Is There Room For Evolution In Sociology?

Roger G. Albert
Humanities and Social Sciences Department
North Island College
roger.albert@nic.bc.ca

Most sociologists are wary of any intrusion into their discipline of biological or other alien methods and practices. Evolution is not a four letter word, but for them it might as well be. This view must change, but in a way that does not threaten what sociology has already accomplished. The currently dominant structural-functionalist paradigm has severe limitations but has a place in sociology, just as anatomy and physiology have a place in a biology which also has evolution as an important methodological focus. Evolution, conceived of as an analysis of the genesis, growth and decay of institutions (habits of thought and life) adds a new dimension to sociology without detracting from the discipline's current research agenda and practices. Using Veblen and Innis for theoretical inspiration, this paper, from an admittedly 'Canadian' standpoint, argues that a new evolutionary sociology would greatly expand sociology's research domain and bring it fully-fledged into the 21st century.

Introduction

The simple answer to the title question is: there has not been lately, but there could be, and should be. But this answer needs qualification: the evolution to which I refer in the title is not biological evolution per se, but evolution defined in methodological terms as a focus on the genesis and change of phenomena, something which is relevant to all scientific disciplines. Evolution in this sense is a part of sociology's past. As Gouldner pointed out in the early seventies, evolution was inherent in the classical period of sociology, which he defined as the fifty years prior to World War II. However, it rapidly disappeared from the main sociological stage after the war, displaced by structural-functionalism. Publications by Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merton and others in the late thirties established the dominance of structural-functionalism in the United States and Parsons' **The Social System**, which appeared in 1951, was the ultimate expression of its dominance. In recent years attempts have been made to introduce evolutionary biology to sociology via sociobiology but these efforts have been vigorously opposed by mainstream sociologists. (van den Berghe, 1990)

This essay, then, argues for a fresh look at evolution and how it might be incorporated into a new focus for sociology. I think that a major fear among many sociologists is that any intrusion by biology, history or other disciplines into sociology dilutes its raison d'être and threatens its viability as a genuine scholarly discipline. Defensiveness among sociologists is understandable under the circumstances. This said, sociologists must address the strong challenges faced in understanding the evolutionary character of social life. Failure to do so can only result in disciplinary theoretical stagnation. To avoid this stagnation, we must re-evaluate our definitions and practice of science. (van den Berghe, 1990: 173; Veblen, 1961 [1906])

Although this essay acknowledges that biology sets the stage for social life and society itself is the result of evolutionary adaptation, this essay does not contribute to the nature/nurture discourse. Rather, it proposes a reconsideration of evolution for sociology which would provide a whole new methodological thrust for the discipline while maintaining strong disciplinary integrity. The reality is that all scientific disciplines require evolutionistic approaches. For sociology, the evolution I outline here originates with

Thorstein Veblen's work. It focuses on both the genesis, growth and decay of institutions (defined by Veblen as habits of thought and life) and on their natural selection. The question must be addressed, however: Would the incorporation of evolution or an evolutionary perspective necessitate a wholesale rejection of Durkheim's focus on social facts and on the analysis of structure and function, or of Marxism, or of any other current sociological perspective? Not at all.

This essay shares Emile Durkheim's commitment to sociology as the only discipline dedicated to the study of social institutions and social facts. Durkheim argued that sociology's concern with the analysis of social facts justified its existence as a scientific discipline. I do not deny that there is room for the study of social facts in sociology. In biology, the introduction of genetics did not preclude the study of anatomy and physiology. There is no reason why, in sociology, that evolution, in the form of a methodology based on the analysis of the evolution of institutions, should preclude the study of structure and function, although there may be basic incompatibilities between the two approaches in certain areas of analysis. This is a theme I explore later in this essay but a note here is in order.

The normative-pathological approach which is closely tied to structural-functionalism, as originally outlined by Durkheim in **The Rules of Sociological Method**, is based on a number of moral assumptions the most important of which is the assumption that social equilibrium or balance is something for which we should strive. The evolutionary approach avoids the moral assumptions that, for example, one society is better than another, that social inequality is bad, that one type of family is functional, another dysfunctional, that human suffering should be avoided at all cost and that life is preferable to death. It recognizes that social relations and that all things grow and decay. The death of an institution is as inevitable and predictable in essence as the death of any individual human being. The question is not whether or not an institution will survive but when and how it will die, what its life-history is and how it "fits" in with the whole constellation of institutions, in various stages of growth and decay, Veblen called Western Civilization.

According to Veblen, Western Civilization is a going concern, a complex of institutions, not all of them being equally important in the scheme of things. In fact, for Veblen, a hierarchy of institutions exists within which relations of power and dependency must be considered. For instance, voting is a political institution which supports the nation-state, itself a major political institution of Western Civilization which arose in conjunction with, and in support of, business enterprise. Business enterprise is a more general institution, the nation-state a more particular one. From this perspective, nationalism should be anathema to sociologists because as scientists their concerns need to be more cosmopolitan and less partisan, less beholden to a particular institution. More importantly, scientists have a responsibility to critique or 'deconstruct' all institutions and constellations of institutions and not to take any of them for granted, even their own countries. Sociological research which is politically circumscribed should itself be the subject of sociological research designed to uncover and track its development in the growth and decay of Western Civilization. As Harold Innis, a noted Veblenian, suggested in the 1940s, social scientists should resist having politicians lead them around by the nose (which happens when governments commission studies with particular ends in mind or provide convenient 'national' statistics for use by social scientists). But more about this later.

I think that there is a great deal to learn from Thorstein Veblen and Harold Innis about the kinds of evolutionary or genetic (as Veblen sometimes called them) methodological and theoretical concerns which could be successfully incorporated into sociology while still retaining the discipline's integrity. Although neither men were sociologists, they both wrote extensively on the nature of social science and its place in Western Civilization. This paper is largely concerned with demonstrating the relevance of their ideas for sociology. It begins with an assessment of the effects of nationalism and the normative-pathological approach in the social sciences with a significant contribution from

Albrow (1995). It then proceeds to outline the importance of Harold Innis' work for a critique of the role of social science in Western Civilization. Following this section, the paper broadly outlines Innis' intellectual debt to Thorstein Veblen. Veblen presaged Innis' views on nationalism, "rigidities" in the social sciences and reformism. He concluded that science must be occupied by questions of genesis and cumulative change "as it converges on a theoretical formulation in the shape of a life-history drawn in causal terms." (1961 [1906]: 76) Veblen's views on individual action as the basis of institutional formation, and of institutions as the foundation of civilization are highlighted next. The next section points the way to a new evolutionary sociology following guidelines set down by Innis, but especially by Veblen. This section starts by pointing to a version of genetic sociology developed in the first quarter of this century by Davis and Barnes (1931) and by suggesting reasons for its demise. It then proceeds to note the efforts of other social sciences to develop genetic or evolutionary approaches and outlines in general terms the parameters of evolutionary sociology.

