, and all proceeding on the supposition that it is Darwin’s hypothesis. As no one says a word in rectification, and as Darwin himself has not indicated the fact that the Principles of Psychology was published five years before the Origin of Species,1 (Mr. Darwin mentioned the fact next year in the sixth edition of the Origin of Species, pp. xix, 428.) I am obliged to gently indicate it myself." (In a brief article, "just out," probably "Mental Evolution" in the Contemporary Review of June, 1871.) (Letter from Herbert Spencer to Edward L. Youmans dated June 3, 1871. Quoted in John Fiske, Edward Livingston Youmans, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894. P. 267)

"Spencer’s immense synthesis exerted tremendous influence on his contemporaries, but is practically forgotten now. He seized on the discovery of biological evolution by Darwin and built up a most elaborate system, half speculative, half encyclopaedic, on the basis of the potent new clue to the sequence of phenomena." (William Foxwell Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, second edition, Doubleday Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, N.Y., 1957. P. 89)

"Even a Taine could say that Spencer’s merit consisted in his application of the Darwinian principles to the phenomena of nature and the mind—as if without the Origin of Species we should not have had a Synthetic Philosophy!” (Otto Gaupp, Herbert Spencer, Stuttgart, 1897. Quoted in R. Didden, "A German Appreciation of Herbert Spencer," Westminster Review, Vol. 148, pp. 604-610, 1897. P. 609)

"With Darwin evolution was a biological law; with Spencer it was a cosmic generalization." (Ralph Barton Perry, Philosophy of the Recent Past, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1926. P. 29)
"Most people connect this great revolution in thought mainly with the name of Charles Darwin; but in that respect they are, to a great extent, mistaken. Darwin applied it only to organic life, but Spencer extended it to comprise the whole universe. To Darwin we owe only the minor principle of the origin of species by natural selection; to Herbert Spencer we owe the general doctrine of evolution as a whole. Darwin confined his attention almost entirely to the field of plant and animal life, or to human origins viewed purely from the anatomical standpoint; whereas Herbert Spencer taught us that still wider and deeper view of evolution which recognizes its actions in suns and worlds, in plants and animals, in minds and ideas, in social institutions and governments, in religions and morals, and in all the various products of human organization and human activity." (John Dietrich, The Fathers of Evolution and Other Addresses, The First Unitarian Society, Minneapolis, 1927, Pp. 73-74)

"Herbert Spencer never did quite forgive his contemporaries for overlooking his paternity of the new evolutionary movement. He was particularly chagrined because, having made the discovery, he felt that he had done so much more with it than Darwin." (Idus L. Murphree, "The Evolutionary Anthropologists: The Progress of Mankind," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 105, pp. 265-300, 1961, P. 270)


"Herbert Spencer, into whose empiricism Darwin inculcated the idea of "evolution" as a special vaccine, ...." (The Basic Writings of Leon Trotsky, edited by Irving Howe, "Their Morals and Ours," 1938, pp. 370-399, Vintage Books, New York, 1963, P. 376)

"Toward the end of that book [The Origin of Species] Mr. Darwin looked forward to a "distant future" when the conception of gradual development might be applied to the phenomena of conscious intelligence. He had not then learned of the existence of such a book as the Principles of Psychology. In later editions he was obliged to modify his statement, and confess that, instead of looking so far forward, he had better have looked about him. I have more than once heard Mr. Darwin laugh merrily over this, at his own expense." (John Fiske, Edward Livingston Youmans, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894, Pp. 104-105)

"The evolution which is now accepted as the true process of creation is the joint product of their [Darwin's and Spencer's] two unlike but concordant minds ...." (A. M. Fairbairn, "Herbert Spencer," The Contemporary Review, Vol. 85, pp. 1-11, 1904, P. 2)
"It is ... interesting to contrast Spencer's with Darwin's approach to the problem [of evolution], because it illustrates the difference between Darwin and his predecessors and contemporaries. Herbert Spencer's adoption of evolution [as illustrated in "The Development Hypothesis"] was a theoretical deduction from the impossibility of accepting special creation, an argument of reductio ad absurdum without any observational objective basis from which inductive evidence could be derived." (Sir Gavin de Beer, Reflections of a Darwinian, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, London, 1962. (Pp. 18-19)

"Herbert Spencer's adoption of evolution was a theoretical deduction from the impossibility of accepting special creation, an argument of reductio ad absurdum without any observational objective basis from which inductive evidence could be derived. / [There follows a quotation from Spencer.] This is magnificent but it is not science. It may be contrasted with a passage from Darwin's Essay of 1844 ...." (Sir Gavin de Beer, "Charles Darwin," Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. 44, pp. 163-183, 1958)

