Rethinking Materialism:

A Question of Judgements and Enactments of Power

Laurel Steinfield
Doctorate of Philosophy in Management Research
Green Templeton College, University of Oxford

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Abstract

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This thesis traces the etymology of 'materialism' using a Foucauldian discourse analysis to bring to the fore the word's use as discursive mode of power. Through examining over 5000 texts, spanning across 400 years, I trace a line from the origins of materialism in philosophical thought of the Renaissance and Enlightenment eras to its uptake in American rhetoric and integration into the consumer behaviour literature.

This approach leads to a reconceptualization of materialism. Commonly viewed in consumer studies as a measurable value, trait, or motive inherent in the consumer, I situate materialism as external to the consumer. The word's history, especially in consumer studies, demonstrates that it embodies moral condemnations.

I find that accusations of materialism rise in discourses during moments of intense social dislocations. It is wielded by social groups as part of a play for status. In this analysis, concepts of power as per Foucault and social distinctions as per Bourdieu, are used to explain the motives residing behind the use of the word. These motives, which reflect sociocultural dynamics and geo-political agendas, manifest in the meanings attributed to 'materialism', and the directionality of the allegation.

Thus I argue that 'materialism', at its essence, is an epithet used to advance or demobilise a set of interests. This is what I term, delegitimizing discourse—words used to debase other social groups. Studying 'materialism' as a case in point, I note that groups use delegitimizing discourse either an *assimilative measure*—rhetoric geared towards indoctrination—or as a *defensive mechanism*—rhetoric used to debase threatening elements and behaviours.

It is hoped that this new perspective will encourage academics to be rethink their approach to studying materialism, or in the least, to be aware of what is being measured, and what moral judgements and interests they are perpetuating through their continued studies.

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Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Acknowledgements iv

Table of Contents v

Figures xii

Tables xii

List of Abbreviations and Notes xiii

Introduction
Rethinking Materialism 1
Problem Statement 2

Research Questions 4

Methods 5

Theory 6

Common Findings 12

Outline of Thesis 13

Part I
Materialism: Shifting Perspectives 21
Chapter One
Setting the Scene:
The Pejorative Nature of 'Materialism'—Then and Now 22
The 1600s 22

The 1980s 26

Consumer Research on Materialism 28

Chapter Two
Plotting the Etymology of 'Materialism' 33

Part II
The Origins of 'Materialism': Uncovering the Pejorative Associations and the Rise of a Delegitimizing Discourse 44

Chapter Three
Founding 'Materialism':
The Origins of the Word and its Associated 'Truths' 45
The Origins of Thought: Epicurus's Atomistic Theory 46
The Origins of the Word 'Materialism' 51
The Renaissance Survival of Epicurus's Materialistic Philosophy 57

Chapter Four
Supressing 'Materialism': The Mechanisms of Control 63
Sovereign Modes of Power: 'Materialism' and the Censorship Regime 64
Disciplinary Modes of Power: 'Materialism' and Delegitimizing Discourse 71
Reconsidering the Association of 'Materialism' with Hedonism 74

Chapter Five
Shaping 'Materialism': Shifting Contexts and the Development of Truth-Systems 78
The Shifting English Landscape 79
The Shifting American Landscape 83
The Shifting French Landscape 84
The Development of Modern Science and the Advancement of a 'World Politick' 88

Chapter Six
Defining 'Materialism': The Debates and Defended Interests 95
'Materialism' in Protestant Europe and America 97
Materialism in France 111
Summarizing Thoughts 125

Part III
The Establishment of 'Materialism' in America: Exploring the Modes of a Delegitimizing Discourse.....126

Chapter Seven
Framing the Advancement of 'Materialism' in America 127
The Established Order.....128

The Shifting Context, Transitioning Value System, and Emergence of New Truths 131

I. A Change of the Old Guard 131

II. The Consequences of an Industrialising Economy and the Rise of a Middling Class 133

III. Reforming Society: The New Values and Truths Spread through the Social Movements.....139

IV. Challenging Institutional Orders: The Transcendentalists Redefine Religion.....148

V. Transcendentalist's Initial Spins and Semantic Shifts of 'Materialism' (1830s-1840s).....152

Chapter Eight
Regulating an Industrialising Society: 'Materialism' as an Assimilative and Defensive Device 157
'Materialism' and the Perils of Progress.....159

