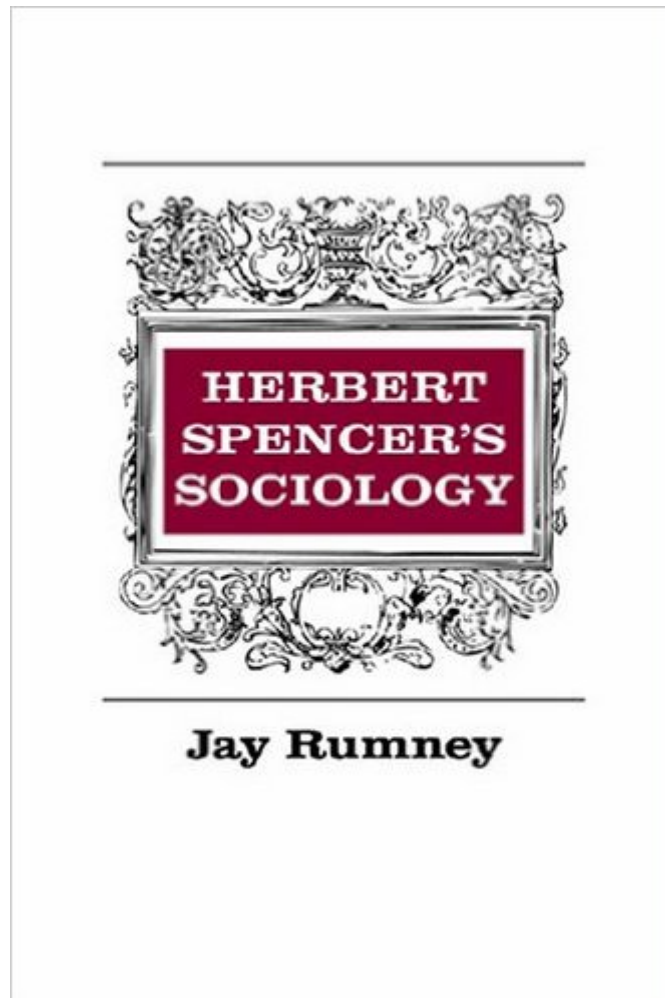


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Herbert Spencer's Sociology



Synopsis

The republication of this book is eminently fitting at this time. It is a valuable, and most readable contribution to a subject meriting renewed reflection. Jay Rumney's Herbert Spencer's Sociology first appeared in 1937. In that year Talcott Parsons, citing Crane Brinton, declared: "Spencer is dead. But who killed him and how?" It was the thesis of Parsons' famous *The Structure of Social Action* that the evolution of scientific theory had put an end to Spencer. For more than a generation the man whose name had been synonymous with sociology was, or so it seemed, repressed and forgotten. Of late there has been a notable revival of interest in Herbert Spencer. Summary rejection of his ideas has yielded to a more judicious appreciation of his contribution to sociological thought: To be sure, social evolutionism in its classic form has passed from the scene. No one today considers society a biological organism. No longer does anyone believe in an iron or cosmological law of evolution guaranteeing the nonlinear development of human society to perfection. But while it was fashionable at one time to dwell upon those aspects of Spencer's work that have since met an honorable demise, there is now undoubtedly a general agreement with Talcott Parsons' more recent statement that Spencer's thinking about society was informed with three main positive ideas: that of society as a self-regulating system, that of differentiation and function, and that of evolution--all of which remain as important today as they were when he wrote. Herbert Spencer's voluminous writings, espousing the theory of evolutionary change as a universal feature of all existence, have exerted pervasive influence on the social sciences of the last hundred years. This volume provides a comprehensive and illuminating summary of Spencer's sociological teachings and his principal conclusions--altogether the only full-scale critical assessment of Spencer's sociology available. The book includes a preface by Morris Ginsberg, and a forty-seven-page bibliography of works by and about Spencer. A foreword by Joseph Maier was written especially for this edition of this authoritative work, now reissued, appropriately, as a classic in the field. Jay Rumney (1905-1957) was professor of sociology and chairman of the Department at the College of Arts and Sciences of Rutgers University in Newark from 1940 until his death in 1957. He was the author of *Probation and Social Adjustment* and coauthor of *Sociology: The Science of Society*.

Book Information

Paperback: 373 pages

Publisher: Aldine Transaction; Reprint edition (August 30, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0202361675

ISBN-13: 978-0202361673

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.8 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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