"I have called this principle by which each slight variation, if useful, is preserved, by the term Natural Selection, in order to mark its relation to man's power of selection. But the expression often used by Mr. Herbert Spencer of the Survival of the Fittest is more accurate, and is sometimes equally convenient." (Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species, 6th edition, John Murray, London, 1872. P.49)

"Toward the end of the first edition of the "Origin of Species," published in 1859, Mr. Darwin looked forward to a distant future when the conception of gradual development might be applied to the phenomena of intelligence. But the first edition of [Spencer's] the "Principles of Psychology," in which this was so successfully done, had already been published four years before,—in 1855,—so that Mr. Darwin in later editions was obliged to modify his statement, and confess that, instead of looking so far forward, he had better have looked about him. I remember hearing Mr. Darwin laugh merrily over this at his own expense." (John Fiske, A Century of Science and Other Essays, Houghton, Mifflin and Company. Boston, 1899. P. 49.)

"In the future I see open fields for far more important researches. Psychology will be securely based on the foundation already well laid by Mr. Herbert Spencer, that of the necessary acquirement of each mental power and capacity by gradation." (Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species, 6th edition, John Murray, London, 1890. P. 428)
"With regard to the relations of positivism to Science my fa­
ther [Charles Darwin] wrote to Mr. Spencer in 1875: "How curious
and amusing it is to see what an extent the Positivists hate all
men of science; I fancy they are dimly conscious what laughable and
gigantic blunders their prophet [Comte] made in predicting the
course of science."" (The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, ed.,
Vol. 2, p. 328n.)

"Evolution may be considered as a fairly straightforward meta­
physical theory with a long history which was not so much confirmed
by the theory of natural selection as embarrassed by it. The dif­
ference between the two is indicated by the fact that Darwin him­
self did not use the word until the fifth edition of the Origin
(1869), and then he appears to have used it with some hesitation,
almost as if he did not quite know what he was talking about." (Morse Peckham, "Darwinism and Darwinisticism," Victorian Studies, Vol. 3, pp. 19-40, 1959. P. 23)

"Darwin is said to have discovered the Law of Evolution, ac­
cording to which the universe is characterized by a steady growth
in richness and complexity and excellence. Now Spencer formulated
a Law of Evolution, but there is no such law in the Origin. In
fact, in the fourth edition there is a brief but profoundly im­
portant passage at the beginning of Chapter Four in which Darwin
specifically disclaims any knowledge of and any statements about
Laws of Nature, which he clearly labels mental conveniences, or
constructs. He is a scientist, not a moralist and not a metaphys­

"The crux of the matter is revealed by comparing Spencer's
essays and books with the Origin. In his introduction the General
Principles [sic!] Spencer complained that Darwin had received
credit for establishing biological evolution, although, if fact,
he had already revealed the truth several years before. And of
course a great many people, particularly in the United States,
believed him. Yet Spencer has all but disappeared from contemp­
orary culture while the current scientific theory of biological evo­
lution still has a firm, if partial, place for Darwin's theory of
natural selection and admits and insists that the Origin was the
foundation for all subsequent work. Scientifically, Spencer's
theories on the subject were of no importance; they were entirely

"... Herbert Spencer into whose empiricism Darwin inculcated
the idea of 'evolution' as a special vaccine ...." (Ivan Trotsky,
The Basic Writings of Trotsky, edited by Irving Howe, Random House,
"... while the greatness of Darwin's work in itself, and its importance as a contribution to scientific thought, are acknowledged without hesitation, it has still to be remembered that that work was special and limited in character, and that with the general doctrine of evolution at large it had itself nothing whatever to do." (William Henry Hudson, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer, revised edition, Watts & Co., London, 1906. Pp. 38-39)

"There has perhaps never been so original a thinker as Spencer, who has had such a hard struggle to get or keep possession of the credit due to his own ideas. Not only is he thus reduced to the position of a mere aide-de-camp to Darwin, but many of his critics are never weary in insisting, in spite of all disproof of their assertions, upon his vital indebtedness to Auguste Comte." (William Henry Hudson, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer, revised edition, Watts & Co., London, 1906. P. 36n.)