'Materialism' as an Instrument of Assimilative Reforms 163

'Materialism' as a Weapon of Defensive Ploys 169

Part IV
The Rise of 'Materialism' in America: Detailing the Advancement and Refutation of a Mode of Delegitimizing Discourse..... 173

Chapter Nine
The Industrialization of America and Shifting Accusations of 'Materialism': New Threats, New Meanings, and New Directions 174
The Shifting Context and the Threats to the Social Order.....178

Positioning 'Materialism' as A 'Danger of the Age'
and Deceptive Degrader 194

Chapter Ten
'Materialism' as a Threat to the Cultural and Symbolic Capital of
an 'Enlightened' Mind (c. 1850s) 201
Protecting a Liberal Education: The Fight Against a 'Materialistic,

Dollar and Cent, Engineering System'..... 202

Refuting 'Materialism': The Tactics of Educational Reformers..... 210

Summing Up the Educational Debate:
The Purpose and Consequences of 'Materialism'..... 221

Chapter Eleven
'Materialism' as a Threat to America's Economic
and Political Systems and 'Truths' (c. 1880) 223
'Materialism', Industrialism, and the Vices of the Labour Movement..... 224

Materialism' of the Working Class 229

Thorstein Veblen's Materialism..... 231

Refuting 'Materialism': The Tactics of the Labour Movement 235

The Failure of Refuting 'Materialism': The Protection of American
'Truths' and 'Freedoms'..... 247

Chapter Twelve
'Materialism' as a Threat to Social Order
and to The Hierarchy (c. 1880) 255
'Materialism' as Mammonism and the Idolization
of Wealth and Material Pursuits 255

'Materialism' of the Wealth Pursuers and Status Seekers..... 261

'Materialism' and the Middle Class 278

Chapter Thirteen
'Materialism' as an Affliction of Consumerism:
The Debates and the Envisioned Consequences.....286
Creating the Dividing Lines: 'Materialism' versus 'Non-Materialism'..... 287

Critics of Progress: Positioning 'Materialism' as 'Moral Dry-Rot' 291

Examining the Perpetuation of 'Truths' about 'Materialism' and its 'Moral Dry Rot' 301

Advocates of Progress: Positioning 'Materialism' as Remedial.....311

Examining the Perpetuation of Materialism's Remedial Solutions 320

Chapter Fourteen
Tracing the Development of 'Materialism' through the Decades: Private Vices versus Civic Virtues 323

'Materialism' and the Progressive Era: 1900-1910 324

I. The Proponents' Validation: 'Materialism' becomes a 'Patriotic Duty' 325

'Materialism' and the Threat of New Fads and the Promise of More: 1910-1920 328

I. The Critics' Raise a Flag: The Social Ills of Inventions and Wealth 329

II. The Proponents' Sanctioning: 'Materialism' and the Improvement of Society's Welfare.....333

'Materialism' in the Age of Jazz Degradation and Babbittry: 1920-1930 337

I. The Critics: Defending Genteel Ideals Against 'Materialistic' Unproductive Consumerism 338

II. The Proponents' Valorization of 'Materialism': An Embracement of 'Modernity'.....346

III. Changes in the Directionality, Categorizations, and Remedies of 'Materialism': The Glorification of American Business and its March Towards Material Progress.....353

'Materialism' and the Malaise of America's Depression (1930s).....363

I. The Critics Call for the Reform of Business and its 'Materialism' Provocations 368

II. Changes in the Social Order: The Rise of the Protected Consumer and Fall of the 'Money-Changers' 374

'Materialism' and the Fight for the Right to Consume Pre- and Post-War (1940s) 378

I. The Critics' Lone Calls for Self-Restraint 378

II. The Proponents' Challenge of False Beliefs 379

'Materialism' in the Landscape of Consumers (1950s) 383

I. Materialism and the Beginning of its Psychometric Scales 385

II. 'Materialism' and the Rhetoric of 'A Better Life for All' 393

III. Signs of a Revolt: Questioning The 'Materialism' of Prosperity . 398

'Materialism' in the Counter-Culture Revolution and Beyond (1960s-1980s) 413

Part V
'Materialism': Rethinking the Consumer Behaviour Perspective 427

Chapter Fifteen
'Materialism' and the Consumer Behaviour Literature 428

Belk's Trait Theory of Materialism 438

Richins' Value Theory of Materialism 454

A Critical Perspective of the Inherent Weakness of Materialism Scales.... 469

Chapter Sixteen
Reflections on 'Materialism': Moral Judgements, Plays for Power, and Modes of Delegitimizing Discourse.....480

