

Rethinking Instinct Theory from a Darwinian Perspective

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Sexual Selection: A Darwinism which Wallacism Reject

- *“Just as Darwin uncovered the law of organic nature's development, Marx discovered the law of human history's evolution.” (Marx & Engels 1989,467)*
- How do people think about “struggle for existence”?

Veblen's Instinct Theory

- workmanship
- parental bent
- idle curiosity

- savage era

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- emulation
 - predation

- barbarian era
- era of handicraft
- era of machine processes



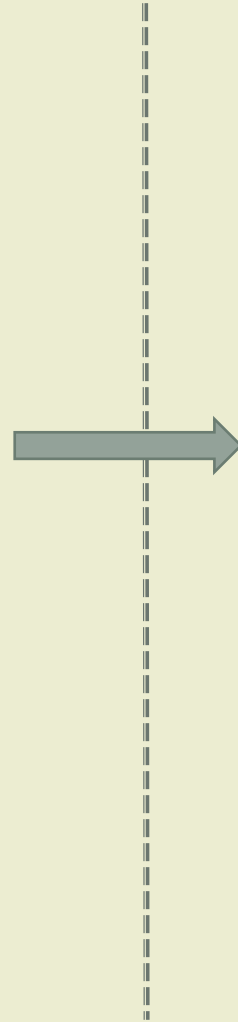
The Origin of Emulation

- *“The opportunity and the incentive to **emulate increase** greatly in scope and urgency. The activity of the men increasingly takes on the character of exploit...” (Veblen 2007,16)*
- *“The evidence for the hypothesis that there has been such a **peaceable stage of primitive culture is in great part drawn from psychology rather than from ethnology, and cannot be detailed here.**” (Veblen 2007,17)*

The Origin of Emulation

- Surplus Products

- Gender Differences



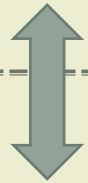
- Marriage

- Divisions

- Ownership

The Unsolved Contradiction in Instinct Theory

- workmanship
- parental bent
- idle curiosity



- emulation
- predation

- savage era



- barbarian era
- era of handicraft
- era of machine processes

The Unsolved Contradiction in Instinct Theory

workmanship

parental bent

idle curiosity

Industry

Technology

emulation

predation

Percuniary

Ceremonialism

The Unsolved Contradiction in Instinct Theory

➤ “the *propensity for emulation*—for invidious comparison—is of ancient growth and is *a pervading trait of human nature*” (Veblen 2007, 74)



Is there a preconception existing?

➤ *Workmanship* “is altogether the more generic, more abiding trait of human nature” (Veblen 1898,196).

Expansion and Criticism in Instinct Theory

- Workmanship Centered Instinct Theory. (Gambas 1976)
 - Extend Instinct Theory to Freud's life and death instinct. (Almeida 2010)
 - Constructive and Destructive Dichotomy. (Reiseman 2019)
- There is also **CRITICISM**. (Hodgson 2004)
1. Do not consider work as a "compensating inducement"
 2. Neglect the possibility that "aversion to labor" was selected
 3. Productive activity is a result of instinct and their combination with habit.
- i.e. Workmanship and aversion to labor are both selected and they are combined with instinct and habit.

A Discussion on Hodgson's Criticism

1. “aversion to labor” is an instinctive behavior as well.
2. Workmanship is contaminated, and expressed as an altruistic behavior which entails productivity behavior may be due to “natural selection of institutions” or “compensating inducements”.

So how did the qualities develop?

A Response to Criticism

- *“The evolution of society is substantially a process of mental adaptation on the part of individuals **under the stress of circumstances** which will no longer tolerate habits of thought formed under and conforming to a different set of circumstances in the past.” (Veblen 2007,127)*
- People need to meet the code of reputable living, which implies their personal biological success.

A Response to Criticism

- Leisure Class 
 - Aversion to labor
 - Sabotage

➤ Rethinking about male peacock's tail

1. Handicap Principle (Zahavi 1975, Zahavi and Zahavi 1999, cited by Wisman 2022)
2. Signaling Theory (Bird and Simith 2005)

A Response to Criticism

➤ Aversion to labor

1. A result of natural selection: economies of effort might bestow greater fitness on the individual (Hodgson 2004).
2. A value that leisure class persists.