"Thus it appears that if any one man is to be looked upon as the immediate progenitor of a doctrine which, in common phraseology, may be said to have been to some extent in the air—a 'truth of science, waiting to be caught'—that man is not he who first elucidated one factor of its process in one domain of phenomena—the biological; but rather he who first seized upon it as a comprehensive law, underlying all the phenomena of the universe. In a word, it is not Charles Darwin, but Herbert Spencer." (William Henry Hudson, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer, revised edition, Watts & Co., London, 1906. P. 39)

"What Darwin did was to amass an enormous number of facts from almost every department of biological science, and by the persistent labour, patient examination, and searching thought of many studious years, to establish, once and for all, not the reality of evolution, nor even the laws and conditions of evolution—a factor which, though it had till his time entirely eluded the scientific mind, was yet required to render comprehensible a vast array of phenomena otherwise without interpretation." (William Henry Hudson, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer, revised edition, Watts & Co., London, 1906. P. 38)

"In the common speech of the day the word "Darwinism" is almost invariably employed as if it were absolutely synonymous with the word "evolution"; the one is treated as being at all points not only coextensive, but also coextensive with the other. Two notable results of this indiscrimination are: first, that Darwin is habitually regarded as the author of the modern doctrine of evolution at large; ..." (William Henry Hudson, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer, revised edition, Watts & Co., London, 1906. P. 36)
"I am as great an admirer as any man can be of H. Spencer's genius; but his deductive style of putting almost everything never satisfies me, and the conclusion which I eventually draw is that "here is a grand suggestion for many years' work."" (Letter from Charles Darwin to Lewis H. Morgan, dated July 9, 1877. Quoted in Bernhard J. Stern, "Darwin on Spencer," The Scientific Monthly, Vol. 26, pp. 180-181, 1928. P. 181)

"The effect of Spencer's theory on continuous evolution throughout all nature was, first, to link man with the animal world in unbroken series, though it needed publication of Darwin's Origin of Species to give this doctrine a scientific foundation and a wide acceptance." (Walter Greenwood Beach, The Growth of Social Thought, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1939. P. 119)

"I dare say you will think me a foolish fellow, but I cannot resist the wish to express my undaunted admiration of your article* ("Mr. Martineau on Evolution," by Herbert Spencer, 'Contemporary Review,' July 1872.) in answer to Mr. Martineau. It is, indeed, admirable, and hardly less so your second article on Sociology (which, however, I have not yet finished); I never believed in the reigning influence of great men on the world's progress; but if asked why I did not believe, I should have been sorely perplexed to have given a good answer. Every one with eyes to see and ears to hear (the number, I fear, are not many) ought to bow their knee to you, and I for one do." (Letter from Charles Darwin to Herbert Spencer dated June 10, 1872. Quoted in The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, edited by His Son, Francis Darwin, 2 Vols., Basic Books, Inc., New York, 1959. Vol. 2, p. 344)

"The great law of competition, of which natural selection is the most important subordinate law, finds here another extensive application, which Mr. Darwin had overlooked, but which did not escape the vigorous generalizing powers of Mr. Spencer. This he characterizes as "the truth that each species of organism tends ever to expand its sphere of existence—to intrude on other areas, other modes of life, other media; and, through these perpetually recurring attempts to thrust itself into every accessible habitat, spreads until it reaches limits that are, for the time, insurmountable."" (Lester F. Ward, Dynamic Sociology, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894. Vol. 1, p. 174)

"I am glad to receive to-day an advertisement of your book [The Study of Sociology]. I have been wonderfully interested by the articles in the Contemporary. Those were splendid hits about the Prince of Wales and Gladstone. I never before read a good defence of Toryism." [Probably re Spencer's passage, on p. 395 of some edition: "The desirable thing is that a growth of ideas and feelings tending to produce modifications shall be joined with a continuance of ideas and feelings tending to preserve stability." (Letter from Charles Darwin to Herbert Spencer dated October 31, 1873. In More Letters of Charles Darwin, edited by Francis Darwin, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1903. Vol. 1, p. 351)
"For wide and immediate influence Spencer must come before even Darwin." (William James, "Herbert Spencer," The Critic, Vol. 44, pp. 21-24, 1904) P. 21

In a small biography of Darwin for the series of "English Worthies" edited by Andrew Lang for Longman's, Grant Allen had taken pains to point out the contributions of Darwin's predecessors and contemporaries to the development of the theory of evolution. Spencer wrote to Allen: "I have all the more reason to thank you for what you have done in setting forth in various places the relations in which I stand toward the evolutionary doctrine, because it is a thing which I have not been able to do myself, and which none of my friends have hitherto taken occasion to do for me. Of course, the continual misstatements publicly made or implied I have been, for these five-and-twenty years, obliged to pass in silence; because not only would it have been in bad taste for me to take any overt step in rectification of them, but doubtless by most I should have been regarded with alienated feelings rather than as one who had not been fairly dealt with. Of course, too, it has been out of the question for me to say anything about the matter to those of my friends who well know that a rectification is needed, and from whom one might fitly have been expected. To you, therefore, as having been the first to make any adequate representation of the state of the case, I feel all the more indebted." (Letter from Herbert Spencer to Grant Allen, dated October 22, 1885. Quoted in Grant Allen, "Personal Reminiscences of Herbert Spencer," The Forum, Vol. 35, pp. 610-628, 1904. P. 622)

