

# **Evolutions Including the Basic Laws of Philosopher Herbert Spencer and His Contributions to Develop the Study**

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## **Abstract**

The basis for Spencer's appeal to many of his generation was that he appeared to offer a ready-made system of belief which could substitute for conventional religious faith at a time when orthodox creeds were crumbling under the advances of modern science. Spencer's philosophical system seemed to demonstrate that it was possible to believe in the ultimate perfection of humanity on the basis of advanced scientific conceptions such as the first law of thermodynamics and biological evolution. Now, we will discuss about him and his contribution.

**Keywords:** Synthetic; Law; Evolution; Emphasize.

## 1. Introduction

Herbert Spencer developed an all-embracing conception of evolution as the progressive development of the physical world, biological organisms, the human mind, and human culture and societies. As a polymath, he contributed to a wide range of subjects, including ethics, religion, anthropology, economics, political theory, philosophy, literature, astronomy, biology, sociology, and psychology. During his lifetime he achieved tremendous authority, mainly in English-speaking academia. "The only other English philosopher to have achieved anything like such widespread popularity was Bertrand Russell, and that was in the 20th century." Spencer was "the single most famous European intellectual in the closing decades of the nineteenth century" but his influence declined sharply after 1900: "Who now reads Spencer?" asked Talcott Parsons in 1937.

## 2. About Herbert Spencer

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) was a prominent British social thinker of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He is often called "the second founding father of sociology. He is known to the world as a great social philosopher. a famous evolutionist. He was a defender of individualism and a prolific writer. He made sociology an all-encompassing science.

Spencer was born in Derby, England, on 27 April 1820, the son of William George Spencer (generally called George). Spencer's father was a religious dissenter who drifted from Methodism to Quakerism, and who seems to have transmitted to his son an opposition to all forms of authority. He ran a school founded on the progressive teaching methods of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and also served as Secretary of the Derby Philosophical Society, a scientific society which had been founded in 1783 by Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin.

### 2.1 *Synthetic Philosophy*

In essence Spencer's philosophical vision was formed by a combination of deism and positivism. On the one hand, he had imbibed something of eighteenth century deism from his father and other members of the Derby Philosophical Society and from books like George Combe's immensely popular *The Constitution of Man* (1828). This treated the world as a cosmos of benevolent design, and the laws of nature as the decrees of a 'Being transcendently kind.' Natural laws were thus the statutes of a well governed universe that had been decreed by the Creator with the intention of promoting human happiness. Although Spencer lost his Christian faith as a teenager and later rejected any 'anthropomorphic' conception of the Deity, he nonetheless held fast to this conception at an almost sub-conscious level. At the same time, however, he owed far more than he would ever acknowledge to positivism, in particular in its conception of a philosophical system as the unification of the various branches of scientific knowledge. He also followed positivism in his insistence that it was only possible to have genuine knowledge of phenomena and hence

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that it was idle to speculate about the nature of the ultimate reality. The tension between positivism and his residual deism ran through the entire System of Synthetic Philosophy.

Spencer followed Comte in aiming for the unification of scientific truth; it was in this sense that his philosophy aimed to be 'syn

### **3. His Famous Works**

- a) First principles
- b) The Principles of Sociology
- c) Descriptive Sociology
- d) The Nature and reality of Reality
- e) Social Statics
- f) Data of ethics

### **4. His theory of Evolution**

It was considered as the greatest contribution of the British sociologist Herbert Spencer to the realm of social thought.

“Evolution “The Most exciting concept of 19<sup>th</sup> Century

“Evolution” was one of the most exciting ideas of 19<sup>th</sup> century. It’s most influencing sponsor was Darwin. Sp enter applied his theory on social world.

#### ***4.1 Meaning of the Concept of “Evolution”***

The term “evolution” comes from the Latin word “evolvere” which means “to develop” or to “un fold”. It closely corresponds to the Sanskrit word “Vikas”. Evolution literally means gradual unfolding or unrolling.

#### ***4.2 Meaning of “Social Evolution”***

The word “evolution” is borrowed from the biological science to sociology. The term “organic evolution” is replaced by “social evolution” in sociology.

### **5. Herbert Spencer’s Theory of Social Evolution**

The most important contribution of Herbert Spencer to Sociology is the theory of evolution. He utilized the principles of physical and biological evolution in order to elaborate and explain his theory of Social evolution.

In physical evolution, a movement is from indefinite incoherent situation to definite and coherent situation. Besides, the underlying principles of physical evolution are a movement from simple to complex and homogeneity to heterogeneity.

In biological evolution only those creatures survive in the struggle for existence who are able to make effective adjustment with changing circumstances. Herbert Spencer utilized these two principles, physical and biological evolution in order to explain social evolution.

## **6. Physical Evolution**

Spencer writes, “Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion, during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation.”

According to Lewis A. Coser, “The very- foundation of Spencerism is the evolutionary doctrine or the law of evolution. In his “First Principles” he traced everything in the world back through causal chains to two fundamental factors. These are matter and motion—two aspects of force. According to Spencer, the law of evolution is the supreme law of every becoming.

