Reflections on Human Nature

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What the last lecture showed was that in most of the observations on the dominant motives of man which were there cited, these seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers were seeking, and believed they had found, effective substitutes for "reason" and "virtue" in the control of human behavior—substitutes it seemed imperatively necessary to find because "reason" and "virtue", though they doubtless should, seldom if ever do, direct men's conduct. But the substitutes—approbativeness or self-esteem or emulation or all three together—are, by the beneficent dispensation of Providence, capable of producing the same effects in outward conduct as reason and virtue themselves.

1. Manifestly, from these premises the political philosopher should be able to deduce important practical conclusions. But just what conclusions? One answer was given by Montesquieu. He observed that the great advantage of monarchical governments, with a hierarchy of ranks and orders, is that in them "politics can achieve great things with as little virtue as possible." For the "spring of action" in monarchies is "honor," the desire for "preferences and distinctions"; and this provides an adequate substitute for "political virtue. It can inspire the finest actions; it can, combined with the force of law, lead to the end of government as well as virtue itself."
[Doubtless,] philosophically speaking, it is a false honor which moves all parts of the State; but this false honor is as useful to the public as the true would be to whatever individuals might possess it. And is it not a great thing to oblige men to perform all the actions that are difficult and demand energy, without any recompense except the fame (bruit) attaching to such actions?¹

In democracies, on the other hand, according to Montesquieu, though this spring of action need not be wholly absent, another and very different motivation is absolutely essential: it is “political virtue,” that is, “a constant preference of the public interest to one’s own.” There must be no rivalry among citizens for personal advantages; l’amour de la démocratie est celui de l’égalité; individual “ambition is limited to the sole desire, the sole happiness, of rendering to one’s country greater services than other citizens.”² This contrast between the motives upon which the two systems must respectively depend for their success and permanence, I think, did not imply for most eighteenth-century readers, the superiority of equalitarian democracy. If you could depend upon civic virtue to make a political system work satisfactorily, that would doubtless be the ideal form of government; but since it was commonly assumed that you can’t, it followed that you will do better to rely upon a less exalted but far more potent and less rare spring of action in men, the desire for honors, distinctions, recognized superiority, which, properly utilized, can bring about the same desirable results.

¹ De l’esprit des lois, Bk. III. ch. 6-7.
² Ibid., Bk. V, ch. 3.
Even Rousseau, though he of course belongs mainly among the deciers of "pride," insists, in the wisest, though unhappily not the most influential, of his political writings, the Considerations on the Government of Poland, that approbateness is the motive upon which the statesman must chiefly rely for the good regulation of society and points out the futility of legislation which seeks to prevent acts which are not in fact generally disapproved. One could wish that our own statesmen had pondered the following passage of Rousseau before launching on a certain "noble" but short-lived experiment:

Prohibition of the things that ought not to be done is an inept and vain expedient, unless you begin by making them hated and despised; and the reprobation of the law is always ineffectual except when it comes to the support of the [prevailing] judgment. Anyone who endeavors to instituer un peuple should know how to dominer les opinions, [i.e., approbations and disapprobations] and through them to govern the passions of men.

Of all political figures of the eighteenth century, the one upon whom this complex of ideas seems to have made the deepest impression, and by whom it was most earnestly applied to the practical problems of his time, was the first Vice President of the United States. In 1790, John Adams published, at first anonymously, in the Gazette of the United States at Philadelphia, a series of papers entitled Discourses on Davila. It was, if I may put it so, a very Adamsy performance; for though apparently designed to influence American opinion on the political issues of the moment, it
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consisted mainly of thirty-two long chapters of quotations or summaries of a History of the Civil Wars in France (i.e., the wars of the sixteenth century) by an Italian, Henrico Caterino Davila, with occasional interspersed comments by Adams himself. But in the midst of this historical matter he interpolated twelve chapters of thoughts on "the constitution of the human mind," which are simply a disquisition on the all-importance in human life of emulative approbative-variously called by him "the passion for distinction," the individual's "desire to be seen, heard, talked of, approved and respected by the people about him and within his knowledge," "emulation," "the love of praise," the "desire of the attention, consideration, and congratulations of others." Adams had read Young's Love of Fame, Pope, Voltaire, Rousseau, Dr. Johnson, Adam Smith's Theory of the Moral Sentiments, and quotes from them all; he had probably read Mandeville and Hobbes, though he does not quote these less respectable authors. His treatise on human nature is thus a recapitulation and elaboration of nearly all the themes of which examples have already been cited from his predecessors, but with inferences from them pertinent to the problems of the infant Republic of the West. A summary of his argument must therefore be largely a repetition of ideas already expounded and illustrated. But they were here brought together in a more complete and connected pattern, and Adam's expression of them has a historical interest of its own and must not be omitted from this history.