"I fear Pangenesis is stillborn. Bates says he has read it twice and is not sure that he understands it. H. Spencer says the view is quite different from his (and this is a great relief to me, as I feared to be accused of plagiarism, but utterly failed to be sure what he meant, so thought it safest to give my view as almost the same as his), and he says he is not sure he understands it. Am I not a poor devil?" (Letter from Charles Darwin to Joseph Hooker, February, 1968. Quoted in Henshaw Ward, Charles Darwin and The Theory of Evolution, The New Home Library, New York, 1943. P. 349)


Darwin's view of organic evolution was stated thus: "That the innumerable species, genera and families of organic beings with which the world is peopled have all descended, each within its own class or group, from common parents, and have all been modified in the course of descent." (Charles Darwin, On The Origin of Species, first edition, John Murray, London, 1859, p. 457)
Spencer always enjoyed the admiration and esteem of Darwin and Huxley. (Give "hemp rope" and "dozen times" quotes here.) Huxley became known as 'Darwin's Bulldog,' but Spencer also, on more than one occasion, came to Darwin's defense in print when the latter, never a polemicist, chose to ignore it. E.g., when Darwin chose not to reply to Sir A. Grant's article, "Philosophy and Mr. Darwin," Contemporary Review, May, 1871. (See Duncan, The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer, p. 149)

"Spencer was largely influential in making the idea of evolution a power in modern thought. Had it not been for the reinforcement that came from Darwin's application of the idea to a particular scientific problem (however), it is not certain how far he would have succeeded. But he was lucky in becoming possessed of the conception just at the moment when forces were preparing in the intellectual world for its favorable reception." (Arthur Kenyon Rogers, English and American Philosophy Since 1800, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1922. P. 150)


"Anthropology is the child of Darwin. Darwinism makes it possible. Reject the Darwinian point of view, and you must reject anthropology also." (R. R. Marett, Anthropology, Williams & Nor- gate, London, 1911. P. 8)

"Herbert Spencer laid aside his sense of the absurdity of ecclesiastical ceremony to attend [Darwin's funeral] ..." (Geoffrey West, Charles Darwin, a Portrait, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1938. P. 316)


"You ask what I think of Herbert Spencer's great book [undoubtedly First Principles]. I never attempted to read any except the last Part; & that greatly disappointed me—all words and generalities, like Sir H. Holland's writings, & I could grasp nothing clearly. But I suppose this is all my stupidity; as so many think so highly of this work." (Charles Darwin to Joseph D. Hooker, June 23, 1863. The Correspondence of Charles Darwin [no editor listed], Vol. 11, 1863. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 1999. P. 504)

"Outside the domain of religion, Darwinism had very little influence [in the Islamic area in the latter part of the 19th century]. The Origin of Species was still neither available in Arabic in a complete translation nor widely discussed. But the ideas of Comte, Mill, and Spencer were sweeping the educated Islamic world: they were more convenient for Muslim reformers than the ideas of Büchner and Haeckel." (Najm A. Bezirgan, "The Islamic World," in The Comparative Reception of Darwinism, ed. by Thomas F. Glick, pp. 375-387, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1972. P. 386)

"Spencer was gentle and admirable as always; and the reverence which all these men [Lewes, Huxley, Tyndall, etc.] feel for him was thoroughly apparent in the way in which they listened to every word that came out of his mouth." (p. 270) "There is no doubt that Spencer is the profoundest thinker of all these men but Darwin impresses me with his strength more than any man I have ever seen." (p. 271) (Letter from John Fiske to Abby Morgan Brooks, November 13, 1873. Quoted in Ethel F. Fisk [sic], The Letters of John Fiske, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1940)

"Open almost any book dealing with the problems of our time and you will find ... Darwin and Marx repeatedly coupled as the great pair whose conceptions revolutionized the modern world .... Darwin as the scientist and Marx as the sociologist." (Jacques Barzun, Darwin, Marx, Wagner; Critique of a Heritage, Doubleday & Company, Inc. Garden City, N.Y., 1958. P. 1.)
"The "Data of Ethics" is unquestionably the most valuable single part of the "Synthetic Philosophy," not for the reason that it makes ethics for the first time "scientific" (although this was probably its chief merit in its author's eyes), but because it gives voice with single energy to one man's ideals concerning human life." (William James, "Herbert Spencer," The Critic, Vol. 44, pp. 21-24, 1904. P. 23)

"The frankly teleological point of view from which, in this book, Mr. Spencer contemplates the phenomena of Life generally, seems worthy of notice; since in his Principles of Biology he seems to have taken some pains to avoid "teleological implications." Cf. Pr. of Bi. c.v. p. 27." (Henry Sidgwick, "Mr. Spencer's Ethical System," Mind, Vol. 5, pp. 216-226, 1880. P. )

