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On the Use and Abuse of Thorstein Veblen in Modern American Sociology, I:

David Riesman's Reductionist Interpretation and Talcott Parsons' Pluralist Critique

By J. L. SIMICH and RICK TILMAN*

ABSTRACT. The analyses and applications of *Thorstein Veblen's social theory* by *David Riesman* and *Talcott Parsons* are found to be deficient. Riesman's study of Veblen lacks viability because the *reductionist methodology* he uses psychologizes and sociologizes Veblen rather than examines the theoretical import of his work. Parsons is wrong in denying the originality of Veblen's work and in treating him as an eccentric *utopian*. Thus the paradigmatic and ideological bias of both Riesman and Parsons preclude a proper understanding and use of such Veblenian concepts as *status emulation* and *conflict*.

I

Introduction

THIS STUDY ASSESSES the views of five leading contemporary sociologists of Thorstein Veblen's ideas and contributions to social theory. It focuses on David Riesman, Talcott Parsons, Daniel Bell, Robert Merton and C. Wright Mills. Each is an important theorist in his own right and although all five have considered the work of Veblen, they reach divergent conclusions about it. Bell and Riesman's attitudes toward Veblen appear to be ambivalent although more negative than positive; Parsons' view is almost wholly negative; Merton finds value in Veblen but uses him in selective, apolitical ways. Only Mills uses Veblen in a more generalized manner as part of a systematic critique of American institutions.

Our analysis will 1) describe and assess the attitudes of each of these major sociologists toward Veblen; 2) determine if they were able to utilize any Veblenian concepts in a fruitful manner; and 3) demonstrate that the particular treatment of Veblen had the effect of diminishing or enhancing his stature as a social theorist.

Assessing Veblen's treatment by American social scientists is important for several reasons.

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First, the five sociologists considered are influential and have helped define the parameters and agenda of American sociology.

Second, it is evident that mainline sociology under the influence of its dominant figures has often abandoned social criticism in favor of approaches that study existing structures, and in the process, justify them by showing that various institutional configurations perform necessary functions in some natural sense.

Third, an attempt is made to canvass the field of sociology and come to some tentative conclusion respecting Veblen's position as a sociologist. The dominant mode of post-World War II sociology was such that the ideas of radical critics—Veblenian, Marxist, Millsian or otherwise—were ignored, rejected, ridiculed and belittled in order to justify more conventional analyses of social structures. This article provides an opportunity to show why this was so. For the conventional treatment of Veblen is indicative of the ideological bias of mainline paradigms and theorists.

Before analyzing the work on Veblen by prominent American sociologists it is essential to explain why so many others simply ignore Veblen altogether. There are several reasons for this.

First, it is not clear to many that Veblen was a sociologist as well as an economist, for he is commonly regarded as the latter.

Second, since Veblen is widely known as a social critic and satirist whose work was heavily laden with value judgments, he is thought to have little to say to "empirical" social scientists.

Third, in the post-World War II era, research grants have been primarily available to those doing empirical work who were able to convince grant-givers that their work was "value-free," that is to say "scientific." Veblen, in spite of tongue-in-cheek posturing as an "objective" social scientist, provided little aid or comfort to those engaged in "value-free" or "scientific" (scientistic?) approaches to the study of society.¹

Fourth, Veblen's iconoclasm was professionally unacceptable to many purveyors of the conventional wisdom who were looking to more orthodox analyses of existing social institutions. Iconoclasm is not "enlightening" when it threatens the basic social fabric and values which the orthodox hold dear.

Although interest in Veblen's work has varied from one period to another, his name is clearly not a household word among sociologists. Nevertheless Veblen's contributions to sociology have not gone unnoticed in certain quarters. Specialists in social deviancy and criminology,² social theory,³ political sociology,⁴ social psychology,⁵ industrial sociology,⁶ social stratification,⁷ social anthropology,⁸ and the sociology of knowledge⁹ have all paid heed to his

work if only to mention it in passing. However, there is a strong tendency in many scholars to simply mention Veblen and one or two of his ideas, without systematically incorporating the ideas into their analyses.

Does this reflect a selective and politically judgmental reaction of American sociologists who find Veblen too radical to take seriously? Or does the answer lie elsewhere? We now turn to analyses of the work on Veblen of selected American sociologists with these questions in mind.