A Theory of Delegitimizing Discourse 482

Conclusion 484

Appendixes 487

Appendix A: Ward and Wackman's Materialism Scales (1971) 487

Appendix B: Moschis and Churchill's Materialism Scales (1978) 487

Appendix C: Belk's Materialism Scales (1984, 1985) 488

Appendix D: Ger and Belk's Materialism Scales (1996) 490

Appendix E: Richins' Materialism Value Scales for 18, 15, 9, 6, and 3 items (1992, 2004) 492

Appendix F: Dawson's Statements added to Belk's (1984) Materialism Scale (1988).....494

Appendix G: Richins' Preliminary Materialism Scale (1987).....495

Appendix H: Wong et al's Interrogative Question Format Scales (2003) .496

Appendix I: Articles on Measuring Materialism and the Scales Used 497

Figures

Figure 1: Results for Materialism, Materialistic, and Materialist from Ngram Viewer (1600-2008)…….. 50

Tables

Table 1: Familial Origins for Wealthiest Two Thousand Citizens in Northern United States (1828-1848) 128
Table 2: “The Distorted Mirror”: Materialism vs. Non-Materialism 435

List of Abbreviations and Notes

DRN	De Natura Rerum (On the Nature Things)
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
MR	Motivation Research
SDR	Social Desirable Responding
VALS	Values, Attitudes and Lifestyles

‘Materialism’, ‘materialistic’, and ‘materialist’

The etymology I present in this thesis is for the words ‘materialism’, ‘materialistic’, and ‘materialist’. Contrary to the popular perception that views ‘materialism’ as an objective concept or measurable value, I treat ‘materialism’ as a word often used as an epithet. Scare quotes are used to mark this non-standard treatment of materialism and its derivatives.

Materialism Scales

Although there are numerous scales that measure materialism as it relates to consumer behaviour, this thesis will focus predominately on the scales developed by Belk and by Richins and Dawson, as these are the most recognised scales in the literature under study. Throughout the majority of this thesis I denote Richins and Dawson’s scale as Richins’ scale, except in chapter fifteen where I describe the construction of their scale. Richins’ contributed to the majority of the scale structure, created adjusted short-form scales and, unlike Dawson, continued to study materialism.

Dictionary Entries

In examining the existence and use of the words ‘materialism’, ‘materialistic’ and ‘materialist’ in texts, I found a number of discrepancies between the suggested dates and texts listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* for origination of words and semantic changes, and the corresponding dates and texts I found. These discrepancies are noted in the text, with the appropriate antedates noted in the footnotes.

Quotations

Unless otherwise indicated, I have maintained the spelling, grammar, and formatting as they appear in the original quotes to preserve the authenticity of the text. Although I use British style for quotes, using single quotations marks, within the quoted material I use the original formatting. Accordingly, when there are quotations within the initial quotation, there will sometimes be double quotations used and at other times single quotations used pending the original formatting of the text.

Dates of Publications and References

Where possible, I have used the original published version of texts. Where this has not been possible, I indicate the original copyright date of the text either in the text or in the corresponding footnote. For primary sources, I repeat a full citation in each section to aid readers with chronology of quotes.

Dates of Events, Eras, and Lifespans

Unless otherwise specified, dates given for eras, events, and lifespans are taken from: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* for the Renaissance and Enlightenment era; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* for British and French scholars; and *American National Biography Online* for American scholars.[1]

Country Names

Throughout this thesis I refer to the United Kingdom as 'Britain' and the United States of America as 'America'. I use these short forms to preserve a level of consistency throughout the thesis: these were the predominant terms used in the works included in this study.

[1]Edward N. Zalta, ed., "Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy" (Stanford: The Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2014), http://plato.stanford.edu/index.html; Lawrence Goldman, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/; Susan Ware and Rob Heinrich, eds., "American National Biography Online" (Oxford University Press, 2012), http://www.anb.org.