William James found The Data of Ethics "... decidedy the most noteworthy production of its energetic author." (Anonymous, William James, "Herbert Spencer's Data of Ethics," The Nation. Vol. 28, pp. 178-179, 1879. P. 179)

"I was, on the whole, disappointed in Spencer's Data of Ethics, though, of course, it contains much that is acute and suggestive; but considered as the mature fruit of so distinguished a philosopher's thought, it seemed to me fully crude and superficial. I have stated some of my objections to it in the last number of Mind." (Letter from Henry Sidgwick to Miss Cannan dated June 13, 1880. Quoted in Henry Sidgwick, A Memoir, by A. S. Arthur Sidgwick and E. M. S. Eleanor Mildred Sidgwick, Macmillan and Co., Limited, London, 1906. P. 344)

"Readers of his works had been led to suspect his loyalty to the established code of morals by frequent previous utterances. Such intimations were found in his earlier works which preceded his "Synthetic Philosophy," and throughout the latter this respect was occasionally manifested. It appeared strange that a writer whose works had cleaved so thoroughly the superstitions and traditions of his time, and acquired the reputation of being so radical and profound on most subjects, should evince so high a regard for the prevailing code of morals, and the world was prepared to expect in the "Data of Ethics" to find the elements, at least, of a new system of morality—a substitute for the existing system. In this it was destined to be disappointed." (Lester F. Ward, Dynamic Sociology, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894. Vol. 1, p. 215)
"... he [Spencer] plants himself squarely upon utilitarian principles. Indeed, this book [The Data of Ethics] contains decidedly the best defense of utilitarianism that has yet been made. Its chief merit consists in the thorough and able manner in which the doctrine is pruned of its crudities, confined within its proper boundaries, and presented as a reasonable and respectable truth for acceptance." (Lester F. Ward, Dynamic Sociology, 2 Vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894. Vol. 1, p. 217)

DEATH AND FUNERAL

"In accordance with an announcement made at the cremation a sum of £1,000 was presented to the University of Oxford, by Mr. Shyamaji Krishnavarma to found a Herbert Spencer Lectureship. Three annual lectures have already been delivered—by Mr. Frederic Harrison in 1905, by the late Hon. Auberon Herbert in 1906, and by Mr. Francis Galton in 1907." (Duncan, p. 483)

"In accordance with his [Spencer's] directions, his remains were cremated at Golder's Hill Crematorium, where Mr. Leonard Courtney delivered a brief but impressive address. As my friend, Mr. Hector Macpherson, and I walked away together afterwards, with the last words of the orator's tender farewell lingering in our ears, that sense of the utter indifference of cosmic things to our human losses and sorrows, which seldom fails to affect one at such a time, came upon us with singular force. The sun was shining brightly over the placid winter landscape; the air was crisp and clear.

"Nothing in Nature's aspect intimated
"... the way Spencer uses the collected /ethnographic/ material /of Descriptive Sociology/ is an excellent illustration of the working of his mind. The general laws which he finds are not drawn from a study of / the facts gathered. The laws, so called, were formulated by Spencer through reflection upon the problem at issue, while the vast collection of factual material was then arranged to illustrate the laws. Thus the facts gathered are not the material for induction; they are examples or illustrations of assumed laws already reached by deduction." (Walter Greenwood Beach, The Growth of Social Thought, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1939. Pp. 128-129)

"Here [Viscount] Samuel quoted T. H. Huxley's famous remark: Herbert Spencer's idea of a tragedy is a deduction killed by a fact." [Samuel and Einstein had been talking about relativity.] Einstein's reply was recorded by Samuel: "Every theory is killed sooner or later in that way. But if the theory has good in it, that good is embodied and continued in the next theory."" (Ronald W. Clark, Einstein, The Life and Times, Avon Books, New York, 1972. P. 481)

"Spencer was as complete a deductior:it as science has ever seen, documenting his preconceived theories by citing only the supporting evidence." (p. 408) (Melville J. Herskovits, "A Genealogy of Ethnological Theory." In Context and Meaning in Cultural Anthropology, ed. by Melford E. Spiro, pp. 403-415. The Free Press. New York, 1965)

"Growing complexity of subject-matter implies growing complexity of causation; and with recognition of additional factors comes proof of the inadequacy of factors previously recognised. This is manifest when tracing the filiation of ideas throughout the Principles of Sociology. The modifications resulted from evidence contained in the Descriptive Sociology and added to from various other sources. Simple induction now played a leading part." (Herbert Spencer, "The Filiation of Ideas," in David Duncan, Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer, Vol. 2, pp. 304-365, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1908. P. 354)

