Social Darwinism

* Definition: A social theory influenced by Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution via natural selection, in which the “struggle for existence” determines the survival, ensuring that the species adapts to new conditions
  + It is widely assumed that the process also guarantees progress toward higher levels of complexity.
* Prominent Figure: Herbert Spencer, a 19th century English philosopher, coined the phrase “survival of the fittest” and believed anything that interfered with the 'natural' relationship of conduct and consequence was to be resisted. i.e. the coercive power of the state to relieve poverty, public education, or compulsory vaccines.
  + Spencer stressed that learning should be a sensory experience. Children should be encouraged to explore, discover, and therefore acquire knowledge naturally. He also believed that education should be a pleasant experience for children with the least restrictions possible.
* Education today continues to be influenced by Spencer's Social Darwinist theories with choice of charter schools, Montessori schools, school vouchers, and other private school options.

Works Consulted:

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