

## Please May we Join the Veblen Club? – A Response to John Hall

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21 October 2011

*For Journal of Economic Issues*

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We are grateful to John Hall (2011) for his review published in this journal of our book *Darwin's Conjecture* (Hodgson and Knudsen 2010). Hall summarises our work in one paragraph, and then proceeds to raise issues without any direct reference, or quotation from, our book. The foundation of his critique, he admits, is “based on what appears absent.” He accuses us of “subtle efforts to omit Veblen’s contribution.” He concludes that our book takes “social science thinking further and further away from its foundational Veblenian roots.” But he provides no evidence for this. In fact, we refer to Veblen on no less than twenty pages in our book. Hall claims that we raise Veblen and then his thinking is “glibly dropped.” In fact, our references to Veblen extend to later chapters of the book. Our bibliography cites several of Veblen’s works, including three of his books.

Hall claims that our interpretation of Darwin is “reductionist.” Again it is unclear what he means by this. In fact we argue against reductionism on several pages of our book. If reductionism means claiming that social phenomena can be explained largely in biological terms then we explicitly and repeatedly counter this view.

Hall claims that we argue that Darwin’s principles can be “effectively relied upon for explaining processes at the core of evolution taking place in society and the economy.” On the contrary, we argue that Darwin’s core principles are entirely insufficient for such a task. We repeatedly explain that auxiliary explanations and theories are always required. Darwinism, as we explain at length, is not enough.

Hall refers to himself and others as “us Veblenians” and notes with approval an article by Cyril Hédoïn (2010) on how Veblen generalized Darwinism. It appears that Hall is excluding us from this club: he does not count us yet among “us Veblenians”. But we would like to apply to join. Our application would cite a selection of our joint articles, as well as the book under review, among the many which cite Veblen significantly (Hodgson and Knudsen

2004a, 2004b, 2008, 2010). One of us has written no less than eight books that discuss Veblen's contribution at length and largely in approving terms (e.g. Hodgson 2004). In addition our application would a single-authored article published in this journal (Hodgson 2008), which discusses at length how Veblen generalized Darwinian principles. And finally, we would draw the attention of the Admissions Committee of the Veblen Club to a co-editorship of the definitive collection of Veblen's pre-1914 works (Camic and Hodgson 2011).

It seems that Hall may of overlooked one or two of these humble contributions. How else could he write of our "subtle efforts to omit Veblen's contribution" and attempts to take "social science thinking" away from "Veblenian roots"? We hope that the Admissions Committee of the Veblen Club will take a more comprehensive look and consider our application with due regard to our previous efforts.

## References

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