

Economy, aesthetics and creativity in Thorstein Veblen

Véronique Dutraive, Université Lumière-Lyon 2, Triangle

Abstract : The paper proposes to present an aspect of the intellectual legacy of Thorstein Veblen that is little noticed by economists. If Veblen did not really deal with the theme of art, his concepts of *conspicuous consumption* and *leisure class* are the basis of a conception of aesthetics which characteristic is to articulate the criteria of beauty and harmony to economic and social issues.

The paper is organized as follows. After recalling the main ideas developed in the theory of the leisure class, the first part will focus on Veblen's aesthetic theory, whose particularity is to relate the conception of beauty with the economic institutions. The second part will discuss the interpretations related to the intellectual context of his aesthetic conception, notably that of the University of Chicago and pragmatist philosophy. This part will also present Veblen's position vis-à-vis the aesthetic and social movement of *Art and Craft* – bearer of a criticism of the consequences of the industrial revolution - and will open up to Veblen's conception of creativity which it is interesting to compare with the notion of rationality as the reference conception of human behavior in economics.