Sociology, Nationalism and the Normative-Pathological Approach

There remains among many sociologists in this part of the world a significant bias towards accepting the nation-state as the referential unit of analysis for the study of society. It hasn't always been this way, and it's not true of all sociologists, obviously, but a quick perusal of texts will support my conclusion. What this means, essentially is that instead of dealing, for example, with the family as a general evolving institution of social organization, sociologists explore the "Canadian" family; instead of undertaking an evaluation of the evolution of economic institutions, sociologists study the "Canadian" economy. As a concession to "globalization," some sociologists offer up comparative international analyses à la Seymour Martin Lipset, comparing the "Canadian" family with the family in the U.S. or Iran, or wherever. But this new international focus does not reflect a diminution of the emphasis on the way sociologists use the nation-state or country as their primary referential or organizing unit of analysis. That many "Canadian" or "American" sociologists put the nation first is not surprising.

Albrow (in Brym, 1995: 15.2), notes that the social sciences developed within, and generally exist to benefit, the nation-state. Social scientists are, like most other people, loathe to bite the hand that feeds them. The question of who signs one's paycheque is a very real one. The social sciences are largely supported by the state and are expected to serve the state, but the social sciences also have broad disciplinary interests. There is a special tension between sociology's "global" disciplinary interests and service to the nation-state. (Lee, 1994) It is nevertheless true that in the context of liberal ideology some social scientists are allowed to be more critical (and annoying for politicians) than the main but as long as they remain marginal, there will not be any trouble with the regularity with which paycheques are issued. "We must tolerate dissent, now mustn't we," as a principle can easily be combined with institutional limitations on the expression of that dissent. As we should expect though problems are gathering on the horizon like storm clouds to dampen our picnic. The sovereignty of the nation-state is now being threatened, we are repeatedly told, and if that is true, if the nation-state is truly withering away, then who will sign our paycheques?

So, social scientists have a vested interest in nationalism, and *a priori* interests of any kind have profound consequences for the very nature of social scientific practice, teaching and research. In one instance, the vested interest of social science in the nation-state is often expressed as a form of analytical patriotism which, combined with a structuralist bias, produces the scientifically untenable equation of society with nation-state. (Albrow in Brym, 1995:15.2) In another instance, if we accept the nation-state as an *a priori* context for social scientific analysis, we give up our responsibility to critically examine it as an evolving institution within the context of the history of Western Civilization. We take it for granted. In yet another instance, we open ourselves wide to pressures from all quarters to "do something" about the "problems" facing Canada. For marginal toilers in the social scientific world, for political economists and Marxists, the

pressure to "do something" is no less severe than for others. In fact, for a group that is quick to point out the problems and failings of "Canadian society" the pressure to come up with solutions may be even greater than for social scientists already happily involved in finding solutions for business and government and applying them. Consequently, there is enormous pressure on social scientists to adopt normative/pathologica1 approaches to the detriment of historical or evolutionary approaches. The issue is essentially a political one but it comes to rest practically on the choice of units of analysis sociologists make.

The question of the selection of units of analysis in the social sciences is a long standing one. As much as anything the debate is centered on the very nature of social science itself. For his entire academic career which spanned the years of the second quarter of the twentieth century Harold Innis was concerned about social science and threats to its survival. His main focus was on the effects of nationalism and specialization in the social sciences and with what constituted effective units of analysis for the social sciences.

Innis

Harold Adams Innis was an internationally recognized economic historian and scholar born in Ontario, Canada, in 1894 and who died in the same province in 1952 after a long and illustrious career at the University of Toronto. He published widely and served on a number of Royal Commissions. He wrote substantial monographs on the Canadian Pacific Railway, the fur trade and the Atlantic cod fishery. He also wrote numerous articles on the newspaper industry and on the role of communications in the rise and fall of empires over the whole of the history of Western Civilization and he delivered countless speeches to academic audiences. We should not expect any more of his work than we do of our own with regard to consistency of perspective over time. He changed his mind on occasion, his focus changed over time and he often wrote and spoke in a sort of metaphoric and tangential code because, I think, he felt that his colleagues would reject him and his career would be in danger if he spoke or wrote too plainly and directly. As he delivered “Minerva’s Owl," a sweeping view of the evolution of communications in Western Civilization and the Presidential Address to the Royal Society of Canada in 1947, with many of his colleagues such as Donald Creighton and S.D. Clark present, never was he more at once at the center of academic life in Canada while at the same time being firmly at its margins. In a contradictory way, Innis was consumed with being a "successful" academic, that is, an academic with offices and respected positions in his university and in professional associations, while at the same time maintaining a view of the nature of the social sciences at odds with the views held by the vast majority of social scientists and historians at the time. There was little of the methodology in "Minerva's Owl" to which his colleagues could relate. The speech is nonetheless a prime example of his method of analysis and his focus on the growth and decay of institutions in Western Civilization. Not surprisingly, a favourite theme in his books, articles and speeches is the state of the social sciences and the deleterious effects of nationalism thereupon.

Nationalism and Science

Innis repeated on a number of occasions the notion that science is the search for truth. The emphasis in "search for truth" must be on "search" because to settle on a particular truth, according to Innis, means to abandon the search and thereby to abandon science. The findings of science must be subject to continuous revision and rejection; there is no absolute truth in science. Innis (1972 [1950]: 63) wrote: "With the independent search for truth, science is separated from myth." Of course, many scholars of the time were not convinced that there could even be a social science (see esp. Urwick, 1935), and for those who accepted the premise of a scientific study of human social life, many fell in love with their theories and in effect abandoned social science itself in the process.