"His facts, in short, seem all collected for a purpose; those which help the purpose are never forgotten, those which are alien to it have never caught his eye." (William James, "Herbert Spencer," The Critic, Vol. 44, pp. 21-24, 1904. P. 22)

Spencer's Synthetic Philosophy " ... pretended to be inductive, and was merely a series of deductions, based upon Spencer's prejudices and bolstered up by a mass of selected, and not always very carefully selected, evidence." (Raymond Mortimer, "Books in General," The New Statesman and Nation, Vol. 24, pp. 411-412, 1942. P. 411)
"Spencer has often been reproached that his system is based far more upon preconceived ideas than upon the observation of reality. Yet it must be admitted that he managed to marshal an enormous amount of facts to support his theories. If it be true that the latter were generally ahead of his experience, is not the same true to a certain extent of every scientific hypothesis? Never mind where a man gets his theories if he can establish them on experimental grounds. And Spencer, however biased and ignorant he may have been, took enormous pains to gather the experimental facts which he needed. Think only of the descriptive sociology whose publication under his direction began in 1873 and is not yet completed."


"As the carrying-out of this task single-handed was neither possible nor congenial, Spencer solved the difficulty by delegating the labour of gathering data to a number of assistants, who scanned the available literature on human society for illustrations of customs and beliefs. In this enormous task they were guided by the pigeon-holes prepared by Spencer on the basis of much preliminary thinking which was almost wholly deductive. Thus was laid the beginning of what came to be known as the "comparative method," which consisted in the utilization of customs and ideas gathered from many places and periods, to substantiate genetic schemes arrived at by speculation."


"Dominant as political government is in the thoughts of all, it is naturally assumed to be the primary form of government; and this had been assumed by me, as by everybody. But the facts which the Descriptive Sociology put before me, proved that of the several kinds of control exercised over men the ceremonial control is the first. After recognition of this unexpected priority ...."


In criticizing the mythologists of the day, Spencer speaks of "misinterpretation caused by analysis of the phenomena from above [i.e., deduction from modern, advanced societies to simpler earlier ones] downwards, instead of synthesis of them from below, upwards [i.e., induction from simpler to more complex societies]" (Vol. I, pp. 712-713).

Spencer delegated "the labor of gathering data to a number of assistants who scanned the available literature on human society for illustrations of customs and beliefs which Spencer had already constructed and arranged into stages, following, in the main, a deductive method." (pp. 214-215) (Alexander Goldenweiser, "Cultural Anthropology," In The History and Prospects of the Social Sciences, ed. by Harry Elmer Barnes, pp. 210-254. Alfred A. Knopf. New York, 1925)
"If sociological generalizations are to pass out of the stage of opinion into the stage of established truth, it can only be through extensive accumulations of instances: the inductions must be wide enough if the conclusions are to be accepted as valid. Especially while there continues the belief that social phenomena are not the subject-matter of a Science, it is requisite that the correlations among them should be shown to hold in multitudinous cases." (Principles, Vol. II, p. vi. New York, 1899; Spencer says this to defend himself against the criticism that was 'overweighted by illustrative facts.' In essence, he had been criticized for being too inductive.)

"Though my conclusions have usually been reached inductively, yet I have never been satisfied without finding how they could be reached deductively." (Auto. II, 431)

"Many have, I believe, recognized the fact that a cult of some sort, with its social embodiment, is a constituent in every society which has made any progress; and this has led to the conclusion that the control exercised over men's conduct by theological beliefs and priestly agency, has been indispensable. The masses of evidence classified and arranged in the Descriptive Sociology, have forced this belief upon me independently: if not against my will, still without any desire to entertain it." (Herbert Spencer, An Autobiography, 2 Vols., Watts & Co., London, 1926. Vol. 2, p. 467)

"But like Descartes once more, his [Spencer's] method was deductive, or synthetic as he called it: it arose from happy subjective intuitions rather than from a deep knowledge of objective facts." (Hugh S. R. Elliot, Modern Science and the Illusions of Professor Bergson, Longmans, Green, and Co., London, 1912. P. 138)

The question of the extent to which Spencer derived his propositions about society deductively as opposed to inductively is an interesting one. It seems fair to say that a number of the statements that Spencer made about the social organization were enunciated as deductions from broader principles. But these broader principles were, it seems to me, inductions from a wider range of phenomena, of which those from human society were only a part, but a part nonetheless. Therefore Spencer's propositions cannot legitimately be said to be a priori or intuitive. The only basis of knowledge, Spencer believed, was experience. And from experience one could form certain general principles whose embodiment could then be pointed out in a large number of cases beyond those out of which it had been formulated.

