

Anonymous.  
1890

"Light for 'Outsider' /editorial/,"  
The New York Times, vol. 39 (Sunday, 27 April),  
page 4, column 5.

LIGHT FOR "OUTSIDER."

HERBERT SPENCER is seventy years old to-day. It has been the good fortune of few philosophers of his eminence to witness a more appropriate and gratifying observance of their seventieth birthday than Mr. SPENCER may enjoy in reading the competent and sympathetic appreciations of his life work which THE TIMES prints this morning. Most systems of philosophy are discarded and replaced by newer but perhaps not more enduring systems before their authors reach the allotted age of man. But while Mr. SPENCER'S Synthetic Philosophy is still in ardent controversy, it may fairly be claimed by his adherents that his assailants have suffered more damage than he or his system in the contest that has raged around him during the last thirty years. To have withstood so long the erosive tests of modern thought and inquiry is a distinction and a triumph for any theory formulated by the human mind.

A great part of the discussion which has been laid before the readers of THE SUNDAY TIMES during the last month has been of a somewhat abstruse character. This happens almost of necessity when a cosmic philosophy is the subject in hand. But Dr. W. J. YOUMANS, turning aside from the examination of the merits of SPENCER'S system, presents a body of evidence to show in what honor and esteem SPENCER is held by specialists and men of acknowledged authority in science, and this record persons the least familiar with the evolutionary philosophy may read with full understanding. Dr. YOUMANS'S contribution derives special value both from its source and from its method. Nobody in this country can measure SPENCER'S influence or estimate his standing more accurately than Dr. YOUMANS. He is familiar with the course and vogue of his publications in the United States and abroad, and, as his letter shows, he has been an attentive observer of the treatment of the Synthetic Philosophy by the world's thinkers. In the second place, he answers directly and with specification "Outsider's" call for light. After reading the Doctor's communication, that alert inquirer will be fairly well informed as to what HUXLEY, TYNDALL, MILL, LEWES, LANKESTER, MIVART, HOOKER, and a host of others have thought and said of SPENCER. He will discover, also, an important reason why SPENCER is not a member of a greater number of learned societies. Dr. JANES of the Brooklyn Ethical Society projects other and further illuminating rays upon the subject which "Outsider" found so obscure, and in Mr. ILES'S sketch information of interest and value concerning SPENCER'S early training and the gradual unfolding of his philosophical system will be found. It has been the wish of THE TIMES to get SPENCER discussed in precisely this way--by question and answer, by attack and defense, by argument and counter-argument--and it is gratified at the fulfillment of its wish. The successive installments of the discussion serve to show what opinions American thinkers and inquirers hold about the Synthetic Philosophy, and that is what we wanted to bring out.

425