The effects of nationalism have been especially devastating for the social sciences. "Scientific interest has been distorted to fit the mold of nationalism," Innis remarked, "and national boundaries have become cultural facts with the permanence of features of

geological phenomena." (1945: 302) Nations elicit the support of social scientists and, as Innis noted caustically, "On all sides the social scientist can be seen carrying fuel to Ottawa to make the flames of nationalism burn more brightly." (1946:x11) The increasing collection of national statistics and unquestioned use of them in the social sciences indicate that social scientists are ready and willing to serve the interests of the nation in promoting itself. (Innis, 1951 [1949]: 104) "Social scientists of reputable standing are known as nationalists or imperialists or protectionists or free traders." (Innis, 1935:281) On the grounds that social scientists must be free to search for the truth wherever that search might lead them, Innis rejected the notion that the region or nation-state should be considered an appropriate starting unit of analysis in the social sciences. He concluded: "The importance of vested interests and of rigidities in thought in the social sciences [such as nationalism] weakens the position of the social scientist in relation to impacts of cultural importance." (1916:vll)

For this reason, he was critical of the League for Social Reconstruction and Frank Underhill; both closely associated with the CCF (now the New Democratic Party of Canada, a democratic socialist political party). Ironically, he used Marx to criticize them and he quoted **The Communist Manifesto** (under Marx's title "Conservative or Bourgeois Socialism") to do it: "...to this section belongs economists, philanthropists, improvers of the conditions of the working class, organizers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to dumb animals, temperance fanatics, hole-in-the wall reformers of every imaginable kind." (Innis, 1936: 283). He was critical of "meliorism" of any kind and he wrote:

> The task of the social scientist is to discover, not to persuade. There are fewer and fewer people who will admit that they do not know, or who have the courage to say that they have not solved the problem. And yet that is what the social scientist must continually keep saying if he hopes to maintain any hold on intellectual life. Constant admission of ignorance is not popular in lecturing, to say nothing of its impracticability as a means of winning elections.

The point is that if one has found the truth and has abandoned science, all that is left is proselytization and persuasion. Both are anathema to science. Rather than attempt to make things "right," in the world, according to Innis, the social scientist must attempt to keep focused on the broad sweep of the evolution of civilization.

Innis wrote in the Preface to *Political Economy in the Modern State* , "Perhaps the most significant development in the social sciences in the past quarter century has been the interest in the study of civilization following Spengler, Toynbee, Kroeber and others." (Innis, l946:xvi). He followed Veblen very closely in his definition of economics as the study of institutions of civilization primarily concerned with the material survival of men. In the early stages of his career, Innis studied the institutions of Western Civilization as they expanded into North America, but in the latter part of his career he extended his attention to the whole course of the development of Western civilization in the hope of uncovering a solution to the problems of monopoly and extremism evident in the twentieth century.

He extended his analysis not out of antiquarian interest, but to test the tools of economic history, i.e., to determine if economic history could explain the present crisis of modern civilization. His early studies were studies in the growth and decay of Western Civilization at its spatial margins. **A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway, The Fur Trade in Canada** and **The Cod Fisheries** were all studies in the spread of institutions of Western civilization into North America. His later studies are no less concerned with Western civilization although they are focused largely on earlier empires such as those of ancient Egypt, Babylonia, Sumeria, Greece and Rome. His interest in the study of civilization now moved clearly into an analysis of the temporal and spatial dimensions of the growth and decay of institutions of Western Civilization. His earlier interest in the evolution of production and distribution in the pulp and paper and newspapers industries

led him eventually to an interest in the invention and institutionalization of various media of communication and their effects on the rise and fall of empires, which he considered prime institutions of Western Civilization. Unquestionably, Innis' adoption of civilization as his overarching unit of analysis came largely from Thorstein Veblen[1]. Veblen had earlier pointed to the analysis of civilization as the major objective of a post-Darwinian social science. It's to Veblen that we now turn.

Veblen, Science and Civilization

Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) was an economist and social scientist born in the state of Wisconsin. He attended Carleton College in Minnesota and then moved on to Johns Hopkins University where philosophy was his main interest. He eventually received a doctorate in economics from Yale University. For various reasons, some personal and some professional, he was either revered or hated by his colleagues. He was thrown out of some of the best universities in America. As Max Lerner (1948: 10) writes:

> The Philistines knew that a giant was among them, but he was the wrong kind of giant, whose strength they feared, and they were glad to see him go packing before he pulled the temple down around their heads. What outraged them in Veblen, one may surmise, was less his unstable ménage than his dangerous thoughts.

And dangerous thoughts he did indeed have, especially for classical economics. His economics were so foreign to mainstream economists that his critics maintained that he was "not scholarly," "not an economist." In deprecation, they intimated that he "may have been a sociologist, perhaps, but not an economist." (Lerner, 1948: 10) He had totally abandoned the hedonistic calculus, the basis of classical economics, and was urging economists to study the evolution of institutions. His critics were dumbfounded by his approach and his unabashed use of Darwinian principles in his work. He paid dearly for his critical spirit. As Lerner, 1948: 10) noted wryly,'They made his path hard from the beginning, his salary small, his promotions slow; the range of teaching posts available to him shrank, despite his fame; he never got a grant of funds for any research project he ever submitted." Waller and Robertson (1990: 1027) conclude that

> It is difficult if not impossible for neo-classical economists to understand and respond to the way Veblen writes, especially in **The Theory of the Leisure Class**. We are not arguing that Veblen is hard to grasp. Quite the contrary. We are arguing that economics as a discipline has so narrowed its definition of the field that economists are often simply baffled by anyone who does not think as they think. When one person thinks differently from others, he or she will express ideas differently. In baldest terms, that means he or she will use the language differently and will conceptualize the world differently. It is one thing to disagree with someone who thinks differently from you. It is quite another to have such a limited capacity for comprehending discourse that you simply cannot grasp that someone else has challenged your fundamental way of conceptualizing the world. It is this latter case that we think explains the problem Veblen presents to mainstream economists.

Whatever the reason, it is clear that Veblen became a virtual pariah even though his scholarship was evident in the many books he wrote including his seminal **The Theory of the Leisure CIass** (1899) , his **The Theory of Business Enterprise** (1904)**, The lnstinct of Workmanship and the Stare of the lndustrial Arts** (1914), **Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution** (1915), **The Higher Learning in America** (1918)**, The Place of Science in Modern Civilization** (1919) and **The Engineers and the Price System** (1921) among others.

Innis' debt to Veblen was immeasurable in terms of method of analysis but he also learned another valuable lesson from him: 'The first duty of the social scientist is to avoid martyrdom." (Innis, 1935:210) Innis was definitely successful in doing just that. By

compromise and by the use of oblique speech and phrase he avoided the martyrdom Veblen endured. But as his career moved forward and he felt a little more secure in his position, he promoted his method of analysis more self-consciously and he allowed himself to engage more openly in polemics about the nature of science, especially social science, and the role of the university in protecting the climate that makes the social sciences possible. Whatever Veblen meant to Innis, I think that the initial attraction of Veblen's work for Innis was his method of analysis and his conception of science.