For Spencer, evolution pervaded the inorganic as well as organic realm. His voluminous work also treated “Super organic evolution” (Which today we would term social evolution), and evolution of super organic products (what we call cultural evolution). Within the Framework of Universal evolution, Spencer developed his basic three laws and four secondary propositions—each building upon each and all upon the doctrine of evolution.

## **7. The Three Basic Laws**

- (i) The Law of persistence of force. (Some ultimate cause that transcends knowledge)
- (ii) The Law of the indestructibility of matter.
- (iii) The law of Continuity of motion.

### ***7.1 Force Tends to Persist***

(1) The First law is energy or force tends to persists. In the course of evolutionary change there is no increase in energy or force.

Energy or Force is persistence. It undergoes no change. Energy or Force is the cause of evolution but it is unaffected by the evolutionary process.

### ***7.2 Matter is Indestructible***

(ii) The Second law is “matter is indestructible”. Matter as one form or aspect of energy is never destroyed. It may undergo formal changes. The changes in the form of matter are responsible for the evolutionary process. But the fundamental nature of matter never changes. The basic elements of matter and energy in the world are neither created, nor destroyed but conserved.

### ***7.3 Continuity of Motion***

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(iii) The third law is, “motion is continuous and it is never wholly dissipated”. There are of course, changes in the form of motion. On account of these changes, there are stages in the evolutionary process. There is perpetual continuity of motion in the world. All things continue in motion.

**8. Four Secondary Propositions**

- (i) Persistence of the relationship between the forces. (Harmony of all laws)
- (ii) Principle of formal changes and uniformity.
- (iii) Principle of least resistance and greatest attraction.
- (iv) Principle of gradual motion.

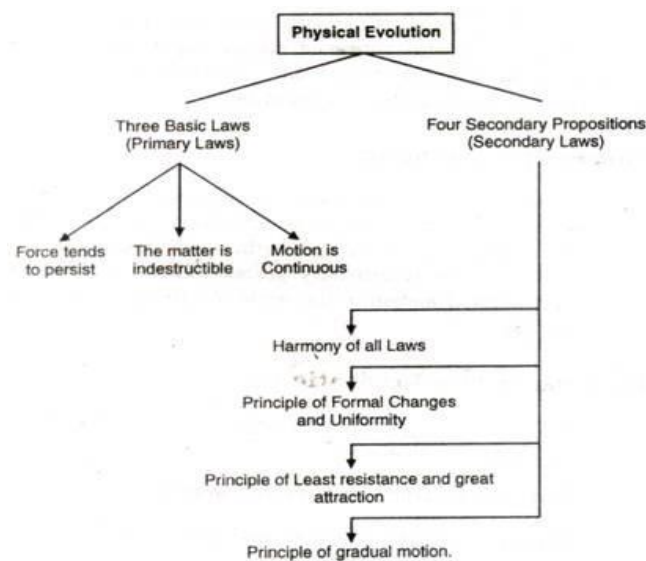
Spencer has enumerated four secondary laws of evolution.

**(i) Harmony of all laws:**

According to Spencer there must be harmony among the various laws of evolution. No two laws should contradict each other. There exists a uniformity or regularity of relationships among defined phenomena in the world. The world is an order of elements.

**(ii) Principle of formal changes and uniformity:**

Matter and motion is not completely destroyed. These undergo changes in form only. Of course during formal change the quantum of matter and motion remains static. The force, the elements of matter, the motion are never lost in the process of change. They are merely transformed into the manifestation of some other event.



**(iii) Principle of least resistance or great attraction:**

The direction of evolution is always towards the line of least resistance or greatest attraction. All forces and elements move along the line of least resistance and greatest attraction.

**(iv) Principle of gradual motion:**

For evolution, motion is essential, but it is not required that motion should be at one level all the time. It may speed up or slow down. All phenomena in nature have their own particular rate and rhythm of movement of duration and development.

Spencer argued that the evolution of human societies, far from being different from other evolutionary phenomena. It is a special case of a universally applicable natural law. It is axiomatic to Spencer that ultimately all aspects of the universe, whether organic or inorganic, social or non-social is subject to the laws of evolution.

All universal phenomena—inorganic, organic, super organic—are subject to the natural law of evolution. According to Spencer, all the phenomena of nature—the stars and planetary systems, the earth and all terrestrial phenomena, biological organisms and the development of species, all the psychological and sociological processes of human experience and behaviour—follow the definite pattern of change.

Given the persistence of force, the indestructibility of the basic elements of material substance, the continuity of motion and the like, Spencer says, “Why were the changes of phenomena from homogeneous to the heterogeneous? From the relatively incoherent to the relatively coherent? From simple to complex? From the in differentiated to the differentiation of specialized structure and functions?”

**9. More important factors which he emphasized:**

1. The instability of the homogeneous.
2. The multi-fication of effects.
3. Segregation
4. Equilibrium
5. Dissolution.

***9.1. The Instability of the Homogeneous***

Spencer argued that the condition of homogeneity is in-fact a condition of unstable equilibrium.