➤ Sabotage

1. A fine corporate bureaucracy: better management ability
 2. Strong marketing investment: better salesmanship
 3. Streamline production capacity: better pricing
- } Reliable
&
Profitable

A Response to Criticism

- Both signaling theory and handicap principle enclose that some seemingly useless behaviors to reduce communication cost basing on sex selection.
- Why are people **incented to work?**
 - Productive activity displays one's reliability and enhance sexual appeal (Bird and Smith 2005)
 - “Human altruism is...a sexual ornament” (Miller 2001,339)

A Response to Criticism

➤ **Sexual selection** affects the competitive process of human society in more subtle and complex ways. In Veblenian word, **workmanship is of a process of contamination.**

- workmanship + emulation = creative destruction
- workmanship + idlecuriosity + emulation = speaker, dancer, singer
(Wisman 2022)

Rethinking Instincts in Sexual Selection

- Workmanship → constructive instinct → natural selection
 - Emulation → destructive instinct → sexual selection
- meta-habit

➤ Veblen's contamination focus on “*several instinctive proclivities cross, blend, overlap, neutralise or reinforce one another*” (Veblen 1918,9)

Does both selection mechanism cross and blend each other?

The Interaction between Two Selection

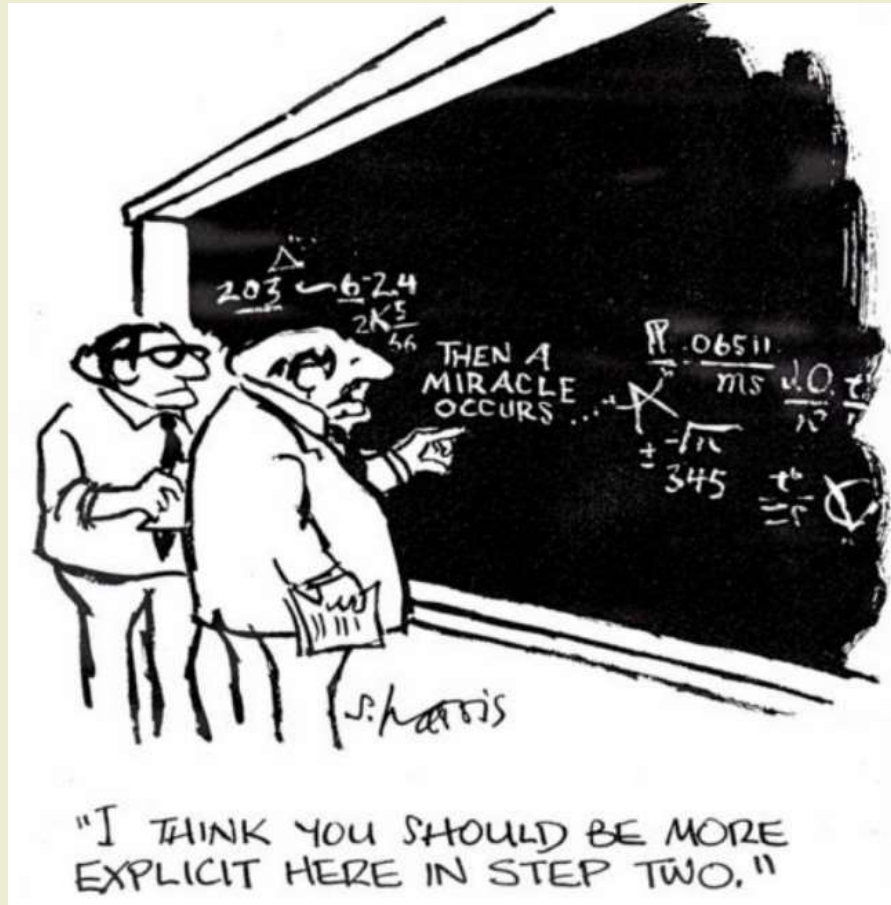
➤ Runaway selection (Fisher, 1930) and Parental investment (Trivers, 1972)

- The length of peacock's tail is of an equilibrium. (Fisher, 1930)
- More healthy characteristics are inherited. e.g. taller men. (Pawłowski et al., 2000)



- To explain emergence which is more the end of the processual account of a phenomenon (Waller 2023)

Conclusion



Source From: Waller,2022

- *“All science makes an attempt to “carve nature at its joints” to study aspects of reality in isolation.”* (Waller 2023,632).
- Where is the “Missing middles” in Instinct theory?
 - More focus on interaction between instinct, habit and institution under two selection mechanism.

MANY THANKS!



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