There is no substitute for a careful reading of Veblen's **The Place of Science in Modern Civilization**, from which much of the following is drawn. However, I cannot reproduce his entire argument here so I must risk doing violence in some measure to it and I can do so only under the proviso that my outline of Veblen's work here should not be taken as definitive.[2] Pushing ahead, I suggest that Veblen's life opus can best be understood by tracking the positive side of his contribution. On the negative side of Veblen's work, as Innis noted, he undertook a devastating critique of classical and marginal utility economic theory, but on the positive side added his contribution to a new perspective on the nature of science and the way science has evolved to explain the social world. Always, Veblen applied the evolutionary approach (which he also called the life-historical or genetic approach) consistently to the study of social phenomena and social organization, including to science itself.

For Veblen,"the growth of the scientific point of view begins farther back than modern Christendom, and a record of its growth would be a record of the growth of human culture." (1961[1906]: 39) He noted that human nature has remained much the same for millennia and that modern institutions and human characteristics and propensities can be traced in an unbroken sequence for as long as human culture has existed. According to Veblen, “scientific inquiry proceeds on the same general motive of idle curiosity as guided the savage myth-makers, though it makes use of concepts and standards in the great measure alien to the myth-makers' habit of mind." (1961 [1906]: 26) So, modern humankind has evolved idle curiosity which at all stages, "formulates its response to stimulus, not in terms of an expedient line of conduct, nor even necessarily in a chain of motor activity, but in terms of the sequence of activities going on in the observed phenomenon.” (l96l [l906]: 7) In "savage" culture, the product of idle curiosity is "a large body of knowledge organized into myths and legends." (1961 [1906]: 7) These may have no practical value whatsoever, nor any "intended bearing on [the] conduct of practical affairs." (l96l [l906]: 7) And as Veblen noted, "the test of truth applied throughout this body of barbarian knowledge, is the test of dramatic consistency." (1961 [1906]: 8) Of course, “[barbarian] peoples have also a considerable body of worldly wisdom in a more or less systematic form. In this the test of validity is usefulness." (1961 [1906]: 8) Earlier in the same work, Veblen had already written that

> With the advent of modern times, a change comes over the nature of the inquiries and formulations worked out under the guidance of the idle curiosity - which from this epoch is often spoken of as the scientific spirit. The change in question is closely correlated with an analogous change in institutions and habits of life, particularly with the changes which the modem era brings in industry and in the economic organization of society. (1961 [1906]: 2)

One of the major changes wrought in the modern era was a change from an emphasis on workmanship in industry to the machine process. Within the context of this change:

> The dramatic interpretation of natural phenomena has thereby become less anthropomorphic; it no longer constructs the life-history of a cause working to produce a given effect - after the manner of a skilled workman producing a piece of wrought goods - but it constructs the life-history of a process in which the distinction between cause and effect need scarcely be observed in an itemised and specific way, but in which the run of causation unfolds itself in an unbroken sequence of cumulative change. (1961 [1906]:16)

The machine process, thus, produces an animus which informs the research scientist. Yet,

> as seen from the point of view of the scientist, it is a wholly fortuitous and insubstantial coincidence that much of the knowledge is useful, or may be made so, by applying it to the control of the processes in which natural forces are engaged. This employment of scientific knowledge for useful ends is technology, in the broad sense in which the term includes, besides the machine industry proper, such branches of practice as engineering, agriculture, medicine, sanitation, and economic reforms. (1961 [1906]:16)

Thus, the modern scientist must not be concerned with useful purpose. Science and technology go hand in hand in that they are both animated by the same "canons of validity "[which are] made for [the scientist] by the cultural situation; they are habits of thought imposed on him by the scheme of life current in the community in which he lives; and under modern conditions this scheme of life is largely machine-made." (1961 [1906]:17) Veblen concluded, in a summary statement:

> In the modem culture, industry, industrial processes, and industrial products have progressively gained upon humanity, until these creations of man's ingenuity have latterly come to take the dominant place in the cultural scheme; and it is not too much to say that they have become the chief force in shaping men's habits of thought. Hence, men have learned to think in the terms in which the technological processes act. This is particularly true of those men who by virtue of a peculiarly strong susceptibility in this direction become addicted to that habit of matter-of-fact inqujry that constitutes scientific research. (1961 [1906]:17)

Science and technology, although related, are not compatible in the sense that science, driven by idle curiosity, must not settle on a particular course of expedient conduct, whereas it is the role of technology to do just that. There is only one conclusion to be reached on the basis of this argumentation, one that is reflected in all of Innis' work. In Veblen's own words,

> Pragmatism [read worldly wisdom] creates nothing but maxims of expedient conduct. Science creates nothing but theories. It knows nothing of policy or utility, of better or worse. (1961 [1906]:19)

So Veblen concluded that modern science was driven by the same motive of idle curiosity that drove the "savage" myth-maker for most of the history of human culture and is informed by the way the technological process acts in any given historical stage. In the modern era, science is particularly matter-of-fact and as he wrote:

> The sciences which are in any particular sense modern take as an (unavowed) postulate the fact of consecutive change. Their inquiry always centers upon some manner of process. This notion of process about which the researches of modern science cluster, is a notion of a sequence, or complex, of consecutive change in which the nexus of the sequence, that by virtue of which the change inquired into is consecutive, is the relation of cause and effect, The consecution, moreover, runs in terms of persistence of quantity or of force. In so far as the science is of a modern complexion, in so far as it is not of the nature of taxonomy simply, the inquiry converges upon a matter of process; and it comes to rest, provisionally, when it has disposed of its facts in terms of process. But modern scientific inquiry in any case comes to rest only provisionally; because its prime postulate is that of consecutive change, and consecutive change can, of course, not come to rest, except provisionally. By its own nature, the inquiry cannot reach a final term in any direction. So it is something of a homiletic commonplace to say that the outcome of any serious research can only be to make two questions grow where one question grew before. (1961 [1906]:32)

Considering this lengthy quotation, it is no wonder Veblen's colleagues were less than fond of him. They could not relate in the slightest to this view of science which he termed, following convention, "post-Darwinian," a term to which he added a caution true to his view of history outlined in the above quotation, "[Darwin's] voice may...be taken as only one of the noises which the wheels of civilization make as they go round." (1961 [1906]: 36) Veblen had a genuine respect for Darwin, but he considered Darwin's work to be a contribution to a process and not a value in and of itself. Veblen was definitely not a fan of the "great man" interpretation of history. This might prove vexing indeed for colleagues aspiring to the status of great scholarly men. Leaving this aside, the next question now must be: what would be the nature of a modern science of human culture?