3 The Life and Works of John Adams, 1851, (VI), pp. 232 ff.
Adams equals any of his precursors, and outdoes some of them, in insisting upon the universality and supreme potency of "the passion for distinction" in man.

This propensity, in all its branches, is a principal source of the virtues and vices, the happiness and misery of human life; and . . . the history of mankind is little more than a simple narration of its operation and effects. . . . The desire of esteem is as real a want of nature as hunger; and the neglect and contempt of the world as severe a pain as gout and stone. It sooner and oftener produces despair and a detestation of existence . . . Every personal quality, every blessing of fortune, is cherished in proportion to its capacity of gratifying this universal affection for the esteem, the sympathy, admiration and congratulations of the public.  

It is, in short, "the great leading passion of the soul," and "the theory of education and the science of government may be all reduced to the same simple principle, and be all comprehended in the knowledge of the means of actively conducting, controlling, and regulating the emulation and ambition of its citizens."

Yet it is, Adams admits, a strange and irrational component of human nature: "What a folly is it!" he exclaims (quoting Pope). "On a selfish system, what are the thoughts, passions, sentiments of mankind to us?" Through this desire, "men of all sorts . . . are chained down to an incessant servitude to their fellow-creatures; . . . they are really con-

4 Ibid., p. 234.
5 Ibid., p. 246.
6 Ibid., p. 247.
stituted, by their own vanity, slaves to mankind.” But though it is thus a kind of trick played by “Nature” upon man’s egotism, it is a beneficent trick. For, “as Nature intended men for society, she has endowed them with passions, appetites and propensities calculated . . . to render them useful to each other in their social connections. There is none more essential and remarkable” than this desire of every man “to be observed, considered, esteemed, praised, beloved, and admired by his fellows.”

The six terms in the clause last quoted are obviously not synonyms and were not used as such by Adams; they designated for him several species of a common genus, which in one passage he takes pains to discriminate. He was a more careful and acute analytical psychologist than any of those who had previously written on the same theme. While the generic desire underlying all these motivations is “the passion for distinction,” it has three varieties or grades. In some men it takes the form merely of a desire for “attention,” i.e., notoriety or celebrity, regardless of the means by which it may be attained, and may manifest itself in conspicuous crimes or extravagant vices—the vanity of the criminal “big-shot,” as our current slang might say.

The greater number, however, search for distinction, neither by vices nor by virtues; but by the means which common sense and every day’s experience show, are most likely to obtain it; by riches, by family records, by play, and other frivolous personal accomplishments. But there are a few, and God knows, but a few, who aim at some-

7 Ibid., p. 245.
8 Ibid., p. 232.
thing more. They aim at approbation as well as attention; at esteem as well as consideration; and at admiration and gratitude, as well as congratulation. Admiration is, indeed, the complete idea of approbation, congratulation, and wonder, united.\(^9\)

It is, I think, uncommonly interesting to picture a busy and influential political figure, in a difficult and highly controversial period of our history, thus sitting down to do a little psychologizing for himself, and to give precise meanings to the terms which he uses. Nor does Adams stop with drawing these distinctions; he goes on—being an Adams—to note the dangers attendant upon even the third form of the passion. It is in those persons who are inspired by it that “most of the great benefactors of mankind” are found. “But for our humiliation we must still remember that in these esteemed, beloved and adored characters, the passion . . . is a passion still; and therefore, like all other human desires, unlimited and insatiable. No man was ever contented with any given share of this human adoration. . . . Man constantly craves for more, even when he has no rival.”\(^10\) But when he sees a rival gaining more than himself of this popular acclaim, he feels “a mortification . . . and a resentment of an injustice, as he thinks it. These feelings are other names for jealously and envy; and altogether, they produce some of the keenest and most tormenting of all sentiments.”\(^11\) It would be unjust to suppose that in all of these observations Adams was drawing a portrait of himself; but in the final


clause he was, there is reason to think, not unmindful of an emotional experience of his own.\textsuperscript{12} It must be added that, though Adams here discriminated these varieties of the "passion for distinction" and their respective consequences, he in many other passages spoke of all of them as normally concomitant in the same persons and conceived of the great majority of mankind—not merely "a few"—as habitually actuated by the desire "to be observed, considered, esteemed, praised, beloved, and admired by their fellows." "It is the only adequate instrument of order and subordination in society, and alone commands effectual obedience to laws, since without it neither human reason, nor standing armies, would ever produce great effect."\textsuperscript{13}

