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80 (26 January 1905) 71-72: **ROYCE'S SPENCER**

Herbert **Spencer** : An Estimate and Review.

By Josiah **Royce** . Together with a Chapter of Personal Reminiscences, by James Collier. Fox, Duffield & Co. 190

CSP, identification: Haskell, Index to The Nation. See also: Burks, Bibliography; List of Articles; MS 1490a(s) (draft).

Exactly one-half this volume is occupied by Professor **Royce's** estimate of **Spencer** . Such a review by so ve eminent a philosopher of one of his elder contemporaries should be of great and permanent interest. It will not, however, add to author's reputation. Five different meanings of the term "evolutionist" are given, and yet a very important meaning is omitted--th which Aristotle was an evolutionist, since he certainly based his central conception on the idea of a plant coming up from seed upon something of the sort. Aristotle is represented by Professor Royce as one of the two great anti-evolutionists of Greece, in sense hard to understand from the few sentences he devotes to this matter. But doubtless many of Professor Royce's readers agree with Zeller that, from the passages which the latter cites in Aristotle, the continued evolution of higher perfection "erhelit." some of us it appears to be chiefest of the differences between the historical Aristotle and the imaginary Aristotle of the schola that the former makes the form to grow out of the matter, and continually to increase in perfection in the passage through the vegetable and animal kingdoms to man. However, Professor Royce has earned so much credit for accuracy that we cannot do that in this difficult matter he has chapter and verse ready for citation.

Having sketched the general history of evolution in bold and strong lines, he reviews the origin and significance of Spen own view of evolution. This Englishman's extraordinary innocence regarding every sort of nexus between his own philosophy ai of any remote period or foreign country receives due notice, as well as his failure to regard philosophical thought as itself an evolutionary process in which his own thinking had an organic place. His unemotional, direct, plain, and simple mental build is well described, and brings up to our minds the picture of a common American balloon-frame house with the conventional gable ell, with its own reasons fro being as it is and not the slightest suspicion of any reason for being otherwise. A great deal of atte is bestowed upon Spencer's invalidism, which is attributed in large part to eye-strain, in accordance with the general theory of I M. Gould.

Professor **Royce** next goes on to give his own restatement of **Spencer's** principle in these four propositions that if the parts of any large body are as nearly alike in any specific respect as they then can be, this homogeneity will be unst (2)

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that the differentiating mass, as it ages, will react by its various structure upon the play of the external forces which impinge upon it; that, as the body slowly integrates, the energies within and about it tend to assume an orderly character; and (4) that "evolution is th consolidation of a mass of matter, attended by a loss of some of the energy that this mass contained; while, as this consolidation ta place, both the matter concerned and the energy which it still retains pass from a state in which there is little firmness of structure, l orderliness of arrangement, little sharpness of contour, and much inner resemblance of part and part, to a state in which there is gr firmness of structure, much orderliness of arrangement, much sharpness of contour, and much inner variety of part and part." Evol being thus completed, the reverse process of dissolution begins.

Professor **Royce** passes to a criticism of **Spencer** in something less than four thousand words, or, say, two of the Nation. Here we remark the fairness and catholicity which might confidently have been anticipated. He finds Spencer's limitations to be "as obvious as it is unfair to make one's judgment of him dependent upon them." "The real question is, How f he help people to understand evolution?" He ought not to be condemned because he undertook to conceive of evolution in mechanical terms. He would have been false to his just philosophical purpose had he conceived it otherwise."

The Spencerian will derive great comfort from the different attitudes of the idealist and the logical scientist toward his me

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A Comprehensive Bibliography of the Published Works of Charles Sanders Peirce