For an answer, we turn to an article Veblen published in 1909 called *The Limitations of Marginal Utility*. In this article, aside from lambasting his colleagues in classical economics for their "statical" approach and their "hedonistic postulates," Veblen provides a sense of what he considered would constitute a post-Darwinian scientific point of view with regard to human culture. He writes:

> In so far as modern science inquires into the phenomena of life, whether inanimate, brute or human, it is occupied about questions of genesis and cumulative change, and it converges on a theoretical formulation in the shape of a life-history drawn in causal terms. In so far as it is a science in the current sense of the term, any science, such as economics, which has to do with human conduct, becomes a genetic inquiry into the human scheme of life; and where, as in economics, the subject of inquiry is the conduct of man in his dealings with the material means of life, the science is necessarily an inquiry, into the life-history of material civilization, on a more or less extended or restricted plan. Not that the economist's inquiry isolates material civilization from all other phases and bearings of human culture, and so studies the motions of an abstractly conceived "economic man." On the contrary, no theoretical inquiry into this material civilization that shall be at all adequate to any scientific purpose can be carried out without taking this material civilization in its causal, that is to say, its genetic, relations to other phases and bearings of the cultural complex; without studying it as it is wrought upon by other lines of cultural growth and as working its effects in these other lines. But in so far as the inquiry is economic science, specifically, the attention will converge upon the scheme of material life and will take in other phases of civilization only in their correlation with the scheme of material civilization. (1909: 628)

With these long quotations I risk contradicting the statement I made earlier about not including here Veblen's whole argument, but I include them because they so succinctly express Veblen's thought and because I want to give you a taste of Veblen's language and some exposure to the subtlety and complexity of his argument. The above quote outlines Veblen's views on economics, but his remarks apply equally to all the social sciences. They also warn of the dangers of specialization in the social sciences because of the complexities of human civilization and they presage Innis' views on specialization in the social sciences.

Civilization, Individual Action and Institutions

Following the extensive quote above, Veblen turns his attention immediately to the subject matter of social science, that is, to civilization. He writes:

> Like all human culture this material civilization is a scheme of institutions institutional fabric and institutional growth. But institutions are an outgrowth of habit. The growth of culture is a cumulative sequence of habituation, and the ways and means of it are the habitual response of human nature to the exigencies that vary incontinently, cumulatively, but with something of a consistent sequence in the cumulative variations that so go forward - incontinently, because each new move

> creates a new situation which induces a further new variation in the habitual manner of response; cumulatively, because each new situation is a variation of what has gone before it and embodies as causal factors all the underlying traits of human nature (propensities, aptitudes, and what not) by force of which the response takes place, and so the ground of which the habituation takes effect, remain substantially unchanged. (1909: 628)

So, civilization is the broadest context of Veblen's analysis, but civilization is a scheme of institutions which are "crystallized" habits of thought and of life which arise in the cultural scheme of things in a process of natural selection of ways of doing things and in ways of thinking. Individual conduct, thus, plays a central role in Veblen's method of analysis.

> The growth and mutations of the institutional fabric are an outcome of the conduct of individual members of the group, since it is out of the experience of the individuals, through the habituation of individuals, that institutions arise; and it is in this same experience that these institutions act to direct and define the aims and ends of conduct. It is, of course, on individuals that the system of institutions imposes those conventional standards, ideals, and canons of conduct that make up the community's scheme of life. Scientific inquiry in this field, therefore, must deal with individual conduct and must formulate its theoretical results in terms of individual conduct. *But such an inquiry can serve the purposes of a genetic theory only if and in so far as this individual conduct is attended to in those respects in which it counts towards habituation, and so toward change (or stability) of the institutional fabric, on the one hand, and in those respects in which it is prompted and guided by the received institutional conceptions and ideals on the other hand*. (1909:629-630) [my emphasis]

Thus, individual conduct that leads to institutions is the basis upon which theoretical results must rest. But are there some kinds of individual conduct that are more “important" than others in the scheme of things, or stated another way, is there a kind of differential of importance of institutions in the cultural complex that Veblen calls civilization? Veblen (1961 [1906]: 38) gives us a clue in his statement that habits of thought are an outcome of habits of life. And habits of life change largely due to environmental pressures and the falling into disuse of previously derived institutions. Based on this conclusion he states that "...the forces that count toward a readjustment of institutions in any modern industrial community are chiefly economic forces; or more specifically, these forces take the form of pecuniary pressure." (1967 [1898]: 195-196) He gives us another clue in his conclusion that scientific thought is largely defined by the way the technological process acts, and another yet in his view that:

> Indeed, so great and pervading a force has this habit (institution) of pecuniary accountancy become that it extends, of as a matter of course, to many facts which properly have no pecuniary bearing and no pecuniary magnitude, as, e.g., works of art, science, scholarship, and religion. More or less freely or fully, the price system dominates the current common-sense in its appreciation and rating of these non-pecuniary ramifications of modern culture; and this in spite of the fact that, in reflection, all men of normal intelligence will freely admit that these matters lie outside the scope of pecuniary valuation. (1909: 631)

So, economic institutions, particularly pecuniary accountancy and business enterprise dominate the scheme of institutions of Western Civilization. They dominate most other institutions, including countries or nation-states, which are in fact the prime explicitly political institutions in the current phase of Western Civilization. They are effectively supra-national or cosmopolitan, in Veblen's terminology. Anticipating Innis' views on nationalism and patriotism, Veblen (1967b [1917]: 587) concluded that

> the modern civilized scheme of life is, notoriously, of a cosmopolitan character, both in its cultural requirements and in its economic structure. Modern culture is

> drawn on too large a scale, is of too complex and multiform a character, requires the co-operation of too many and various lines of inquiry, experience and insight, to admit of its being confined within national frontiers, except at the cost of insufferable crippling and retardation.

This view is not incompatible, I think, with Marx's conclusions regarding the economic base and the superstructure of any particular mode of production, including capitalism. Nowhere in Marx is the idea that there is capital that can be "of" the nation-state, so to speak. Capital is the more general institution and the nation-state the subordinate one although there is no denying that at a certain phase in the evolution of capitalism the interests of capital seem to be circumscribed by national frontiers. (Olsen and Marger, 1993: 75) However, to allow that the primarily political institution of capitalism (in Marx's terminology) or the phase of evolution of Western Civilization dominated by business enterprise (in Veblen's terminology) we call the nation-state circumscribes capital's interests is to allow the supremacy of political over economic institutions, something neither Marx nor Veblen would accept.

Veblen (1967b [1917]; 587), with the above possibility in mind and with reference to the responsibilities of social science, noted that

> The science and scholarship that is the peculiar pride of civilized Christendom is not only international, but rather it is homogeneously cosmopolitan; so that in this bearing there are, if effect, no national frontiers; with the exception, of course, that in a season of patriotic intoxication, such as the current war has induced, even the scholars and scientists will be temporarily overset by their patriotic fervour. Indeed, with the best efforts of obscurantism and national jealousy to the contrary, it remains patently true that modern culture is the culture of Christendom at large, not the culture of one and another nation in severalty within the confines of Christendom.