II

David Riesman and the Reductionist Interpretation of Veblen

DAVID RIESMAN'S TREATMENT of Veblen as an eccentric outsider is ironic in view of Riesman's own inability to gain acceptance within the inner sanctum of the sociology profession. He is all the more relevant here because he has published more about Veblen than other sociologists. Riesman's well-known psychoanalytic study, *Thorstein Veblen: A Critical Interpretation*, was accomplished, as the saying goes, "without benefit of couch." His disclaimers to the contrary, Riesman did not heed his own words when he wrote that:

I do not feel that Veblen's intellectual achievement can be reduced to the tangle of motives that produced it. (And I must remind the reader that I can only surmise what these motives were; to be surer of my ground I would need to know much more than I do about Veblen, his parents, his many siblings, his whole development.) In what follows, therefore, I shall proceed without further speculation as to Veblen's personality. . . . There will be no absence of ambiguities, but they will be those of Veblen's published thought, not the ambivalences of his inner life.¹⁰

Unfortunately, much of Riesman's work on Veblen is rife with a reductionism which psychologizes or sociologizes the latter's ideas. Used in this context, reductionism means a refusal to deal with the substantive content of a theory, explaining it rather in terms of its author's family background, occupational environment and ethnic and religious affiliations. Riesman investigates Veblen's relationship with his two wives, his role as a professional economist and his interaction with other faculty, students and administrators. Much of Riesman's speculation is intriguing, but by his own admission it is based on scanty evidence which he often uses as a way of avoiding serious analysis of the independent merits of Veblen's ideas. Indeed, what Riesman unwittingly demonstrates is his own centrist political bias and his ambivalence toward his own values.

At the beginning of his study of Veblen, Riesman tries to justify what he is about to do. He writes that:

We are led to look to the idiosyncratic elements in him for what they will tell us about his ideas. Of course, it does not help determine the truth of a doctrine to penetrate into

its personal and psychological sources in its originator. . . . However, such analysis can sometimes help us trace connections in a man's thought that might otherwise escape us.¹¹

In the first of many examples that could be given, Riesman argues that the influences on Veblen's thinking were conditioned by the fact that:

Veblen, having early handed in his resignation to life and being in many ways a very dependent person, seems to have felt that the "struggling ambitious human spirit" could neither found a scientific system nor change the world, even though, as in many fatalistic schemes, this discovery heartened him to espouse, with a very personal style, the claims of impersonality and, with a very unexpedient life, the mandates of expedient adaptation and determinism.¹²

This allows Riesman to avoid having to deal adequately with Veblen's tongue-in-cheek allegations that he is engaged in "scientific," that is, value-free analysis of the work of other scholars and the existing social order. Veblen's posturing in this respect is certainly open to question, but what is gained by explaining away his position with reference to his personality traits?

Veblen's study of *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution* has been widely praised by scholars in several disciplines both for its explanatory power and its prophetic qualities. But, instead of dealing with Veblen's substantive arguments Riesman argues that "Veblen's ill-disguised and quasiracial dislike of the Germans may have less intellectual roots than here suggested: it may go back to hostility between German and Norwegian Lutheran groups in Minnesota and Wisconsin."¹³ In this book Veblen made major contributions to development theory by advancing his theory of cultural lag, pointing to the advantages of industrial backwardness and the "penalty of taking the lead," and prophesying the resurgence of right wing authoritarianism. Instead of dealing squarely with the main elements of Veblen's analysis, Riesman again engages in reductionism—this time we are told that what "really explains" Veblen's work is the ethnic conflict that existed in the community where he was reared!

Veblen's egalitarian sympathies are evident in his attacks on the vested interests who function at the expense of the common man. Riesman refuses to take a stand on the issue of equality in America and then "explains" Veblen's egalitarianism by asserting that "Veblen was so frightened of one human being taking precedence over another that at times he seemed willing to repress all equally."¹⁴ Veblen's alleged psychological traits are substituted for analysis of the exploitative mechanism upon which he claimed capitalism rested.

