

# **ON MR. SPENCER'S DATA OF ETHICS**

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On Mr. Spencer's Data of Ethics by Malcolm Guthrie

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**MALCOLM GUTHRIE**

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Note - *lepp* - *leis* - *adj* - *o*, *simon* *rebe* & *out* - *rebe* -  
*oigamim* = a *nasim* *segulah* *rebe*

81 - Short Wild in all it - Hagen  
a fruit of 1000 ft. of south

MR. SPENCER'S

19<sup>th</sup> June 1911  
Fowls

### DATA OF ETHICS.

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BY MALCOLM GUTHRIE.

**AUTHOR OF**

"ON MR. SPENCER'S FORMULA OF EVOLUTION," & "ON MR. SPENCER'S  
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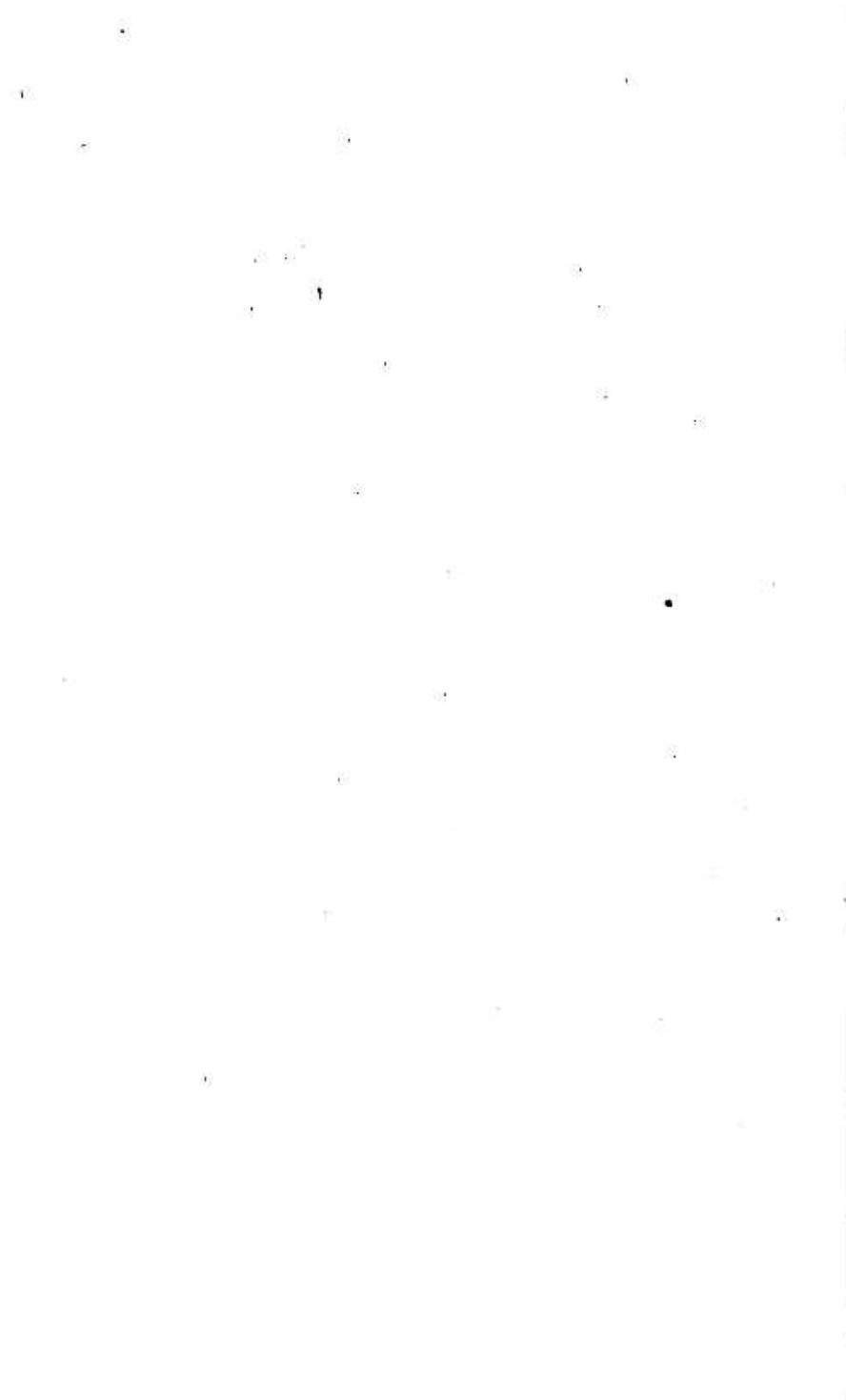
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## PREFACE.

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THIS volume completes the critical examination of Mr. Spencer's system of Philosophy already pursued through two previous volumes entitled respectively "On Mr. Spencer's Formula of Evolution," and "On Mr. Spencer's Unification of Knowledge." The entire task has been undertaken by a student for the use of students. It cannot be of much use to the general reader, as it presumes and indeed requires a very intimate knowledge of Mr. Spencer's works. For those who do not wish to enter into detailed examination perhaps Chapter I. of the "Unification of Knowledge" will afford a good epitome of the line of criticism; and this may be followed, if desired, by a perusal of the "Formula of Evolution." It is believed that the most serious piece of criticism against Mr. Spencer's system will be found in the examination of his re-constructive Biology in Chapter V. of the "Unification," and in the examination of the origin of organic molecules com-

mencing at page 30 of the "Formula of Evolution." Evidently of the highest importance in a system of philosophy conceived in the manner in which Mr. Spencer presents it, this point of transition between the inorganic and the organic with its dependent histories is of the very deepest fundamental interest, and upon the question whether it is well or badly treated depends the practical value of his philosophy as applied to human concerns.

In our opinion, whatever of worth there is in Mr. Spencer's works (and there is very much), derives its value from *a posteriori* grounds and not from its *a priori* reliance upon first principles, nor from its place in a deductive system of cosmic philosophy. It has not fallen to our lot, nor has it been our object, to appraise the separate or incidental value of Mr. Spencer's works. Our view has been limited to the single object of examining them in the mode in which he presents them, as forming a connected system of philosophy. We have done so because he sets forth his works to us in this light, and evidently if they can be so accepted, it would be a gift to humanity of the highest value, for it would lend cogency to every past and confer a guidance to all future ages, forming a crowning glory to the intellectual achievements of the human race.

It is therefore to this point that we address our exami-

nation, and in no unfriendly spirit ; for the object Mr. Spencer had in view was one which appealed to every sentiment and every intellectual aspiration within us. But we feel bound to say how sadly we have been disappointed. We have found the object of our admiration to be like Nebuchadnezzar's dream god, a thing apparently perfect and complete in configuration but like the image compounded of iron and clay and precious stones inevitably falling to pieces under the strain of sustained criticisms.

Mr. Spencer's philosophic conception was indeed imposing, and before its magnificent proportions many have bowed down in sincere respect. But his cosmical scheme when carefully examined proved to be constructed of terms which had no fixed and definite meaning, which were in fact merely symbols of symbolic conceptions, conceptions themselves symbolic because they were not understood—and the moment we began to put them to use as having definite values they landed us forthwith in alternative contradictions ! Then to effect cosmical evolution, which is a process of imperceptible objective change, what was necessary, but to adopt a system of imperceptible word changes, so that the imperceptible word changes accompanying the imperceptible objective changes should lead us in the end to the completed results, and the process of evolution should thus be made comprehensible ! In this manner over