Introduction

Rethinking Materialism

Beginning in the late 1960s, academics studying the effects of marketing and consumerism have attempted to 'tally the costs of a materialistic lifestyle.'[2] Believing that 'materialism' is an objective, measurable, universal, psychological phenomenon, they created a body of literature that defined, quantified, and assessed the impact of 'materialism'. 'Materialism' became defined as a trait, value, or motivator that caused a consumer to rely on the acquisition, possession, or use of material goods to pursue fulfillment in life. Two psychometric scales, developed by Russell Belk and Marsha Richins, were widely adopted to capture this phenomenon.[3] Using these scales, studies conducted in America, 'proved' that 'materialism' led to numerous psychological and social problems.[4] When the scales were taken abroad, however, they failed to apply.

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[2] Tim Kasser, *The High Price of Materialism* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2002), 5.
[3] Marsha L. Richins, "Media, Materialism, and Human Happiness," in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research*, ed. Melanie Wallendorf and Paul Anderson, vol. 14 (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1987), 352–56, http://www.acrwebsite.org/search/view-conference-proceedings.aspx?Id=6720; Marsha L. Richins and Scott Dawson, "Measuring Material Values: A Preliminary Report of Scale Development," vol. 17, NA - Advances in Consumer Research (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1990), 169–75; Marsha L. Richins and Scott Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement: Scale Development and Validation," *Journal of Consumer Research* 19, no. 3 (1992): 303–16; Marsha L. Richins, "The Material Values Scale: Measurement Properties and Development of a Short Form," *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, no. 1 (2004): 209–19.
[4]Tim Kasser et al., "Materialistic Values: Their Causes and Consequences," in *Psychology and Consumer Culture : The Struggle for a Good Life in a Materialistic World*, ed. Tim Kasser and

Problem Statement

As I will argue in this thesis, the notion that materialism, as a phenomenon, has an objective existence and resides, like a character flaw, in some individuals but not others, is profoundly flawed. The assumptions behind the definitions of 'materialism' and the scales used to measure it are not only highly biased by American cultural norms and history, but are rooted in Christian and elitist foundations. This history has left the word shrouded with negative connotations. It manifests in the socially desirable responses given in answer to the scales' questions: American respondents tend to deny embracing the values or enacting the behaviours that are used to measure materialism because they know such behaviours and values are held in disdain.[5] The subjectivity introduced by its American heritage explains its lack of universal applicability, and why, when these scales are taken to other countries and tested in non-Western societies, they produce inconsistent and unreliable results, or fail completely (refer to Appendix I for examples).

Although the stance taken toward 'materialism' in consumer behaviour literature aligns with its American colloquial meanings, the studies suffer from logical flaws and, actually, stand in glaring conflict with a large body of respected consumer research showing the variety and subtlety of the uses of

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Allen D. Kanner, 1st ed.. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004), 11–28; L. J. Shrum et al., "Materialism: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," *Journal of Marketing Management* 30, no. 17–18 (December 1, 2014): 1867–1869.

[5] David Glen Mick, "Are Studies of Dark Side Variables Confounded by Socially Desirable Responding? The Case of Materialism," *Journal of Consumer Research* 23, no. 2 (1996): 106–119.

goods—including Belk's own landmark "Possessions and the Extended Self".[6] Humans everywhere enact their everyday lives, including spiritual, relational, experiential, and physical pursuits, through material means.[7] A body of literature that casts materialism as dangerous to individual and societal well-being denies the fundamentally material nature of human existence. We are all, unavoidably, 'materialistic'. Yet the drive to label some consumers' behaviours with the pejorative stamp of 'materialism', but not others, continues without reflection.

In this thesis, I will demonstrate empirically that the current conceptualization of 'materialism' in consumer behaviour persists, despite these flaws, precisely because it rests on an ideology so deeply rooted in American history that the scholars themselves could not see it for what it was. The notion embodies a culturally constructed division between appropriate (non-materialistic) versus inappropriate (materialistic) consumption that, in effect, elevates one social group over another.[8] This culturally constructed divide is what I call 'a mode of delegitimizing discourse'—a manner of speaking designed to discredit one social group in order to elevate the status of another. 'Materialism', in sum, is neither a value nor a trait—it is an epithet.

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[6] Russell W. Belk, "Possessions and the Extended Self," *Journal of Consumer Research* 15, no. 2 (September 1988): 139–168.
[7] Mary Douglas, *The World of Goods : Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), 3–10; 36–47; Belk, "Possessions and the Extended Self"; Michael Schudson, "An Anthropology of Goods," in *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 129–146.
[8] Douglas B. Holt, "Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?," *Journal of Consumer Research* 25, no. 1 (1998): 1–25; Michael Schudson, "Delectable Materialism: Were the Critics of Consumer Culture Wrong All Along?," *The American Prospect*, 1991; James B. Twitchell, "Two Cheers for Materialism," *Wilson Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 16–26.)

