In the 1980s Chinese philosopher Jin Yuelin recalled studying in Britain in the 1920s. He wrote, “Spencer, who was a British sociologist, wrote a long series of works, which was no more than a platitude, and made no real achievements. I remembered that his grave was near to Marx’s, but the people, who coming to view Marx’s grave today, had forgotten or even not know at all that there was a man like Spencer once existed.”\(^1\) Jin Yuelin’s statement reflected the image and reputation of Spencer in China in the 20th century. His philosophy didn’t attract detailed study, just some brief introductions.\(^2\) He was regarded as a Social Darwinist, who applied Darwin’s theory to sociology.\(^3\) He and Huxley were viewed as the icons of thought of science education in 19th-century England.\(^4\) Spencer’s decline took place not only in China, but was almost a worldwide phenomenon. However, he still held considerable status among Chinese intellectuals in the early 1920s, which began with the translation of his essays and works.

Only a small part of Spencer’s works was translated into Chinese, which mainly focused on education and sociology (see Table 4.1 at the end of this chapter). Through the circulation of these translations, Spencer’s ideas of education and sociology made significant contributions to the modernization of Chinese culture and education. Previous Chinese scholarship on Spencer concentrated on the content and influence of his ideas, seldom paying attention to the process of communication and appropriation.\(^5\) James Secord argues that a communication revolution took place in Britain from 1830 to 1850. This revolution allowed the publication of cheap science books for a larger reading

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2 Liu Fangtong et al., eds., *Xiandai xifang zhexue* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1990), 76–87.
audience that included middle class and working class readers. And so, scientific ideas had more importance than ever. Simon Eliot has labeled this same process the “distribution revolution,” and asserts that there also came the “mass-production revolution” in the fourth quarter of nineteenth century. This two-part industrial revolution in the production and sale of books had a profound effect on the dissemination of science. After the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, a publishing revolution took place in China, a “distribution revolution” and a “mass-production revolution” came one after another from 1895 to the 1930s, and quickly changed the character of Chinese society and culture. Christopher A. Reed points out that from Late Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China woodblock printing was developed into mechanized printing by the introduction of western printing technology, and print capitalism was finally established in the 1930s. Due to the great difference between China and Britain, the communications revolution in China had its own features. Chinese people chose printing technology according to the traditional culture and their own needs. At first lithography was actively adopted by publishers and spread quickly in the late nineteenth century. The communications revolution was not accompanied by a rise in literacy rates as in Britain. After the abolition of the imperial civil examination in 1905, which destroyed the traditional education system, the literacy rate decreased for more than two decades and increased again in the early 1930s. In this chapter we will argue that the impact of Yen Yung Kiung's translation was initially restricted, and that the appropriation of Spencer in China was more important before the communications revolution began. In the explosion of journals from 1895 to 1912, Yan Fu's political and educational proposition “San Yu Bing Ju,” which was based on Spencer's classification framework of education, was adopted by Chinese intellectuals. Yen Yung Kiung's translation was also valued and reprinted. In 1923 Zen Hungchun took part in “the science versus metaphysics argument” in journals and periodicals. His translation was published that year and included in the Wan You Wen Ku Series (The Complete Library Series) three years later. It was a cheaply priced series for general readers and was collected in nearly all libraries in China. Chinese intellectuals appropriated Spencer's ideas of education

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