It follows that this strongest of human cravings must be the chief object of the attention of the political philosopher and the statesman; "it is the principal end of government to regulate this passion, which in its turn becomes a principal means of government."\textsuperscript{14} Adams too, it will be seen, does not think that you can depend upon reason or upon civic virtue as the operating forces of a political society. True, "there is in human nature," he grants, such a thing as "simple Benevolence, or an affection for the good of others; but alone it is not a balance for the selfish affections. Nature, then, has kindly added to Benevolence, the desire for reputation, in order to make us good members of society."\textsuperscript{15}

True, also, that "Nature has enjoined" upon the individual

\textsuperscript{12} See note 18, below.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 234.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 234.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 234.
the duty of respecting "the rights of others as much as his own. But reasoning as abstruse as this . . . would not occur to all men." This injunction of the moral law of nature has therefore had inseparably attached to its observance or disregard the most effective of all rewards and punishments, "the esteem and admiration" or "the neglect and contempt of others."\(^{16}\)

The political superiority of the Romans, among the peoples of antiquity, was, in Adams's opinion, due to their grasp of the importance of emulation:

Has there [he asks] ever been a nation who understood the human heart better than the Romans, or made a better use of the passion for consideration, congratulation and distinction? . . . *Distinctions of conditions*, as well as of ages, were made by difference of clothing. . . . The chairs of ivory; the lictors; . . . the crowns of gold, of ivory, of flowers; . . . their orations; and their triumphs; everything in religion, government and common life, was parade, representation and ceremony. Everything was addressed to the emulation of the citizens, and everything was calculated to attract the attention, to allure the consideration, and excite the congratulations of the people; to attach their hearts to individual citizens according to their merit; and to their lawgivers, magistrates, and judges, according to their rank, station and importance to the state. And this was in the true spirit of republics, in which form of government there is no other consistent method of preserving order or procuring submission to the laws.\(^{17}\)


\(^{17}\) *Ibid.*, p. 243. Here, it will be observed, Adams reverses the
When Adams turns to the bearing of his political psychology upon the new Constitution which he is (mainly) defending, he finds it lacking in this respect, in comparison with the Roman. The Constitution did not make much provision for attaching outward marks of distinction to "merit" or public service. Presidents and Senators do not wear different garments from the rest of us, or attach medals or similar emblems to their persons (though military officers do). The Constitution did however—and this to him was the best thing about it—utilize emulation to restrain the evils arising from emulation and from other passions; in short, it set up a system of checks and balances, first of all by establishing a bicameral Congress, so that each house would be prompted by emulation to resist the encroachments of the other: "a legislature, in one assembly, can have no other termination than in civil dissension, feudal anarchy, or simple monarchy." The Declaration of Rights adopted by the Continental Congress on October 14, 1774, of which Adams—himself not innocent of emulation as against Jefferson—claimed the authorship, and which he regarded as more important than the Declaration of Independence, had declared "it indispensably necessary that the constituent branches of the legislature should be independent of one another." But this was not enough; there must be "an inde-

thesis of Montesquieu concerning the "principles" of democracy and monarchy, respectively.

Ibid., pp. 277-8. Adams intensely resented the transfer to Jefferson of the "glory" which he thought due to himself. In 1813 he was still complaining about it: "Such are the caprices of fortune. This declaration of rights was drawn up by the little John
pendent executive authority, such as that in our government, to be a third branch as a mediator or arbitrator between them,” and an independent judiciary. “The essence of free government consists in an effectual control of rivalries”—or, at he might better have concluded from his premises, of rivalries by rivalries. Here, of course, he is explicitly recognizing the fact, pointed out in Lecture II, that the Constitution was simply an application of the method of counterpoise to the problem of government. But for him the principal motive upon which the effectiveness of the counterpoise depended was not the self-interest of economic groups or any of the other springs of action mentioned by Madison, but the competitive passion for individual distinction. For this negative utilization of that passion Adams thought that the Constitution had pretty well provided.