The combination of problems with this concept—its propensity to elicit socially desirable responding, its failure to 'travel', its logical flaws, and its contradiction to the literature—call for a full interrogation and a radical rethinking. The thesis will begin that task by looking deeply into the etymology of the term itself, the social struggles in which its use has been formed, the role of social groups in sanctioning the division between those who were and were not 'materialists', and finally, the tight connection between the American context and the conceptualization of 'materialism' in the consumer behaviour literature.

Research Questions

Simply redefining 'materialism' or designing new scales will not solve the problem. Instead, as Schudson once noted, we need to 'reconstruct an understanding of our moral and political view of consumption that we and others can live with.'[9] This thesis answers this call, putting forward a radical reformulation of the notion of 'materialism'.

I begin by tracing a line from the origins of the word, its biases, and usage in the late 1600s to the twentieth century translation of 'materialism' into measurement scales. By following the etymology of 'materialism', I shift our gaze from the individual consumer to the social purposes behind the use of the word.

[9] Schudson, "Delectable Materialism," 35.

My investigation is framed by four research questions.

1. What is the historical context surrounding the emergence of the word 'materialism' and its continued use, as an epithet, over three hundred years?
2. What are the social conditions that usually give rise to the accusation?
3. What purposes and interests are served by calling a person or a group 'materialistic'?
4. How is the social history of 'materialism' present in the assumptions behind the definitions and scales in consumer research?

Methods

I conduct an etymological analysis to show the emergence of 'materialism' and its derivatives—'materialist' and 'materialistic'—drawing a line from the Renaissance era (when materialism was deemed to be a corrupting philosophy) to the modern era (in which materialism is seen as a corrupting behaviour).

To reveal the negative associations that have shaped the dominant view of 'materialism' from the seventeenth century forward, I use a Foucauldian discourse analysis. I note what is and is not classified as 'materialism,' who accuses whom of 'materialism,' and how these changed across time.

I situate the history of the word 'materialism' within discourse so that we can see *how*, and more importantly *why*, the pejorative power of the label was

socially constructed. I follow the recommendations of Hall on discourse analysis, bringing to the fore: the ***statements*** that define 'materialism'; ***rules*** that govern what can be said or thought about 'materialism'; ***subjects*** denoted as personifying 'materialism' (i.e., the impious philosopher or hedonistic consumer); institutionalised ***practices*** and ***mechanisms*** used to regulate conduct; ***conditions*** that allow knowledge and truths about 'materialism' to gain authority; the ***interests*** these truths advance or demobilise; and the ***opposing discourse*** that challenged the dominant perspectives.[10] I use this method to historicise the present so that, by the final chapter, we can understand why we need to be wary of the moral judgments we are perpetuating in our studies of 'materialism'.

Theory

In my reconceptualization, I shift the theoretical landscape from individual psychology to the negotiation of power among social groups. 'Power' is viewed from a Foucauldian perspective—as a phenomenon that flows through the social system and is often contested. It can be oppressive but it also can be used to bring about change. It involves governing or directing another's activities by structuring the possible fields of actions either through sovereign modes of power, such as enforcing obedience to the king or to the law, or through disciplinary modes of power, such as employing structures of social

[10] Stuart Hall, "Work of Representation," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon, 2nd edition (Los Angeles ; Milton Keynes, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013), 30–31.

surveillance or promoting processes of normalization and cultural indoctrination.[11]

Power can be seen at the political macro level but also by looking at the micro-practices of everyday life. By examining discourse, we can see how power builds truth systems that govern values, and thus attitudes and behaviours. These truth systems, or 'regimes of truth', are overarching ideas that shape what is accepted as reality in society.[12] (Throughout this thesis, I will refer to 'truths' being established about 'materialism'; in each case, I am referring to the placement of a belief in the regime of truth and am not suggesting that any of these notions stand as truth in the absolute sense.) Value systems are reflected in normative assumptions and beliefs about appropriate versus inappropriate behaviours and ways of living, in turn manifesting in consumer behaviours. These concepts draw parallels to theories of 'ideological power' and its