***9.2. The Multi-fiction of Effects***

According to Spencer, once differentiation and diversity begins, a cumulative rapidity of increasing diversity and differentiation is set in motion. Diversity feeds upon itself. It makes for increasing complexity.

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### **9.3. Segregation**

Once differentiation occurs within the units of an aggregate, a tendency towards the specialization of parts will develop. Units which are alike will respond in a similar fashion, whereas units which are different will respond differently. A process of internal “selection” or “segregation” of specialized parts will be set afoot.

### **9.4. Equilibrium**

All phenomena according to Spencer are in a process of adjustment and accommodation until a moving equilibrium is reached.

### **9.5. Dissolution**

Dissolution is the reverse process. It is the undoing of evolved forms. Every phenomenon must submit to the process of dissolution. The crux of Spencer’s theory of physical evolution is that according to Spencer, in the process of evolution latent becomes manifest and indefinite passes towards definiteness and lastly homogeneous mass of matter becomes more and more differentiated.

## **10. Biological Evolution**

Spencer adopted his principle of evolution from naturalist Charles Darwin. Darwin developed the concept of evolution in his “Origin of Species” in 1859. Spencer, the sociological giant of the second half of the 19th Century was enamored by “Social Darwinism”.

Spencer believed in the doctrine of the “Survival of the fittest” as expounded by Darwin. According to him animal has to struggle to preserve its existence. The struggle for existence is not confined to any one aspects of life but pervades whole of life. Spencer says, only strong creatures survive and evolve; only strong makes progress. The weak is gradually eliminated. A strong creature is one who has the ability to adjust himself with the ever changing conditions of environment.

## **11. Social Evolution:**

**From the analysis of physical evolution Spencer convinced that the underlying principles of all evolution are two:**

- (i) Movement from- simple to complex.
- (ii) Movement from homogeneous to heterogeneous.

From the analysis of biological evolution spencer utilized the principle that those creatures survive in the struggle for existence who are able to make effective adjustment with changing circumstances. So Spencer utilized both physical and biological evolution for his theory of social evolution. Like physical evolution

also in social evolution there is a movement from simple to complex. The society is moving from homogeneous to heterogeneous structure. Society is also moving from indefinite to definite stage.

Spencer has borrowed the idea from biological evolution that those cultures survive which are able to adjust themselves with the changing circumstances. If a civilization is unable to make adjustment with the changing circumstances it caves in and gradually becomes extinct.

## **12. Spencer's theory of social evolution points out to two stages**

1. The movement from simple to compound societies.
2. Change from militant society to industrial society.

The movement from simple to compound societies—this is seen in four types of societies in terms of evolutionary levels.

### ***12.1. Simple Society***

Spencer defined the simple society as “one which forms a single working whole un-subjected to any other and of which the parts co-operate with or without a regulating center for certain public ends.” These societies were predominantly small, nomadic, and lacking in stable relationship structure. They had low degrees of differentiation, specialization, and integration. Examples are the Eskimos, the Fuegians, Guiana tribes, the new Caledonians and the Pueblo Indians.

### ***12.2. Compound Societies***

Compound societies were presented as having generally come about through either a peaceful or a violent merger of two or more simple societies. They tended to be predominantly settled agricultural societies, although a majority are mainly pastoral, and tended to be characterized by a division of four or five social strata and an organized priestly group. They are also characterized by Industrial structures that show in advancing division of labour, general and local. Examples are the Teutonic peoples in the fifth century, Homeric Greeks, Zew Zealanders, Hottentots Dahomans and Ashantees.

### ***12.3. Doubly Compound Societies***

Doubly compound societies were completely settled, were more integrated and a larger and more definite political structure, a religious hierarchy, a more or less rigid caste system and more complex division of labour. Furthermore, in such societies to a greater and lesser extent, custom has passed into positive law and religious observances have grown definite, rigid and complex. Towns and roads have become general, and considerable progress in knowledge and the arts has taken place.” Examples are thirteen-Century France, Eleventh Century England, the Spartan Confederacy, the ancient Peruvians and the Guatemalans.



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#### **12.4. Trebly Compound Societies**

It includes “the great civilized nations” such as the Assyrian Empire, the modern Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia. Spencer does not outline their traits in detail but points to their increased overall size, complexity, division of labor, popular density, integration and general cultural complexity.

#### **13. Criticisms of his view**

1. According to some social thinkers Herbert Spencer’s theory lacks practicability. It is not practical and realistic. Even today there are several tribes and aboriginals that do not show any sign of evolution.
2. It also lacks uniformity. It is not possible to have a uniform pattern of social evolution in all societies. Because the factors and circumstances responsible for evolution differ from one another.
3. Mere survival for existence is not enough for man. In human society qualities like sympathy, sacrifice, kindness, love etc. are also present. These are quite different from struggle for existence.

#### **14. Conclusions**

In spite of the above criticisms made by some of the social thinkers, Spencer’s theory of social evolution is a master key to the riddles of the universe. In 1902, Spencer received a nomination for the Nobel Prize for literature, but did not win it, and died in 1903 at the age of 83 years old. He was cremated and his ashes interred opposite the grave of Karl Marx in High gate Cemetery in London.

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