With these Veblenian sentiments in mind, Innis' remarks on the subject outlined earlier in this paper and the observations I made at the beginning of this paper with regard to analytical patriotism we might wonder through what "season of patriotic intoxication" we are now living.

To draw a close to this section of the paper, Veblen's concerns can be summarized. Western Civilization is a going concern with a particular life-history. It's a context for the growth and decay of institutions which has at its core material or economic institutions. The kinds of individual conduct that lead to changes in the material circumstances of life under pressure from external forces have far reaching effects and consequences. Those which are successful in the natural selection process become habits of life and of thought which then constitute the constellation of institutions Veblen calls Western, Modern or Occidental Civilization or Christendom. Science, of course, is one of these institutions. The social sciences, qua sciences, must be a genetic analysis of the growth and decay of institutions of Western Civilization as a going concern and in their interconnectedness.

In all of this, Innis' debt to Veblen is transparent. From his views on civilization, institutions, and the role of science, Innis followed the master. His unique contribution was the application of Veblen's perspective to a number of important institutions of Western Civilization in the northern part of North America. In all the theoretical essentials, however, Innis was a Veblenian. Together, their work is based on an elaboration of the Darwinian principle of natural selection to social life and to institutions and is an extension of genetic or evolutionary science, as opposed to normative science, to social life. Their work lays a great foundation for the elaboration of a new evolutionary sociology.

Towards A "New" Sociology

I address three themes in this section. First, the fact that there was a genetic (in the

sense of genesis, not of gene) sociology outlined early in this century that died a quick death; second, the fact that other social sciences, following I think, dramatic advances in biological genetics, are already well along in developing genetic analyses; and third, the basis upon which can be built a new genetic sociology, the theoretical concerns, methods and units of analysis it may develop and its relationship with existing lines of thought or perspectives such as sociobiology, social interactionism, Marxism and political economy.

The "Old" Evolutionary Sociology

This paper is not the place for an extensive history of the social sciences in the first part of this century. What I can offer is a look at a great example of a textbook that was written in the late 1920s and which was based on a genetic method of analysis and exposition. I can also offer here a few insights and speculations as to what provoked the demise of the genetic or evolutionary approach in the pre-war period.

In 1927, Jerome Davis of Yale University and Harry Elmer Barnes of the New School for Social Research in New York (which Veblen had a hand in organizing) published, as editors, **An Introduction to Sociology**. This textbook, a little over 900 pages long would send cold shivers down the spine of any first-year students today from the density of the text alone. A collaborative work, it was dedicated to Lester Ward, Albion Small, William Graham Sumner, Charles Horton Cooley, Edward E. Ross and Franklin Giddings, all of whom had been influenced and affected by Darwin and Spencer, especially the latter. Book I - we'd call it Part I these days - written by Harry Barnes, is entitled *The Evolution of the Great Society*. The first chapter in this book is *called The Genetic Viewpoint in Sociology: Its Uses and Abuse*s. In this chapter Barnes writes:

> In considering an institution, a mechanical device, a scientific axiom, or a matter of general opinion, we can have full understanding of the problems involved only when we possess the genetic or evolutionary viewpoint and attempt to comprehend how present thought and usages have gradually grown up since the days of primitive man. Strange dogmas and accepted ideas alike appear intelligible only when we understand how they came about and when we attempt to discover the relations between them and the age of which they were a natural outgrowth. (Davis and Barnes, 1931: 5)

This perspective right down to the use of language is entirely compatible with Veblen except that Veblen would have insisted that more statically based sciences have a role to play as introductions to genetic analysis, in the sense that anatomy and physiology are not opposed to biological genetics, rather, they constitute, in a sense, a precondition for genetic analysis. After outlining the tone of the volume as above, Barnes goes on to caution and comfort the reformer. He writes:

> The reformer can only hope to have insight into contemporary problems after he has come to understand the tenacity of ideas and institutions and their capacity to resist change. On the other hand, he can protect himself against undue pessimism with respect to the slowness and incompleteness of present-day reform movements by viewing institutions in the process of development and thus comprehending the slight transformation which any age is likely to effect in the remoulding of society. (Davis and Barnes, 1931: 13)

The theme of reform has obvious resonance in the works of Veblen and Innis already outlined, and I will get back to the reform theme in the conclusion to this paper, but the point that must be made here is that there was a long time ago a movement towards a genetic or evolutionary sociology. This effort may have been overly ambitious in the example I've used, which claimed to have produced a "summary of the growth of civilization and the evolution of institutions" (Davis and Barnes, 1931: 13). But ambitious as it may have been, it does point to an effort to construct, along Veblenian lines, a genetic sociology. It didn't last long.

This view of sociology expressed in the early 1930s was soon to be eclipsed by structural-functionalism, an unabashedly normative sociology based mainly on the works of Durkheim and Weber. Talcott Parsons' **Structure of Social Action** (1937) might be considered the first tentative steps towards a systematic expression of this perspective. At least the author thought so. (Parsons, 1951: viii) Why did evolutionary or genetic analysis in sociology attenuate so dramatically in the late 1930s? It's the topic of another paper, but I would venture to speculate that sociology, in order to better serve its masters in government and business must become more *useful*, i.e., more normative, particularly in a time of economic depression with war looming. The pressure was mounting in other disciplines as well to serve the vested interests in government. Anthropologists were drawn into the war effort with their studies of Japanese and German national character, studies that constituted intelligence weapons. (Haviland, 1987:130) O'Hara (1995: 1) quoting Hodgson (1988:21) notes that "in the interwar period [1919-1938] institutionalism [genetic or evolutionary economics] was actually the dominant school of economic thought in the US." It fell into abeyance during and after the war when economics became a branch of accounting. He gives no reason for the demise of institutionalist economics, but I suspect that it's for much the same reasons genetic or evolutionary sociology retreated so rapidly in the face of Parsons' posse. To be fair, Parsons later explored evolution, but his efforts remained progressivist and not Darwinian. That wasn't the end of the story, however. The genetic approach would see a resurgence.

The New Evolutionary Social Sciences

Interest in evolutionary economics was rekindled formally in 1965 with the formation of the Association for Evolutionary Economics (AFEE). (O'Hara, 1995:1) Economics is still predominantly classical but there is now a growing alternative paradigm. Following the organization of the AFEE, the Journal of Economic Issues appeared in 1967 as the forum for evolutionary economics and there is now a very substantial body of literature by evolutionary economists. Other social sciences have followed suit, but the thrust of their Darwinism is not the same as in evolutionary economics.