Resorting to Veblen's relationship with his parents in yet another example of his psychoanalytic treatment Riesman writes:

The mother was a softer person, whimsical and imaginative; she enjoyed folktales and the Bible. . . . Much of Veblen's work may be read as an internalized colloquy between his parents between one who calls for a hard, matter-of-fact, "Darwinian," appraisal of all phenomena and one who espouses the womanly qualities of peaceableness, uncompetitiveness, regard for the weak. I am inclined to think that Veblen is at his best when he takes the side of the one who is maternal, and is destructive when he tries to be "hard." Like many bright boys, he seems to have been impressed by the male who had the power and authority in his home to give commands, while at the same time developing unexpressed resentments against power and command of any sort. When, late in life, he saw in the hard-boiled, mechanically-adept engineers an elite who would take over the country and run it as a no-nonsense industrial republic, one may sense the return of his father in a Technocrat's uniform.¹⁵

Riesman accounts for Veblen's alleged technocratic elitism by pointing to his father who was a "hard" man. He also explains Veblen's "destructive" (read "radical") polemics in the same manner. If only Veblen had been more influenced by his "soft" (read "liberal") mother!

Much of Riesman's analysis of Veblen reveals more about academic liberalism in the 1950s than it does about Veblen. Indeed, politically it is a form of centrist ideology in which a facade of objectivity and detachment is employed which avoids any substantive criticism of the American social system and political economy. Riesman, however, perceptively acknowledged that "it is a measure of Veblen's strength as a social critic that no rounded judgment of his work can be made that is not also a judgment of American society, now as well as then."¹⁶ Why, then, did not Riesman integrate this idea more effectively into his study of Veblen? The gist of his disagreement with Veblen can be summarized by saying that Riesman approves of American institutions and deems them fundamentally sound and wholesome although slightly in need of repair while Veblen, in contrast, thought these same institutions in his own day to be "imbecile." There is much ambiguity and ambivalence in Riesman's own social thought; more, in fact, than in Veblen. Indeed, it is Riesman's vacillation that vitiates his critique of Veblen and precludes any structural criticisms of American society. Riesman is the 1950s prototype of the social scientist that C. Wright Mills criticized for engaging in the institutionalization of equivocation.

Some of Veblen's more vitriolic attacks on the rich, the financiers, etc., might be explained by his jealousy of their success, ambition and social station. That is to say, Veblen's sarcastic treatment of the leisure class could plausibly appear to be the result of his first generation "Norskie" midwestern-farmer background. But how would Riesman explain the psychological roots of other Veblenian concepts such as the "penalty for taking the lead?" Here

we see no need to "equalize" owing to a fear of failure or lack of "commitment." Also, could not Veblen's indictment and analysis of the university be shared by a professor who was tenured, published, well-paid, and highly regarded by students, colleagues and administrators? Perhaps Veblen was not alone in his feelings toward "higher learning?"

Like Daniel Bell and other post-war critics of Veblen, Riesman is eager to label much of Veblen's work "utopian." He feels, for example, that Veblen's work on economic planning has "something about them anticipatory of *Brave New World*."¹⁷ Also, "Veblen could have lived . . . in a brave new world where all consumption would be guided by Consumer's Research, all production by Technocrats, and living itself by a kind of Fordism, a code of simple and invariant rigor."¹⁸ Finally, "For in spite of his disclaimers and in spite of his skepticism, Veblen does ally himself . . . with the progress-minded thinking of the 19th century rationalist. He envisages a society cleansed by the machine and its presumptive accompanying ease of thought of all ritual, reliquary, and rite. The problem of how such a society, if conceivable at all, would hold together never seems to bother him."¹⁹ Curiously, Riesman now seems to cast himself in the role of defender of the status quo including institutional religion, absentee ownership, and status emulation.

The implications of psycho-biographies such as Riesman's are all too obvious and even dangerous; if and when a dissident voice is heard, simply engage a respected and responsible member of the profession to draw connections between the dissident's ideas and his/her personality. The "analysis" might result in a diminution not only in the dissident's reputation, but also render his or her ideas impotent, crushed by the sheer weight of conventional thought.

Better, perhaps, that in some hypothetical context, books, articles, programs and suggestions be unsigned, so that all forebear the temptation to discredit through reductionism, and instead, meet the arguments therein on their own merits. Riesman's study of Veblen fails to advance the cause of sociology of knowledge and simultaneously performs a grave disservice by portraying Veblen as a hopeless eccentric.

In this skirmish, the dissident's attack is beaten back by subtle yet emotional appeals to conventionality and respectability, with there being no further need to press dubious claims about equilibria or models based on nature. Not surprisingly, the dominant ideology is once again confirmed as legitimate and sensible.