"General truths again served as keys to the more special truths, and caused these to fall into coherent order." ("The Filiation of Ideas," in Duncan, p. 562)
"Having established the truth of his proposition on the basis of induction, he [Spencer] applies to it the test of deduction, which, of course, confirms the proposition. In his brilliant chapters entitled "Retrospect" and "Prospect," the hands of the great master are seen. If he holds in his left hand the weapon of induction, he is almost always certain to swing in his right that of deduction; and the two together drive home with relentless vigor the truth and the validity of the general proposition." (B. H. Meyer [University of Wisconsin], "Four Synthecists: Cross-Sections from Comte, Spencer, Lillienfeld, and Schaeffle," The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 6, pp. 20-28, 1900. P. 21)

"The Descriptive Sociology had been for seven years in progress; making me gradually acquainted with more numerous and varied groups of social phenomena, disclosing truths of unexpected kinds, and occasionally obliging me / to abandon some of my preconceptions." (Herbert Spencer, An Autobiography, 2 Vols., Watts & Co., London, 1926. Vol. 2, pp. 274-275)

"This is the method of many of Spencer's demonstrations, in sociology as in ethics; first to deduce his conclusion from some kind of first principles or general rule, and then to show how the conclusion is supported by empirical observation." (J. D. Y. Peel, Herbert Spencer, The Evolution of a Sociologist, Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, New York, 1971. P. 89)

Spencer criticized Sir Henry Maine for not making "the area of induction wide enough" (Vol. I, p. 714). Spencer points out that Maine did not make sufficient use of the available evidence on contemporary primitive peoples, and relied too heavily on data from early Barbarous people, like the Germans, in formulating his generalizations.

"All developed science may be characterised as "high priori" apparently Henry Sidgwick's clever phrase for a priori if the drawing of deductions from premisses positively ascertained by induction is to be so called." (Herbert Spencer, "Replies to Criticisms on The Data of Ethics," Mind, Vol. 6, pp. 82-98, 1881. P. 86)

"It has been seen how Herbert Spencer, one of the most "deductive" minds in the social sciences, claimed and believed that his was a completely inductive work." (Abram Kardiner and Edward Preble, They Studied Man, The World Publishing Company, Cleveland, 1961. P. 63)

Far from being a rarified theoretical treatise, the product of abstract reasoning, Principles of Sociology often amounts to a veritable catalog of ethnographic cases, piled one on another.

Spencer sought to show that actual events and changes in societies were manifestations or exemplifications of general principles, and therefore deducible from them.
"The love of completeness has been curiously shown from the beginning by the habit of summarizing every chapter. I could not leave a thing with loose ends: the ends must be gathered together and tied up. This trait has been further manifested in the tendency not to rest content with induction, but to continue an inquiry until the generalization reached was reduced to a deduction. Leaving a truth in an inductive form is, in a sense, leaving its parts with loose ends; and the bringing it to a deductive form is, in a sense, uniting its facts as all parts of one fact." ("The Filiation of Ideas," in Duncan, p. 535)
"As with organic evolution, so with super-organic evolution. Though, taking the entire assemblage of societies, evolution may be held inevitable as an ultimate effect of the co-operating factors, intrinsic and extrinsic, acting on them all through indefinite periods; yet it cannot be held inevitable in each particular society, or even probable." (Principles, Vol. I, p. 96. 3rd ed. N.Y., 1910)

"Evolution is commonly conceived to imply in everything an intrinsic tendency to become something higher. This is an erroneous conception of it. In all cases it is determined by the co-operation of inner and outer factors." (Principles, Vol. III, p. 95. 3rd ed. N.Y., 1910)

"... the tendency to progress from homogeneity to heterogeneity is not intrinsic but extrinsic. Structures become unlike in consequence of unlike exposures to incident forces." (Herbert Spencer, First Principles, 4th edition, Rand, McNally & Company, Chicago, n.d. P. 503. [17th page of Appendix])

"The doctrine of Evolution, currently regarded as referring only to the development of species, is erroneously supposed to imply some intrinsic proclivity in every species towards a higher form; and, similarly, a majority of readers make the erroneous assumption that the transformation which constitutes Evolution in its wider sense, implies an intrinsic tendency to go through those changes which the formula of Evolution expresses. But all who have fully grasped the argument of this work, will see that the process of Evolution is not necessary, but depends on conditions; and that the prevalence of it in the Universe around, is consequent on the prevalence of these conditions: the frequent occurrence of Dissolution showing us that where the conditions are not maintained, the reverse process is quite readily gone through. Bearing in mind this truth, we shall be prepared to find that the progress of a social organism toward more heterogeneous and more definite structures of a certain type, continues only as long as the actions which produce these effects continue in play. We shall expect that if these actions cease, the progressing transformation will cease." (Herbert Spencer, First Principles, 6th edition, Thinker's Library edition, Watts & Co., London, 1937. Pp. 522-523)