He did not, however, regard the Constitution as perfect; but his further political deductions from the general premise of the all-importance of “emulation” are confused and obscure, because different considerations about it are manifestly playing upon his mind. Obviously, one cannot make use of this passion without publicly recognizing inequalities among men; and Adams clearly felt the American system to be defective because it had in it too much of the French

Adams. The mighty Jefferson, by the Declaration of Independence, carried away the glory of the great and the little” (ibid., footnote). Though Adams apparently did not attribute this to any deliberate filching of his own fame by Jefferson, his almost obsessing feeling of a rivalry for “glory” between himself and the Virginian was perhaps not unrelated to his death-bed exclamation: “Thomas Jefferson still lives.”
equalitarianism. In some passages, therefore, he appears to argue for a hereditary aristocracy of "families distinguished by property, honors, and privileges." To raise himself and his posterity to noble rank will be a potent incentive to the gifted and ambitious man; and the existence of such a class, in any case, provides an additional check against despotism or usurpation on the part of the head of the state. Adams, in this mood, devotes a whole chapter to quotations from that "great teacher of morality and politics," Shakespeare, in Troilus and Cressida, depicting the moral and social "chaos" which would result if "Degree," that is, hierarchical order, were abolished. But he then bethinks himself of another side to the question; hereditary aristocracies in practice usually become idle and frivolous and, if possessed of political power, oppress "the people." A check against this in turn must be embodied in the political system; in our Constitution Adams thought it was provided for through a lower house of Congress, elected by popular vote. But then—turning back again to the first side of the puzzle—Adams is sure that the people are not the proper fountains of honor. For the problem of good government is to make emulation useful by attaching distinction, and therefore rank or public office, to real merit; and of this the multitude can never be a competent judge.

All civilized free nations have found, by experience, the necessity of separating from the body of the people, and even from the legislature, the distribution of honors, and

19 Ibid., pp. 250-251.
20 Ibid., p. 271.
conferring it on the executive authority of government. When the emulation of citizens looks up to one point, . . . you may hope for uniformity, consistency and subordination; but when they look up to different individuals, or assemblies, or councils, you may expect all the deformities, eccentricities, and confusion, of the Polemic system.21

It was this passage that, not unintelligibly, gave rise to the charge that Adams in the Discourses was an “advocate for monarchy”—a charge which, as he wrote some twenty years later, “powerfully operated to destroy [his] popularity.” But, in fact, he was wavering between different conclusions, all suggested to him by a common premise. He was not quite able to make up his mind as to precisely what would be an ideal system relying for order and efficiency upon the workings of “emulation.” However, the general thesis which he was certain about and was seeking to establish is summed up in these words:

Emulation, next to self-preservation, will ever be the great spring of human actions, and the balance of a well-ordered government will alone be able to prevent that emulation from degenerating into dangerous ambition, irregular rivalries, destructive factions, wasting seditions, and bloody civil wars.22

2. Thus there was a very large and respectable body of opinion holding that “pride,” usually in the sense of approbativeness, is the necessary substitute for “virtue” and the

21 Ibid., p. 256.
22 Ibid., p. 279.
motive upon which the good behavior of men depends, and
must depend. But it was also evident that a motive so potent
and so ubiquitous must manifest itself in the economic
order. When its economic aspects were discussed, however,
attention shifted from simple approbativeness to a special
form of emulation—the craving for distinction based upon
the possession of economic goods. Upon the economic ef­
fects of “pride” in this general sense numerous writers in
our period had a good deal to say. And on this matter also,
some of them anticipated a thesis which, if I am not mis­
taken, has often been supposed to be a novelty of the twen­
tieth century.