III

Talcott Parsons and the Abuse of Veblen

ONE EXPLANATION FOR the neglect by Americans of native "founders" of social science such as Veblen has been the profound influence of European social science. Talcott Parsons' claim that Max Weber said everything Veblen said, and said it better, is symptomatic of that influence.²⁰ Nevertheless, Parsons' invidious comparison of Weber and Veblen is an example of a curious misrepresentation of Veblen's social theory. John Diggins was closer to the truth than Parsons when he recently wrote that:

No two social theorists could be more intellectually and temperamentally opposed than Thorstein Veblen and Max Weber. Between the radical empiricism of the American and the conservative humanism of the German ran an ideological fault that was as wide as it was deep. Neither scholar had any influence on the other, and in tone and thesis their works are so widely different as to invite little basis for comparison.²¹

Parsons was introduced to Veblen's writings and doctrines by Clarence Ayres, later an eminent institutional economist, while an undergraduate at Amherst in 1924.²² Although Parsons' writings on Veblen are not extensive, it is evident that Parsons was familiar with Veblen's work and with much of the subsequent literature in American economics produced by the institutionalist movement.²³

Parsons attempted to undermine radical critiques of the American national power structure by labeling the normative aspects of them as "utopian." This was evident in his analysis of the work of both Mills and Veblen, whom he lumped together as having basically similar but fallacious views of the existing power structure.

Unfortunately, Parsons confuses two theories which are substantially different by failing to distinguish Mills' power elite theory from Veblen's ruling class hypothesis. More importantly, he charges the two men with having unrealistic views of possible alternatives to the existing system of power, and further, with a highly selective treatment of the whole complex of the power problem.

Both are alleged to be guilty of exaggerating the importance of power by holding that it was only power which "really" determines what happens in a society. Parsons also maintains that Mills and Veblen were inclined to think of power as "presumptively illegitimate; if people exercise considerable power, it must be because they have somehow usurped it where they had no right and they intend to use it to the detriment of others."²⁴ Parsons further contends that behind all this lay a "metaphysical position" which Veblen and Mills shared with a long line of radical critics of industrial society, for both

entertained a “utopian conception of an ideal society in which power does not play a part at all.”²⁵

Summarizing the case against Mills and Veblen, Parsons writes that:

This is a philosophical and ethical background which is common both to utopian liberalism and socialism in our society and to a good deal of “capitalist” ideology. They have in common an underlying “individualism” of a certain type . . . both individual and collective rights are alleged to be promoted only by minimizing the positive organization of social groups. Social organization as such is presumptively bad because, on a limited, short-run basis, it always and necessarily limits the freedom of the individual to do exactly what he may happen to want. The question of the deeper and longer-run dependence of the goals and capacities of individuals themselves on social organization is simply shoved into the background. From this point of view, both power in the individual enterprise and power in the larger society are presumptively evil in themselves, because they represent the primary visible focus of the capacity of somebody to see to it that somebody else acts or does not act in certain ways, whether at the moment he wants to or not.²⁶

We are thus informed that Mills and Veblen so distrust social organization of any sort that they can be lumped together with most of the other critics, right and left, who want to minimize social organization so that individualism can flourish.

According to the Parsonian interpretation of the radical critique, all existing social restraints would vanish in their “utopia” so that anarchy might prevail. Parsons came to espouse an anti-radical, centrist political viewpoint, and refused in his own work to allow any serious normative consideration to forms of social organization which differed significantly from those already existent in the United States. The social ownership and egalitarian power system in basic industries which Veblen and Mills clearly saw as alternatives to the dominant form of ownership and control were therefore labeled “utopian” by Parsons.

Parsons saw little of value in any of Veblen’s major contributions to modern social theory. For example, he disagreed with the emphasis Veblen placed on the role of technology in bringing about social change. As he put it:

Some schools of thought, as of Veblen and Ogburn, give the former (technology) unquestioned primacy. This is at least open to serious question since it is only in relatively highly developed stages of the patterning of functionally specialized roles that the most favorable situation for the functioning of scientific investigation and technological application is attained.²⁷

Parsons suggests, rather, that in a less direct manner, the mobility or resources made possible through property and market relations, and the institutions of personal freedom all greatly facilitate the influence of technology. In Parsons’ “principled” pluralist explanation of social change, greater emphasis must be

placed on the role and value of institutions of early capitalism and Veblen is faulted for exaggerating the role of science and technology.²⁸