For instance, evolutionary psychology has recently made a dramatic appearance on stage, although many a critic would have preferred it stay backstage. Some critics argue that evolutionary psychology is nothing but sugar-coated sociobiology. (Horgan, 1995: 174) That may be so, but it still isn't likely to go away soon. There is a Center for Evolutionary Psychology at the University of California at Santa Barbara and the Human Behavior and Evolution Society was organized about eight years ago. Robert Wright, senior editor for the New Republic published **The Moral Animal** in 1994. It is subtitled:*Why We Are The Way We Are: The New Science of Evolutionary Psychology*. It exemplifies a growing number of books and articles which develop themes related to the biological basis of human social and cultural behaviour and which drive cultural determinists to distraction. I have no intention here of embarking on a critical analysis of evolutionary psychology. Suffice it to say at this point that it cannot be ignored and that it has a fast accelerating number of proponents. It is not based at all on the same assumptions as evolutionary economics. Their foci are very different except maybe where the Darwinian psychologists emphasize the analysis of “memes," a word coined by Richard Dawkins (see esp. l986) to refer to a unit of cultural evolution where a gene is a unit of biological evolution. A new science of “memetics" is the objective of many people who have found Dawkins' work particularly compelling. Evolutionary economists and memeticists are usually interested in cultural evolution alone whereas evolutionary psychologists work at the interface of biology and culture. So where does sociology fit in this picture and what could an evolutionary, or genetic or post-Darwinian sociology look like?

A "New" Post-Darwinian Sociology

As I noted in the introduction, sociology doesn't fit anywhere in the picture yet, at least not as a discipline. There has been some discussion (Maryanski, 1994) and some individual

sociologists, Marxists and political economist have conducted studies which could be made to "fit" in a new perspective, but there is no collective impetus as yet that I know of for the formation of a new evolutionary sociology, that is, for the evolution of sociology itself into a post-Darwinian mode of analysis. Maybe the time has come.

The sociology that I propose here is "institutionalist." A basic analytical tenet of the institutionalist, genetic or post-Darwinian approach is that all things, including mountain ranges, biological organisms, ideas, values, etc., grow and decay, transmogrify and transmutate. If that's true, science must attempt to explain the process by which this occurs. The science of genetics in biology does precisely that, going beyond anatomy and physiology to actually study the process of life itself. This is not an easy task because the very object of study is not observable. But that doesn't mean it's not possible and the new, very lucrative field of genetic engineering is testament to it's success. Today, few question the notion that there are natural forces that work to create and to erode mountain ranges. Mountain ranges may appear to be stable and immutable, but they are not. It is the role of the geologist to explain the forces of creation and destruction that account for the growth and decay of mountain ranges. The biologist must explain the process by which organisms and species come and go on our evolving earth, and scientists of culture must explain the process of the growth and decay of institutions within the complex of institutions that make up any civilization. All of modern science according to Veblen must be focussed on the process of change. What this means is that with regard to the nation-state, for example, the question is not "will the nation-state survive?" The question is "when and how will it die?" Normative perspectives can ask what the normal course of development should be for a particular institution or for civilization, that is, they can be and are interested in change. What they do not do well is allow that pathology is normality. Life is not possible without death and the life of any one organism or idea is dependent on the death of others. As Ernest Becker (l975:2) noted paraphrasing Elias Canetti, "each organism raises its head over a field of corpses, smiles into the sun, and declares life good." From this comes the conclusion that force, violence and coercion are institutionalized ways which have evolved to deal with social and physical environmental stresses and opportunities. Instead of simply declaring force, violence and coercion bad, science must explain how they have evolved in the natural selection of human action. To anticipate the fault-finders, this view is not conservative, nor is it apologist. It seeks only to understand the evolution of what is. "What is" is particularly noteworthy. As Veblen (1961 [1906]: 1) expresses it:

> ...the peculiar excellence of the modern culture is of such a nature as to give it a decisive practical advantage over all other cultural schemes that have gone before or that have come into competition with it. It has proved itself fit to survive in a struggle for existence as against those civilizations which differ from it in respect of its distinctive traits.

This is not to glorify the civilization we have, but to accept that it exists by virtue of some adaptive quality that has allowed it to survive and even to thrive. We may be repulsed by the means used to ensure survival, but we must face evolutionary reality and examine it scientifically if we want to have a science of culture at all.

What I write here is not new and I feel somewhat pedantic in writing it. But the animating thrust of so much modern science and scholarship is normative and in denial of the crucial roles of death, disease, suffering, violence and all the "bad" things in life that I feel compelled to write it down. We all accept the reality of death, we just have a hard time incorporating it into our analytical frameworks. It's not a question of "if," but of "when" and "how." Will the human species evolve out of existence? Of course it will. Will capitalism and business enterprise evolve out of existence? Of course they will.

Marx attempted to address this latter point by reference to the falling rate of profit and the eventual impoverishment of the working class by its replacement with machine tools and automated techniques. But he was not satisfied with the rate of evolution. He injected a pragmatic element into his conclusions when he required the working class to

become conscious of its oppression and act on that apprehension in a purposive and teleological way. Veblen understood the contradictions of capitalism and the dominance of industry by predatory business, but he denied that the working class can or will necessarily take consciousness of its interests and finally do away with capitalistic exploitation once and for all. He wrote (1961 [1906]: 417): "In Darwinism, there is no such final or perfect term, and no definitive equilibrium." By this, he did nor deny the existence of class struggle. In fact, it is science's responsibility to study the role of class struggle in history and individual teleological action engaged to lessen misery and suffering as institutions of Western Civilization.

For Veblen, human action is largely purposive and teleological. People must constantly explore and try out new ways of doing things in reacting to social and physical stresses and pressures. The actions that "work," are "selected," become habitual and spread throughout the community. These habits of life and thought Veblen calls institutions, which once in existence must compete for survival in the complex of institutions he calls civilization. Institutions come and go. The ones that exist now owe their existence partly to their "fitness" in the struggle for existence and continuance which is "civilization." All institutions are not born equal. Powerful institutions, especially those involved in the struggle for the physical survival of individuals, the ones we call “economic” institutions can and do, as Veblen concludes, dominate and circumscribe a myriad of other institutions in an ongoing process. For instance, the "market" and "business enterprise" as institutions arose in the feudal period and gradually gained strength to eventually displace feudal reciprocity and related institutions. As they gathered strength, they "needed" other institutions for support. Business struggled with, then came to dominate existing states and later, imposed state institutions during the period of colonialism on peoples who had not previously known them.