"Spencer's is to-day, the name to refute, to pulverize, to anathematize, to ridicule, by the opposition to the doctrine of evolution which in Darwin's case spoke through the Bishop of Oxford ...." (James Mark Baldwin, "Mr. Spencer's Psychology," The American Naturalist, Vol. 31, pp. 553-557, 1897. P. 554)

Hughes calls Spencer "... so pedestrian a thinker ...." (H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1961. P. 115)

"... it is the fashion now in England for inferior minds to sneer at Spencer," (Grant Allen, "Personal Reminiscences of Herbert Spencer," The Forum, Vol. 35, pp. 610-628, 1904. P. 618)

"Great thoughts come from the heart. Spencer had very little heart, and he had no great thoughts." (Leo Tolstoi, quoted by Robert H. Lowie, "Tolstoi or Spencer?" The Liberal Review, Vol. 1, pp. 515-520, 1904. P. 515)

"But no one now supposes Spencer to have been a scientist. He was a salesman of ideas, and we no longer like his goods." (Crane Brinton, English Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century, Ernest Benn, Ltd., London, 1933. P. 239)

"Spencer supplements the thinness of his idea system by masses of data compiled from science, but does not use these for new scientific interpretation and so remains a philosopher." (Configurations of Culture Growth. A. L. Kroeber. University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1944. P. 98)

The anonymous reviewer of several books on philosophy (including William M. Lacy's An Examination of the Philosophy of the Unknown as Expounded by Herbert Spencer) wrote in The Nation (Vol. 38, p. 323, 1884): "The books examining or refuting Herbert Spencer now make an imposing library." (p. 323)
"Many critics, indeed, devote so much time and ability to demonstrating Spencer's incompetence, in this or that field of thought, that the reader is left with the impression that it must be a tower of strength which requires so many assaults." (J. Arthur Thomson--Herbert Spencer. J. M. Dent & Co. London, 1906, p. viii)

"From the popularity he has acquired in a dozen European countries one feels pretty certain that Mr. Herbert Spencer will be cited among the great philosophers of the future, yet I think his accomplishment small, his contribution to the sum of truth of slight importance." (Frank Harris, Contemporary Portraits, Second Series, Published by the Author, New York, 1919. P. 228) (By lowering others of greater talent and achievement, Harris sought to elevate himself. --RLC)

"... Herbert Spencer ... was really a very vague old gentleman whose Nonconformist assertiveness beguiled his generation into thinking that a loud voice speaks important truths." (Letter from Harold J. Laski to Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., dated July 14, 1923. Quoted in Holmes-Laski Letters, The Correspondence of Mr. Justice Holmes and Harold J. Laski, 1916-1935, edited by Mark DeWolfe Howe, 2 Vols., Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1953. Vol. 1, p. 516)

Of Spencer, Julian Hawthorne, an unsympathetic and ill-informed critic said: "... after he has been hung out to dry in the winds of time, there will be little left of him ...." (Julian Hawthorne, Shapes That Pass, Memories of Old Days, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1928. P. 309)


"He [J. J. Thomson] also told me a story, which I am trying to verify, of Spencer saying that a theory X could not be true, as he had said the opposite in his Psychology and it was impossible to alter the plates!" (Letter from Harold J. Laski to Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., dated October 4, 1925. Quoted in Holmes-Laski Letters, The Correspondence of Mr. Justice Holmes and Harold J. Laski, 1916-1935, 2 Vols., edited by Mark DeWolfe Howe, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1953. Vol. 1, p. 791)
"On the basis of such pronouncements by Spencer, such as that evolution is not intrinsic, and that it proceeds only until an equilibrium is reached as this, Spencer might have reached a working agreement with Ellsworth Huntington, J. Teggart, W. H. R. Rivers, and other modern ethnologists. Unfortunately, there is little evidence in the constructive elaboration of Spencer's system, of the insight and caution revealed in these passages." But nowhere in this volume does Goldenweiser consider Spencer's discussion of political evolution. (Alexander A. Goldenweiser, Early Civilization, F. S. Crofts & Co., New York, 1922. P. 337n.)

Spencer's "... sociological system--is incomplete, incoherent, imperfectly realised, and set forth with hesitations and confusions that are eloquent of intellectual uncertainty. In particular, when Spencer is asked (through his works) to say what sort of organism society is, or resembles, his various answers in their inconsistency and absurdities verge upon the comic." (F. J. C. Hearnshaw, "Herbert Spencer and the Individualists," in The Social & Political Ideas of Some Representative Thinkers of the Victorian Age, ed. by F. J. C. Hearnshaw, pp. 53-83, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London, 1933. P. 73)