At the turn of the century Thorstein Veblen published a
work that was destined to celebrity and that constituted, as
many of its critics remarked, one of the most subtle and
original of American contributions to economic theory—
*The Theory of the Leisure Class*. It was primarily a psy­
chological inquiry into the principal motives of the acquisi­
tion and expenditure of wealth. The classical economics,
Veblen pointed out, usually had described the end of acquisi­
tion and accumulation as the “consumption” of the goods
acquired—including, of course, under consumption, the
satisfaction not only of the consumer’s physical wants but
also of “his so-called higher wants—spiritual, intellectual,
aesthetic, or what not, the latter class of wants being served
indirectly by an expenditure of goods, after the fashion
familiar to all economic readers.” But, observed Veblen,

It is only when taken in a sense far removed from its
naive meaning that consumption of goods can be said
to afford the incentive from which accumulation invariably proceeds. The motive that lies at the root of ownership is emulation; and the same motive of emulation continues active in the further development of the institution to which it has given rise. . . . The possession of wealth confers honour; it is an invidious distinction. Nothing equally cogent can be said for the consumption of goods, nor for any other conceivable motive of acquisition, and especially not for any incentive to the accumulation of wealth.23

Thus economic values are, for the most part, prestige values; once beyond the level of subsistence and physical comfort, economic goods are considered "goods" because their possession and conspicuous expenditure—or conspicuous waste—gratify the desire for distinction, honor, deference, or one or another form of the craving for recognized superiority. It is in the light of this fundamental psychological fact, Veblen maintained, that most of the phenomena of the economic life of a modern industrial society are to be understood; and from the same theorem he drew a number of striking corollaries—among them, that this human craving can never be satisfied in any regime of economic equality, and, in fact, can never be satisfied at all; since the desire is not for any particular sum of possessions, but always for more possessions than others have, it can never reach a final limit.

However widely, or equally, or "fairly," it may be distributed, no general increase of the community's wealth

can make any approach to satiating this need, the ground of which is the desire of every one to excel everyone else in the accumulation of goods. If . . . the incentive to accumulation were the want of subsistence or physical comfort, then the aggregate economic wants of a community might conceivably be satisfied at some point in the advance of industrial efficiency; but since the struggle is substantially a race for reputability on the basis of an invidious comparison, no approach to a definitive attainment is possible.\textsuperscript{24}

But in all this Veblen was merely repeating and elaborating propositions which may be described as commonplaces of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries—though there is, so far as I know, no reason to suppose that he was aware of this fact. Writers of that period—whether theologians, satirists or philosophers—who were preoccupied with the analysis of "pride" and of its social effects frequently pointed out that that passion, construed either as emulative self-esteem or, more often, as emulative approbative ness, engenders desires for economic goods which have subjective value only as means of distinction—because some or most other people do not have them, or because other people admire or look up to or envy those who do have them. They pointed out that these desires are essentially limitless, and that they are obviously inconsistent with equality.

Thus La Placette wrote in his \textit{Traité de l'orgueil} (1693):

It is certain that the cause of our love for all these things

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 32.}
[possessions, fine clothes, handsome furniture, etc.] is not so much the utility or pleasure which we find in them, as the glory which comes from them. There are very few of them which do not have inconveniences connected with them, of which one would rid oneself if it were not for this consideration. . . . Without it would anyone go to so much trouble as we do for cleanliness and fine clothing? Should we dress as we do if we sought only comfort and protection against cold or heat?\(^{25}\)

Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees*, insofar as it is concerned with economic matters, has for its main theme the dependence of wealth upon “pride.” A “hive” in which that motive was lacking might subsist in modest comfort, everyone being content with little, but it could never grow rich and powerful. For increase of wealth presupposes increase of desires for economic goods, and it is from pride that such desires mainly spring. The “haughty Moralists,” says Mandeville, “conclude that without Pride and Luxury, the same things might be eat, wore, and consum’d; the same Number of Handicrafts and Artificers employ’d, and a Nation be every way as flourishing as where those Vices are the most predominant.” The falsity of this conclusion Mandeville undertakes to prove at length. The truth is that “for the Support of Trade there can be nothing equivalent to Pride.”\(^{26}\)

Young, in one of his Satires, in a more moralizing tone, set forth the economic effects of pride as follows:

> Nature is frugal, and her wants are few;

\(^{25}\) *Tr. de l’orgueil*, p. 41.  
Those few wants answer'd, bring sincere delights;
But fools create themselves new appetites:
Fancy and pride, seek things at vast expence,
Which relish not to reason, nor to sense.