Parsons was also highly critical of institutional economics, and implicitly, Veblen, for repudiating the conceptual apparatus of orthodox economic theory without recognizing the possibilities of using its analytic tools in a different framework.²⁹ The denial of the legitimacy of analytical abstraction in economics was a serious error, according to Parsons. And in a broader sense, the institutional movement was abortive and spread disillusionment because it

undoubtedly exaggerated the distance between the two disciplines. The combination (to us) of not very good sociology and a negative attitude toward economic and almost any other theory made this movement a poor entering wedge for exploring interdisciplinary relations on a theoretical level.³⁰

Parsons finds Veblen's distinction between business and industrial pursuits, what is today known as the "ceremonial-technological-dichotomy," to be greatly exaggerated and destructive of the positive role of the business community.³¹

Symptoms of disturbance appeared, *e.g.*, the "technological" view of the destructive consequences of business . . . machinations as interfering with "efficiency;" utopian exaggerations of the results to be obtained from abandoning "business" altogether and becoming purely "technological."³²

Parsons argues that Veblen's application of the ceremonial aspect of the dichotomy to consumer behavior seriously distorts the significance of that behavior. Parsons charges Veblen with believing that consumption under capitalism serves primarily a status function, and indeed is a form of status emulation. Parsons writes that:

The very ready tendency to derogate such symbolism often takes the form immortalized by Veblen in the phrase "conspicuous consumption," with the allegation that people lived in comfortable and tasteful houses, or wore attractive clothes, in order, for instrumental motives, to enhance their prestige. This was then held to be a dishonorable motive with no "intrinsic" connection with the "real" functions of the unit.³³

Parsons continues to the effect that "the aspect of the problem which needs to be noted here is that it arises wherever generalized media of interchange are involved in human action."³⁴ Parsons holds that status emulation will occur wherever there is economic inequality and where money is used as a medium of exchange.³⁵ Parsons fails to note that status emulation is more intense in some societies than in others, and that advanced capitalism is more effective, in part owing to mass advertising, than other kinds of societies in inducing such behavior. He is thus guilty of assuming that status emulation on a massive scale is an inevitable feature of all industrial societies.

Parsons indiscriminately lumps together the different forms of emulatory

behavior, thereby making them appear to be “normal” and generalized features of all societies. He adamantly refuses to consider the waste and deprivation created by some forms of conspicuous behavior. Indeed, his systemic explanation of its functioning comes perilously close to a justification or defense of it.

Parsons would, no doubt, reply that there exists no scientific or agreed upon standard which would allow social scientists to condemn those practices Veblen described. The upshot of all this is that sociology of the Parsonian variety can brook no criticism of social action; what is, and what happens, exist and occur in some natural sense. Criticizing conspicuous consumption is as scientifically pointless as criticizing the behavior of the great white shark or a school of piranha.

Parsons was highly critical of Veblen’s theory of instincts and habits. Yet nowhere does he attempt to go beyond the mere expression of these terms to draw out any further significance they might have. Veblen had cautioned against possible misinterpretation of his use of instinct and habit, and several observers since have pointed out that these terms are best understood in some other sense than the terms imply. Janice Harris, for example, claims that “Veblen’s position on ‘instincts’ and ‘habits’ comes far closer to what Erich Fromm calls ‘normative humanism’ postulating a plausible relationship between basic drives and cultural determination, than to the tenets of biologicistic or of cultural determinism.”³⁶ The best that Parsons can do is to label Veblen’s system as quite “simple.” Considered in the light of Parsons’ own massive inventory that may be true. But nonetheless it is to Veblen’s credit.

Notes

1. The institutional process of separating advocacy from objectivity in order to develop a “value-free” science was a device during Veblen’s day for dissuading powerful, hostile groups both inside and outside the university from interfering with “academic freedom.” See Mary Furner, *Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science, 1865–1905* (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1975), esp. Chaps. 8–13.

2. See W. I. Thomas, *The Unadjusted Girl*, intro. by Michael Parenti, edited with foreword by Benjamin Nelson (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 32; Edwin H. Sutherland, *White Collar Crime* (New York: Dryden Press, 1949), p. 217; Arnold Rose, *Mental Health and Mental Disorder* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1955), p. 19; Donald R. Cressey, “Role Theory, Differential Association, and Compulsive Crimes,” in Arnold Rose, ed., *Human Behavior and Social Processes* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1962), p. 457.

