

Herbert spencer



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Herbert Spencer was a famous English sociologist, biologist, philosopher, as well as well-known Victorian era political theorist. Born in Derby, England, on April 1820 to a religious father, Spencer developed a conception of evolution and wrote about it before Charles Darwin. He was among those who contributed to different subjects, among which are philosophy, religion, ethics, political theory, economics, and anthropology, just to mention a few. He managed to achieve tremendously many in English academia. This philosopher is best known for his concept “ survival of the fittest” that he coined in the Principles of Biology in the year 1864 (Spencer, 1888).

### Herbert Spencer

The theoretical ideas displayed by Herbert Spencer are more advanced as compared to those of his counterpart Augusten Comte. This is because he does not build on findings of other scientists, but he builds his own theories (James, 1978). His work is not only of significance in the development of sociological theory, but also many of his theoretical ideas stand up well from the vantage point of modern sociological cliques.

Turner argues that modern-day sociologists adore the grave of this philosopher. This attitude has positively affected his permissive politics, and his belief in a sociological version of ‘ survival of the fittest’ is demonstrated in a number of Spencer’s theoretical ideas, which are and will continue to be celebrated in sociological theory. Spencer’s theoretical ideas were, however, overlooked in comparison to those of his counterpart Comte. Nevertheless, by the time Spencer was born, Comte was 22 years old; and thus, Spencer had many opportunities to perfect oversights of Comte. Most of the work

done by the two men has similarities. Spencer feels obliged to distinguish his theories from those of Comte. He commented on Comte's work in various occasions and felt the urge to write an essay called "Reasons for Disagreeing with the Philosophy of M. Comte" (Spencer, 1888).

### Analysis of the Theories

#### Natural Selection

If a species is to survive the adverse conditions, it reproduces offspring with those survival traits. Existence of next generation depends on the current generation and its ability to make it through the next generation. This is adaptation concept in play. If the traits get passed on to the next generation, offspring get born with genes that help them adapt to the new environment.

Spencer's concept of natural selection has even been proven right by the modern high tech science. It is best demonstrated in the development of antibiotic. When a patient takes the prescriptions, bacteria causing disease get destroyed, and the ones that resist are said to have been selected out. It plays the same way as the bacteria; a species that cannot survive get selected out and terminated. Nature is not changing; it is the organisms that have to develop survival tactics. This is what is as referred to as the 'survival of the fittest' (Spencer, 1888).

In his connection between sociology and biology, he believed that social actions are determined by the actions of individuals and that those actions are retrieved from the fundamental laws of life, and biology aids in comprehending it. Biology and sociology are similar in the procedure of

survival of the fittest since they both deal with living and social organisms. He dedicated substantial concentration to psychology as an extra main foundation for sociology. He defined psychology as the study of intelligence, feeling and action and believed that feeling links to an action. His belief led him to stress on the extent and cognition in his sociological analyses.

It is natural to have the rich and the poor. One cannot survive without the other. It is natural that the rich get richer on expense of the poor. It is up to the poor to improvise mechanics to get them off the ground, if not the nature selects them. Spencer in this view advocated for capitalism, which is the best tool ever known that discourages laziness and handout habits (Spencer, 1888).

### Psychology Changes Society

Spencer claims that psychological characteristics change with the society and the environment at large (Spencer, 1888). He concludes that the units of individuals are the source of social phenomenon and that everything in the society is derived from motives of individuals. He bases his sociology on psychological principles. He tries to show how the progression of sociology is hindered by the nature of the human beings it governs. He believes that sociology confronts several difficulties that differentiate it from natural sciences.

In his books about social static and social dynamic, Spencer is dealing with stability of a perfect society and forces related to the motivation by which society is driven towards perfection. Society has a way of perfecting itself. It

builds around the content of its members. Perfect society comprises of perfect people.

Its flaw will always be termed as misfits. Thus, both terms are more normative to a certain extent than descriptive. He classifies himself as a positivist always interested in the discovery of the laws of the social world. He deals with a wide choice of science but argues that the sciences cannot be extremely positioned in any other order. Spencer views science as being interrelated and mutually dependent (Spencer, 1888).

### Theory of Science and Religion

Spencer's thought on the collective humankind is based on a sequence of general, theoretical principles. He argues that in the early history of humankind, religion and science got united in their effort to scrutinize the world. Slowly, the two begin to disconnect with religion coming to focus on the unidentified and science on which can be identified. This separation is distant from comprehensive even in the modern epoch and continues to conflict each other. He finds his work as relating to basics of science and religion. His main concern was involved in predictable world and was hence more into science than religion (James, 1978).

### Theory of Evolution and Dissolution

He believes that all natural, lifeless and super organic phenomena undergo growth and devolution. After realizing the general principles of evolution and dissolution, he turns to exact areas to show that his theories are right. Indeed, he was right; science has taught us that what cannot be touched, felt

and experimented has no grounding for discussion. Spencer was a thinker, and he was not in a habit of reading other people's works, because he did not share their findings. From this, we can depict that he did a new search on every aspect he put forward. This is the reason why some people, though not many, agree with his theories after critical analysis (Spencer, 1888).

### Theory of Evolution

In his theory of evolution, Spencer deals with the issue of evolution occurrence. He argues that homogenous phenomena are naturally unstable (Wiltshire, 1978). The reason behind this unsteadiness is that the different parts of this system are subjected to various forces, which separate them from one another. A change in one part of homogenous system will unavoidably result in a change of another part, thus leading to multiform. In his view, the multiplication of effects progresses in a statistical manner. In this case, a small change of once homogenous system has a vast consequence. He continues to explain that a sector turns into segregation because of the component's similarities, which differ with the components of other segments. This separation serves to uphold differences among the sectors, and this promotes the effect.

Spencer recognizes that the processes of dissolution balance the evolutionary process, and this leads to its downfall. Spencer's theory of evolution comes from observations and critical analysis of the theory of psychology (Spencer, 1888).

In his definition of sociology, he puts it as the study of Evolution in a more complex way. It is, therefore, the natural history of societies. He believes

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that the true meaning of his work can be found when placed in a historically evolutionary background. His sociology, therefore, focuses largely on macro-level social phenomenon, and the fact that he shares with Comte the view that sociology should deal with social questions proves that this right. He also faced tribulations as any other sociologist and decided to face them to legitimize the field. He argued that lay people lack the capacity to grasp the complex issues of concern to sociologist and that in order for one to understand, they had to be trained. He went ahead to confront the lost confidence of lay people in their views and their hostility towards sociologists (Wiltshire, 1978). Many philosophers, one of which is Mr Huxley T . H., agree with this.

Thus, Spencer has a more influential theory, and his work have evidenced to be of more contemporary importance compared to that of his counterpart. He offers a series of general principles from which he presumes an evolutionary theory and addresses a number of the practical difficulties confronting sociology. He highlights on various biased sentiments that a sociologist should try to overcome, and in seeking to do so, he articulates a position for sociology. In his Substantive work, Spencer employs the comparative-historical methods.