[11]Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 2nd Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* [Abingdon: Routledge, 2001]; Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 [Summer 1982]: 777–95; Cynthia R. Nielsen, "Foucault and Subjectivities," in *Foucault, Douglass, Fanon, and Scotus in Dialogue: On Social Construction and Freedom* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013], 17–43; Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse, Inaugural Lecture at the College de France, given 2 December 1970," in *Untying the Text : A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young, trans. Ian McLeod [Boston ; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981], 48–78; "Towards a Theory of Discursive Practice" and "Interpretive Analytics" in Hubert L. Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow, and Michel Foucault, *Michel Foucault : Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983], 44–78; 104–125; Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, "Truth and Power," in *The Foucault Reader* [London: Penguin Books, 1991], 51–75; Stuart Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge and Discourse," in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, ed. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates [SAGE, 2001], 72–81.
[12] Peter Brooker, *A Glossary of Cultural Theory*, 2nd edition (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2003), 142–143.

normative influences;[13] however, to avoid confusion with the history of 'materialism' (and the way materialistic theories made obvious ideological structures of society), and to prevent the top-down imposition of ideals it imbues, I opt instead to use the concepts of discursive power and the truth and value systems it conveys.

I use the example of 'materialism' to build towards a theory of delegitimizing discourse. I define 'delegitimizing discourse' as words that are used to debase 'the other'. These words subsequently elevate 'the us' and create or reinforce stratifications in society. Such discourse can be used to prevent the loss of, or to gain social standing over, 'the other' group. It is often used to reinforce or to enact new systems of 'truths' and 'values', and accordingly affects the stability of the social order (the idealised norms, values, and institutions that are perceived as maintaining social stability and harmony)[14] and social hierarchies (the ranking of the relative status of a group).[15] It acts as a mode of discursive power, meaning power manifested in discourse.

In relating delegitimizing discourse to social hierarchies and actual consumption practices, I draw upon theories proposed by Gusfield and Bourdieu. Gusfield, in examining the rise and fall of the American Temperance

[13] Teun Adrianus van Dijk, *Ideology : A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London: Sage, 1998), 69–70; Terry Eagleton, "What Is Ideology?," in *Ideology: An Introduction* (London ; New York: Verso, 1991), 1–32.
[14] "Classical Sociology and the Search for Social Order" in: Barbara Misztal, *Trust in Modern Societies: The Search for the Bases of Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 33–64.
[15] Michael Haralambos, *Sociology : Themes and Perspectives*, 7th ed. (London: Collins Educational, 2008), 20.

Movement, documented two tactics the middle class used in attempts to enforce its value system, legitimize the movement, and control America's drinking consumption. These were *assimilative* tactics (reformers missionized and encouraged social deviants to 'be like us') or *coercive* measures (deviants, perceived as a hostile enemy, where forced, often through legislation, to change).[16] I modify Gusfield's ideas, focusing specifically on how these play out in tactics of delegitimizing discourse. I note how 'materialism' is wielded as either an *assimilative measure*—rhetoric geared towards indoctrination—or as a *defensive mechanism*—rhetoric used to delegitimize or debase threatening elements and behaviours of society. The latter mode adjusts Gusfield's concept of coercive measures, recognising how discursive power, void of formal legislation, uses *defensive* measures to thwart threatening enemies. Both assimilative and defensive methods reflect the enactment of Foucault's disciplinary mode of power.

Bourdieu sets out a theory to explain the reinforcement and proliferation of social stratifications. He argues that social distinctions—that is the differences between groups based on sociocultural factors, such as adherence to certain morals and norms, habits, lifestyles, and tastes for and ability to appreciate music, art, and food—are maintained and perpetuated through acculturation

[16]Joseph R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade : Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement*, 2nd ed (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 68–70.

and through personal embodiment of these dispositions. Social distinctions accordingly act to reinforce group identities and maintain social hierarchies.[17]

In his analysis of class-based distinctions, Bourdieu notes how classes are united by similar tastes and separated by aversions to different tastes. These distinctions, which reflect the level of a group's economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital, are used to denote a group's status and rank in the social hierarchy. Higher levels of capital equate to higher social standings. Economic capital is equated to one's income and earning capability. Social capital refers to relational networks and membership in a group. Cultural capital reflects the embodied dispositions, aesthetic tastes, and acquired educational qualifications. Symbolic capital refers to the level of prestige, honour, and attention a group holds in society. This latter capital interacts with cultural capital in that it enables the dominant group to delineate what is a superior, valued, and honourable way of life.[18]