3. For theoretical and/or methodological use of Veblen, see Peter M. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York: John Wiley, 1964), p. 109; Pitirim Sorokin, *Fads and Foibles in Modern Sociology and Related Sciences* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1965), p. 164; Louis Schneider, *Classical Theories of Social Change* (Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1976), pp. 45–46; George Lundberg, *Social Research* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), pp. 13–14,

45, 412; Edward O. Laumann and James S. Howe, "Living Room Styles and Social Attributes: The Patterning of Material Artifacts in a Modern Urban Community," *Sociology and Social Research*, 54 (April, 1970), pp. 321–42.

4. See Seymour Martin Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1967), pp. 17, 30; Lipset, *Political Man* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1960), p. 337; T. B. Bottomore, *Elites and Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1965), pp. 71–73; Harold Cox, "The Motivation of Political Alienation of Older Americans," *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1980), pp. 1–12; Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1965), p. 302; C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1956), pp. 53, 58, 59, 88, 89, 90, 91, 108–10, 191; Gernot Kohler, "Structural-Dynamic Arms Control," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1977), pp. 315–26.

5. See Emory S. Bogardus, *Fundamentals of Social Psychology* (New York: The Century Company, 1931), pp. 48, 245, 250, 263; Tamatsu Shibusani, *Society and Personality* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), p. 255; Muzafer Sherif and Carolyn W. Sherif, *Social Psychology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 424; Gardner Murphy, "Social Motivation," in *Handbook of Social Psychology*, Vol. II, edited by Gardner Lindzey (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1954), p. 622; Harvey A. Farberman, "Fantasy in Everyday Life: Some Aspects of the Intersection between Social Psychology and Political Economy," *Symbolic Interaction*, 3 (Spring, 1980), pp. 9–21.

6. In the areas of industrial sociology and/or organizational theory see Delbert C. Miller and William H. Form, *Industrial Sociology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 74, 202, 465, 530, 825; Robert Presthus, *The Organization Society* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1962), pp. 150, 151, 184, 191, 320; Wilbert E. Moore, *Industrial Relations and the Social Order* (New York: The Macmillan Company, rev. ed., 1951) pp. 360, 489, 569, 595; Reinhard Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry* (New York: John Wiley, 1956), pp. 11, 151; Alvin Gouldner, ed., *Studies in Leadership* (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1965), p. 648. See the essays by various authors in Oscar Grusky and George A Miller, eds., *The Sociology of Organizations* (New York: The Free Press, 1970), pp. 273, 279, 425, 566; Peter Berger, "Some General Observations on the Problem of Work," in Berger, ed., *The Human Shape of Work* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 223; Bertram Gross, *The Managing of Organizations* (New York: The Free Press, 1964), pp. 75, 393; Kenneth McNeil, "Understanding Organizational Power: Building on the Weberian Legacy," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 23 (March, 1978), pp. 55–90.

7. In the area of social stratification, the following authors use Veblen's ideas or cite his work. Pierre Van den Berghe, *Man in Society* (New York: Elsevier, 1975), pp. 95, 115; Milton M. Gordon, *Social Class in American Sociology* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1963), p. 7; Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973), pp. 176, 257; T. B. Bottomore, *Classes in Modern Society* (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 32–33; S. M. Lipset and R. Bendix, "Social Status and Social Structure, I," *British Journal of Sociology*, 4 (June, 1951), pp. 166–67; Chandra Mukerji, "Art Work: Collection and Contemporary Culture," *American Journal of Sociology*, 84 (September, 1978), pp. 348–65.

8. See, for example, Melville J. Herskovits, "The Significance of Thorstein Veblen for Anthropology," *American Anthropologist*, 38 (April-June, 1936), pp. 351–53; Margaret Park Redfield, ed. *Human Nature and the Study of Society: The Papers of Robert Redfield*, Vol. I (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 59–60; Dwight Bolinger, "The Socially Minded Linguist," *Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 8 (1979), pp. 404–07.

9. See Florian Znaniecki, *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge* (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), pp. 82 ff.; Franz Adler, "The Range of Sociology of Knowledge," in *Modern Sociological Theory* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 396; Karl Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951), p. 58. However, Roscoe Hinkle in his *Founding Theory of American Sociology 1881–1915* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) mentions Veblen only once!

10. Preface by Riesman and Staughton Lynd, David Riesman, *Thorstein Veblen: A Critical Interpretation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), p. 51.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.

12. David Riesman, "The Social and Psychological Setting of Veblen's Economic Theory," *Journal of Economic History*, 13 (1953), p. 453.