The creation of new institutions can only occur within the complex of institutions which already exists so their possibilities are circumscribed by the constellation of existing ones. Institutions are essentially conservative and are, in fact, repositories of bias or value. They determine to a large extent what can follow yet in the course of time they must yield to new institutions.

So, analysis for genetic or evolutionary sociology can range from investigations of human actions that lead to habituation, the growth and decay of institutions within the complex of institutions called civilization, and to civilization itself. There is something for everyone here. Sociologists interested in individual action can study individual action but within a theoretical framework which demands that action be seen as contributing to institutional formation. Sociologists can study institutions ranging from the powerful and dominant to the marginal and peripheral. Buslness is an institution of Western Civilization but so is tooth brushing, taking a vacation, the machine-process, science, racism, Robert's Rules, violence and the currently dominant normative approach in the social sciences. In fact the latter figures prominently in Veblen's **The Place of Science in Modern Civilization**. All habits of life and thought are fair game in genetic science.

Another evolutionary sociological (or institutionalist) focus is the relative power of institutions. Power here refers to success in the natural selection process and the capability of an institution to force the creation of supporting institutions or the defeat of competing ones. Veblen (1961 [1906]:77) denied that there is any "neatly isolable range of cultural phenomena that can be rigorously set apart under the head of economic institutions, although a category of 'economic institutions' may be of service as a convenient caption, comprising those institutions in which the economic interest most immediately and consistently finds expression, and which most immediately and with the least limitation are of an economic bearing." The same may be said for political institutions. The nation-state is primarily a political institution, but it arose, and exists now, to serve business which is a cosmopolitan or supra-national institution. From this perspective, globalization is problematic. Capital and business did not begin as national institutions which are now breaking out of national frontiers in a growth spurt to become international or transnational.

Capital and business spawned nation-states as supportive institutions at a particular stage of their growth. In a sense, capital and business have always been global. (Albrow, 1995) The usefulness of nation-states for business may be waning in the face of the growth of capital. New institutions will eventually displace the nation-state and some nascent ones are already appearing on the scene.[3] Their growth should be of considerable interest to social science.

Another area of interest to a genetic or evolutionary social science is the process by which the general public and the social sciences have come to conceive of the nation-state as a community of people with common interests. I've always found the concept of a "Canadian" economy difficult because it implies the subordination of universal global economic institutions to local political ones. The concept of international trade is also untenable in my mind. Countries don't produce commodities, by and large. So how can countries trade with one another? Businesses produce commodities and move them across borders. General Motors moves a product from Hamilton to Detroit and we call that international trade as if General Motors produces cars for Canadians as a community and we then export them. From my viewpoint, the acceptance of the structuralist view that Canada is a community of individuals within a community of more or less dominant and powerful nation-states must itself be the subject of social scientific study. As a habit of thought it rates serious attention. Maybe a fresh study of the institution of citizenship as a support of business and of politicians as flack-catchers is in order.

Finally, on the strength of contributions by Innis, Veblen and others, including Davis and Barnes (l93l), serious consideration must be given to the idea that modern science is the idle search for truth. Any application of a particular truth of science Veblen calls technology, a category, if you will recall from a quote earlier in this paper, which includes economic reform. Technology and engineering have featured prominently in sociology. A normative focus on inequality and attempts to promote the mitigation of the most negative effects of inequality is social technology as is the championing of "rights" of all kinds. As Veblen put it:

> In order to search for a tendency, we must be possessed of some notion of a definitive end to be sought, or some notion as to what is the legitimate end of events. The notion of a legitimate trend in a course of events is an extra-evolutionary preconception, and lies outside the scope of an inquiry into the causal sequence in the process. The evolutionary point of view, therefore, leaves no place for a formulation of natural laws in terms of definitive normality, whether in economics or in any other branch of inquiry. Neither does it leave room for that other question of normality, What should be the end of the development process under discussion. (1961 L1906]: 76)

Conclusions

This paper has attempted to provide the rough outlines of a new evolutionary or genetic sociology based on the critique, embedded in the works of both Innis and Veblen, of normative social science. lnnis, following Veblen, proposed that modern science is a search for truth. To settle on truth is to abandon science. To work towards reform in society is to move out of science and into technology or engineering.

A genetic analysis of social relations begins with a focus on individual action that leads to habituation and then proceeds to the study of institutions, the product of the spread of habituated practice. Institutions, crystallized habits of life and of thought, govern to a large extent what is possible in future human action. Together, they constitute civilization conceptualized as a process, a going concern, rather than as a structure. In Veblen and lnnis you will not find chronicles and glorifications of the exploits of kings, princes, generals and admirals. You will find concern for understanding the life of the "common man," and for revealing the significance of the actions of common folk for the growth and decay of institutions, including the nation-state.

Civilization, not the nation-state, is the frame of reference for a genetic or evolutionary social scientific study of culture. Nation-states are institutions of Western Civilizations. They do not circumscribe the more general institutions of business enterprise and capital except in the minds of ordinary citizens and social scientists with a vested interest.

As social scientists we are beholden to the nation-state for our livelihoods and yet as social scientists we must be driven only by idle curiosity and a search for the truth. Thereupon rests a substantial contradiction, one that would not be lessened in the least if nation-states eventually refused to support the social sciences and that responsibility was assumed by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank or the World Trade Organization, those organizations spearheading the evolution of capitalism into a non-national state.

As Harold Innis noted over and over again, service to the nation-state leaves precious little time for an assessment of the limitations of the social sciences. An urgent topic for research is to ascertain whether or nor social science as an institution of Western Civilization can survive in the relatively short term in a climate which demands "accountability" and increasing direct subservience to business.

NOTES

1. Cox (l995) ascribes much on Innis' views on civilization in the latter part of his career to Charles Cochrane although he does recognize that Innis had, early in his career, a well-established vision of civilization which I ascribe to Veblen.

2. Since the inception of the Journal of Economic Issues first published in 1967, there has been a flood of material on Veblen. I can't even begin to introduce it here. A suggestion for the reader is to scan the World Wide Web under the search title Veblen. The Journal of Economic Issues is housed there as well as dozens of articles referring to Veblen, Veblen and Marx, Veblen and Kropotkin, Veblen and Bernstein, etc., etc. etc.

3. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization are three of the most visible organizations, but the International Labor Organization and many others have appeared over the years. The Trilateral Commission is one that used to raise shouts of global capitalist conspiracy from a number of quarters. It was organized specifically to undermine the nation-state. (Sherrer, 1995)

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