Shifts in the volumes of capital do occur and can modify social stratifications by affecting the reproduction of what Bourdieu calls the 'habitus' of an individual or group. 'Habitus' captures the socially conditioned preferences an individual learns through the family and surrounding neighbourhood, education, and employment. These learnt dispositions, however, are open to change and can be shaped by individual choices. Although someone may grow up in a certain

[17] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), 256-294.
[18] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 56; "Editor's Introduction" in: Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991), 14.

social stratum (e.g., a middle-class background) and thus have similar life experiences to others in that stratum, and adopt a similar way of perceiving situations and a similar lifestyle, that same person might make a choice that leads to a completely different way of life. Yet in these instances of acquiring a different group's habitus, an individual may not know how to act appropriately, since there is misalignment between her old and new habitus.[19]

Bourdieu notes that in order to maintain the social hierarchy and to support the purity of legitimized tastes, the dominant class will often degrade the aesthetic dispositions of the 'inferior' classes by declaring them to be vulgar. Descriptive words, such as 'frivolous', 'futile', 'shallow', 'superficial', 'showy', 'flashy', 'meretricious', 'low', 'degrading', and 'demeaning' stigmatize the consumption of the dominated classes.[20] I position the 'materialism' epithet as an example of this vulgarization tactic.

The reproduction of habitus helps to maintain the established social order while changes in habitus can disrupt it. I find that this threat of disruption is why, in the discourse, the sources of capital and the institutions that cultivate a habitus (e.g., the family, church, or schools) become protected. These are the channels through which members of a social group are indoctrinated with the norms, attitudes, and preferences for one's social group.

[19] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 169–175; Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1990), 52–65; "Editor's Introduction" by John B. Thompson in: Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 15–17.
[20] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 486.

Common Findings

Applying these methods and theoretical perspectives brings to the fore two common findings: the social conditions and the social purpose that result in the pejorative use of 'materialism'. I find that condemnations of 'materialism' rise during moments of intense social change. These social dislocations create openings for contentious ideas, alternative truths, and new values to emerge. These, in turn, can call into question the established social order. When social hierarchies are threatened or disrupted, groups lash out, as opposing sides attempt to reaffirm or challenge what is a legitimate way of living.

At times, accusations of 'materialism' are levelled by the threatened elite group, and at other times these accusations come from the disrupting group. The directionality of these allegations reflects the mobilisation and de-mobilisation of interests. For instance, in the late Renaissance and Enlightenment era (c.1600-c.1800), the Church used the term to discredit philosophers who promoted an atomistic theory of the world in which God either was not present or operated from a disinterested distance. The plausibility of a 'godless' world was a clear threat to the Church's power, as well as the scholars who relied upon them for financial support. During America's industrialization and commercialization, the intellectual and religious elite used the word to denounce the 'excessive' focus on the material aspects of life among rising classes, from the workers to the new middle class to the nouveau riche. The rise

of these social groups threatened the elite's status, the legitimacy of their values, and the stability of the social order.

In each instance, the pejorative use of the word 'materialism' is applied to denounce the offending group, which simultaneously elevates the accusatory group's ideals and social ranking. This comparative and critical analysis makes us aware of the social purpose of 'materialism': to protect or to challenge the established order.

Outline of Thesis

The plan of the thesis is somewhat unusual. In Part I, I set up the core proposition and describe methods; however, though I will broadly describe my critique of the consumer behaviour literature, I will hold full review of the literature until the end, so that readers can be fully cognizant of the backdrop against which I critique the definitions and scales. Chapter 1 sets the scene by comparing the discourse of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, when scholars were first confronting and attempting to discredit a materialist philosophy, to the discourse of twentieth-century America when scholars were attacking a consumer-driven, materialistic world. I bring these stories to life by depicting how Thomas Hobbes and his works were tainted by the accusation of 'materialism' in the 1700s and held to be a corrupting influence on society. I fast forward nearly three hundred years to the late 1980s when once again 'materialism' is associated with disruptors of the social order—Wall Street

financiers, Jim and Tammy Bakker, the 1980s Yuppies—and held responsible for corrupting society. The similarity between the two moments is striking and the roles played by the delegitimizing discourse parallel. Having illustrated the historical tension residing in the use of 'materialism,' I proceed to describe my methods in detail in Chapter 2.