13. Riesman, *Thorstein Veblen: A Critical Interpretation*, p. 69.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

16. David Riesman and Staughton Lynd, "The Relevance of Thorstein Veblen," *The American Scholar*, 29 (Autumn, 1960), p. 547.

17. Riesman, *Thorstein Veblen: A Critical Interpretation*, pp. 96–97.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 65–66.

20. Talcott Parsons' introduction to Max Weber's *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. by A. M. Henderson and Parsons (New York: The Free Press, 1969), p. 40.

21. John Diggins, *The Bard of Savagery: Thorstein Veblen and Modern Social Theory* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), p. 113. Diggins also adds, perceptively, that "Talcott Parsons . . . likens Veblen's instinct of workmanship to Max Weber's idea of 'The Calling.' The parallel is dubious. In Weber, work is an exercise in repressive moral duty; in Veblen, it is an expressive 'unfolding activity,' a totally secularized concept innocent of the psychological and spiritual anguish supposedly associated with the 'Protestant ethic,'" (p. 70).

22. See Parsons, "Clarence Ayres' Economics and Sociology" in *Science and Ceremony: The Institutional Economics of C. E. Ayres* ed. by William Patton Culbertson, Jr. (Austin and London: Univ. of Texas Press, 1976), pp. 175–80. The eminent institutional economist Clarence Ayres (1891–1972) introduced Talcott Parsons, C. Wright Mills, and Marion Levy to Veblen's social theory. Parsons was a student of Ayres at Amherst in the early 1920s, Mills worked under him at Texas from 1937 to 1939, while Levy was also Ayres' student at the same institution in 1939–40. Levy did considerable work on Veblen early in his career although later he seems to have lost interest in him. Relevant writings by Levy include his "Clarence E. Ayres as a University Teacher" in Breit and Culbertson, eds., *Science and Ceremony*, pp. 181–86, "The Vision of Veblen," *Harvard Guardian*, 4 (October, 1939), pp. 17–32, "The Veblenian Structure and Its Critics," (unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Economics, University of Texas, 1940).

23. Parsons, "Sociological Elements in Economic Thought, I," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 49 (May, 1935), pp. 414–53.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

27. Parsons, *Politics and Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1969), p. 87.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 87, 88.

29. Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (New York: The Free Press, 1961), p. 125. Also

see Parsons and Neil J. Smelser, *Economy and Society* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1956), pp. 5–6.

30. Parsons and Smelser, *Economy and Society*. p. xviii.

31. Parsons, "General Theory in Sociology" in *Sociology Today*, Vol. I, edited by Robert Merton, Leonard Broom, Leonard S. Cottrell, Jr. (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 12–13.

32. Parsons, *Social Systems and the Evolution of Action Theory* (New York: The Free Press, 1977).

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

35. Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (New York: The Free Press, 1963), pp. 244–45.

36. Janice Harris, "Thorstein Veblen's Social Theory: A Reappraisal" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New School for Social Research, New York, 1956), p. 25.

37. The report of our study is concluded in "On the Use and Abuse of Thorstein Veblen in Modern American Sociology, II: Daniel Bell and the 'Utopianizing' of Veblen's Work and Its Integration by Robert Merton and C. Wright Mills," forthcoming in this *Journal*.

A Major Contribution to Business Cycle Research

NO SATISFACTORY THEORY of the expansions and contractions of business activity known as the business cycle has yet been empirically validated. The National Bureau of Economic Research spent millions of dollars in an effort to develop one, and as a result made contributions worth billions of dollars to statistical economics, but the primary goal of the work proved elusive. Other programs at other centers made equally important contributions to economic science, but a theory of the cycle was not one of them.

Now a British economic journalist, Fred Harrison, well trained at Oxford and at the University of London, editor of *Land and Liberty*, the international journal of land reform, and author of several outstanding monographs, presents case studies of the current global recession as it affected the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan and Australia.

His report of his investigation, *The Power in the Land*,¹ maintains that land monopoly "has been the unrecognized cause of the periodic booms and slumps which have regularly afflicted the industrial economies of the West over the past 200 years." He does not indict the price gouging of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, the Arab oil cartel, as one of the primary causes; in his view OPEC's activities were only a secondary cause. The primary cause, he believes, is the institution of absolute private property in land and

1. Fred Harrison, *The Power in the Land* (26 Charing Cross Road, Suite 34, London WC2H 0HY, England: Shephard-Walwyn, Publishers, Ltd., 1983), L8.95.