The fault which each finds with Spencer is a virtue in the eyes of the other. The latter objects that cosmology, because of its immense variety, cannot possibly be deduced as a consequence of a fixed law, such as that of the "persistence of force," which not of itself suffice even to explain a steam-engine. To do this the second law of thermodynamics has to be invoked; and this is what Maxwell first showed and as is now universally acknowledged, merely provides that nothing shall interfere with certain chance distributions; for an intelligent demon opening a door for molecules that happened to be moving with particularly high velocities one way as well as for those moving with particularly low velocities in the other way, would produce the effect which this "law" denies. It thus has a character opposed to that of ordinary definite laws, since these provide that mere chance is not to have it. The physicists further object that, so far as Spencer explains any phenomena of nature, he virtually bases his explanation on a principle quite independent of that of the "persistence of force," and, moreover, that many of his deductions are too vague to have any value as explanations, although they may be valuable as general descriptions of the course of nature. On the other hand, we must admit that he did well in putting the emphasis he did upon the distinction between simple and compound evolution; the former describing histories such as that of a planet, and the latter, histories such as that of a plant or of a race of plants. These objections are familiar to all who have any acquaintance with the world of physical research. They are worth recalling, however, because they contrast with the objections of Professor Royce brings out the distinctive character of the idealistic views; and we may presume Professor Royce intended to mark this contrast. He is very explicit in bracketing the two laws of thermodynamics as of precisely equal rank, the one

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determining the quantity, the other the direction, of change, and is equally explicit in praising Spencer for reducing all the transformations of the physical universe to this single invariant type. Nor has he one word of fault to find with his deductions as being vague. A reader who should know no other writing of Royce than this would think him substantially a Spencerian like Youmans; for objection he makes is that simple and compound evolution ought not to be described as a single process. But the question whether Spencer does as a matter of fact describe them as a single process or as two processes would appear, to the Spencerian and to the physicist alike, to be little more than a question of words.

The third quarter of the volume is given to a criticism by Professor Royce of Spencer's educational theories which, by the way, have no apparent connection with the doctrine of evolution. They are treated with much greater severity than that doctrine, and the last paragraph of this part reads as follows: "Let us honor him for what he was. But let us be glad that he was not the trainer of our children."

The volume is brought to a close by some personal reminiscences of Spencer by Mr. James Collier, who was for nine years his secretary, and for ten his amanuensis. It is as good a personal portraiture as any we call to mind; not speaking, of course, of large books. It begins by saying that Spencer was no recluse, and telling where he might often be seen in London. The places mentioned do not include any at which he would be drawn into serious discussions; and though, besides the places mentioned could be found, for many years, almost every evening at the Athenæum, upon the committee of which he served, yet he did not enter the conversation circle there, but played a certain number of games of billiards and went home to bed. It was only his sworn adherents who could see much of him. It was that vast work which so absorbed him that sometimes, having of his own motion brought about an interview, when the occasion came he found he must not talk. Yet, let an attack be made upon any position he had taken, and instantly upon hearing it read out he would be ready to dictate his reply, for two or three hours, without wishing to make any corrections. On such occasions, his grasp seemed Napoleonic. In short, he had converted himself into an apparatus performing that one task, and he had no passions or intuitions which in any way deranged his adjustment to that.

That he certainly was a wonderful thinker in his peculiar way appears much more clearly now that his work is done. Mr. Mansell says he never read any book of philosophy except Mansell's 'Prolegomena Logica,' and it is a great pity that he ever read that, because it was just that which introduced an element into his 'First Principles' which philosophical students then and always regard as utterly refuted and out of date, and which did not harmonize with his original work. When one thinks that his 'Psychology' appeared in 1855, five years before Fechner's 'Psychophysik,' and simultaneously with Bain's first book, 'The Senses and the Intellect'--so inferior in originality and value, although it taught us more, because we were better prepared for it--one cannot but regard Spencer very high. He wrote when the ideas of energy were in the air, especially among engineers, with whom he had mingled much. But those conceptions were by no means répandues, as they now are. That he had grasped them in his own way, we need not say. His valuation of

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Darwinism was from the first extraordinarily near to that of biologists of to-day. So it was with his estimate of the nebular hypothesis time when the objections to it appeared most redoubtable.

He did his work in his day, but the system of Synthetic Philosophy will never become a classic. It will not be read forever. Locke's 'Essay concerning Human Understanding,' Berkeley's 'Principles of Human Knowledge,' and Hume's 'Treatise of Human Nature.' In a few years it will have passed into history, along with Cudworth and Occam--books that one wishes to know about to be excused from reading.

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