Expensive things, Young notes, are valued just because they are expensive; the ability to pay for them is a social distinction:

Italian music’s sweet, because ’tis dear;
Their vanity is tickled, not their ear;
Their tastes would lessen, if the prices fell.27

But was this tendency of pride to increase ad infinitum the desire for possessions to be reckoned among its good or its bad consequences? Upon this point opinions differed. Mandeville’s constant effort to play the ironist and épater le bourgeois makes his utterances on this as on most subjects equivocal. He affects, on one side, agreement with the traditional view; pride is an “odious Vice.” But on the other side, its results—and this one in particular—are “public benefits.” These benefits are enjoyed (he thinks) by the poor as well as the rich, since in a wealthy community more labor can be employed, and an increasing population can be supported. To produce his effect of paradox, Mandeville must constantly balance one side against the other. But it seems fairly clear that his chief concern was to emphasize the public benefits; and it is at least doubtful whether he would really have admitted that any human propensity of which the consequences are beneficial can be called a

27 The Love of Fame, 1728, Sat. V, pp. 91, 55.
vice. The more conventional view was that expressed in the lines of Young last quoted; this result of the "universal passion" is an evil, because men are happier when their wants are few. To multiply desires is to multiply dissatisfactions; and a desire which is by its very nature insatiable is worst of all. This view was, of course, supported by the whole primitivistic tradition coming down from classical antiquity, and was obviously more in keeping with the Christian ethics. And no one who regarded equality of conditions as a social desideratum could regard as anything but evil a passion which, because emulative, made for inequality.

Speaking of articles of luxury, Rousseau writes in Émile, "Since the value of these useless products lies only in l'opinion [i.e., in their relation to men's appraisals of one another], their price is itself a part of their value, and they are esteemed in proportion as they are costly. The importance which the rich man attaches to them is not due to their utility, but to the fact that the poor man cannot pay for them." And Rousseau concludes with a Latin tag from Petronius: Nolo habere bona nisi quibus populus inviderit: "I don't want to have any goods except those that the populace will envy me for possessing." But eighteenth-century readers were not made familiar with the conception set forth by Veblen in the twentieth merely by such obiter dicta of religious moralists, embittered misanthropes, and satirical poets. It had been fully and emphatically expressed by the founder of the science of political economy—not, indeed, in The Wealth of Nations, but in the later editions of The Theory of Moral Sentiments. It is chiefly from our "regard to the sentiments of mankind," said Adam Smith, "that we
pursue riches and avoid poverty.” By the “sentiments of mankind” here Smith plainly means the ways in which those with whom we associate think and feel about us. “For,” he continues,

to what purpose is all the toil and bustle of this world? What is the end of avarice and ambition, of the pursuit of wealth, of power and pre-eminence? It is to supply the necessities of nature? The wages of the meanest labourer can supply them. . . . What then is the cause of our aversion to his situation? From whence, then, arises that emulation which runs through all the different ranks of men, and what are the advantages of that great purpose of human life which we call bettering our condition? To be observed, to be attended to, to be taken notice of with sympathy, complacency and approbation, are all the advantages which we can propose to derive from it. It is the vanity, not the ease or the pleasure, which interests us. But vanity is always founded upon our belief of our being the object of attention and approbation. The rich man glories in his riches, because he feels that they naturally draw upon him the attention of the world. . . . At the thoughts of this, his heart seems to swell and dilate itself within him, and he is fonder of his wealth upon this account than for all the other advantages it procures him. The poor man, on the contrary, is ashamed of his poverty. He feels that it either places him out of sight of mankind, or that, if they take any notice of him, they have, however, scarcely any fellow-feeling with the misery and distress which he suffers. He is mortified and distressed upon both accounts; for though to be overlooked and to be disapproved of, are things entirely different, yet as
obsccurity covers us from the daylight of honour and approbation, to feel that we are taken no notice of, necessarily damps the most agreeable hope, and disappoints the most ardent desire of human nature.28

It is evident from this passage, then, that Smith had in the eighteenth century enunciated the thesis which Veblen was to propound in the twentieth—a thesis which has often been acclaimed in the latter period as an original and notable contribution to economic theory. The founder of the science, or would-be science, of "Oeconomics" also held that the "consumption of goods cannot be said to afford the incentive from which accumulation invariably"—or ever—"proceeds"; that "the motive which lies at the root of ownership is emulation," the feeling that "the possession of wealth confers honour"; and that there is "no other conceivable incentive to the accumulation of wealth."

28 Theory of Moral Sentiments, 6th edition (1790), Part I, Sec. III, Ch. 2.