

# Spencer, Herbert

Herbert Spencer was the main theoretician of Social Darwinism, who adapted Darwin's principles to the life of society. He wrote that if someone was poor, that was his own fault: No one should help anyone else to improve themselves. If someone is rich, even if he had acquired that wealth immorally, that was due to his own talent. Therefore, while the poor are eliminated, the rich live on. This view dominates just about all modern societies, and is the essence of capitalist morality. (See **Social Darwinism**.)

Spencer, an advocate of that morality, completed his study entitled *Social Statistics* in 1850. In this he opposed all forms of state assistance, health-protection measures, state schools and compulsory vaccinations. That was because, in the view of Social Darwinism, the social order was based on the principle of the survival of the fittest. Supporting the weak and keeping them alive to propagate was a violation of that principle. The rich were rich because they were more fit, and some nations governed others because they were superior. Some nations had come under the yoke of others because the latter were more intelligent.

Spencer strongly advocated the adaptation of this thesis to human societies, summing up the Social Darwinist view in these words:

If they are sufficiently complete to live, they do live, and it is well they should live. If they are not sufficiently complete to live, they die, and it is best they should die. [233](#)

233. Herbert Spencer, *Social Status*, 1850, pp. 414-415.

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