In Part II, I start to trace the history of 'materialism', noting how and why materialism became framed as a mode of delegitimizing discourse. In the first chapter of this section (Chapter 3), I document the renewal of the Greek atomistic theory in Renaissance thought, and connect this to the neology of the word 'materialism' by British scholars in the late 1600s. Central to this story is the recovery and reception of the ancient Greek text—*De Natura Rerum* (*On the Nature of Things*), which contained a clear and full articulation of Epicurus's materialistic philosophy of atomism—a philosophy that, in the religious context of the Renaissance, threatened to undermine the power of the Church and the Divine Right of Kings. In Chapter 4, I document the resulting concerted censorship effort that arose to try to quell the rise of a philosophy of materialism. I trace how and why *De Natura Rerum* and the ideas it contained about a material-based world were debased, noting how truths told about DNR attached themselves to materialism. As part of this story, we see how delegitimizing discourse acts as a mechanism of disciplinary power.

Chapter 5 and 6 demonstrate the influence of the social context. Chapter 5 describes the general background of Protestant Europe (specifically England)

and Catholic Europe (specifically France), so that in Chapter 6, when entries for 'materialism' are analyzed, we can see how framings of the word are highly contextualized and influenced by societal power shifts, sociocultural changes, religious interests, and political agenda. I document how the term was first manifested in English as part of the Cambridge Platonists' critique of materialist philosophers, and was used by philosophers to denote an irreligious atomistic world versus a God-given atomistic world. The former was castigated as a 'materialistic' theory; the latter formed the basis of a mechanical theory of reality that ultimately underpinned the rise of science and, later, industry, in England and America. In France, the word was lifted from the English debates regarding the essence of the world (i.e., was it all man-made or was there some spiritual component that directed mankind?). Philosophers, known today as the 'French materialists' used a materialistic worldview to advance their desires for the power of the Church and King to be replaced by a power of reason and freedom of thought. This ultimately led to the French Revolution. By the end of the eighteenth century, 'materialism' was saturated with the associations of irreligiosity, impiousness, and social disruptiveness.

In Part III, I explore the transition of materialism to America in the mid-nineteenth century. Chapter 7 paints the backdrop, noting key actors, value- and truth-systems, and societal changes that impact the meaning of materialism. It then details how the word was first semantically manipulated in America by the Transcendentalists—a group of intellectual and religious elite who challenged New England's dominant religion. These writers, preachers,

and recognised speakers accused the established church—the Unitarian church—of being prone to materialism. The Unitarian church, in adopting the Enlightenment ideals of using logic to explain the world, was accused of having lost sight of the spiritual aspects of life. In an attempt to bring balance between the spiritual and material, the Transcendentalists established a number of pejorative associations with the word materialism. Some of these associations were carried forward from the Renaissance and Enlightenment era (i.e., hedonism), and some were new and reflected the era of industrialization and America's growing material prosperity (i.e., the monied interests encouraged by the growing capitalistic democracy).

Chapter 8 momentarily slows down the temporal progression of the etymology, using the speech acts of the Transcendentalists to explore the different manifestations of delegitimizing discourse. Transcendentalists wielded allegations of 'materialism' either as i) an assimilative weapon; and/or ii) a defensive ploy, which allowed them to advance their interests and ideals of social order.

In Part IV, I bring the etymology through the American 20th century, up to the moment when Belk and Richins designed their scales (the 1980s). Chapter 9 lays out the social dislocations created by the growth of mass consumerism in America. These rifts gave rise to additional meanings applied to the bedrock of associations for 'materialism,' but continued the agenda for the pejorative use. The growth of America's economic prosperity produced a situation in which the

intellectual and religious elites' status and sources of capital were under threat. The businessman, corrupt politician, and self-made millionaire started to dominate society. Against this backdrop, materialism became couched as a 'danger' of the age.

In Chapter 10 (c. 1850s), I describe how the intellectual elite used the epithet as a defensive mechanism to protect their source of cultural and symbolic capital—a liberal education or classical studies. They claimed their liberal education system reinforced morals, constituted 'proper' learning, and produced a disciplined mind. In turn, they debased the more practical, engineering-focused education system of the businessman as 'materialistic' and void of any moral indoctrination.

Chapter 11 explores the use of the term in the context of socialism. I first explore how American social critics targeted the rising working class in the mid-nineteenth century: by connecting Marxist materialism with an ungodly and immoral lifestyle, the businessman and politicians could readily denounce the demands of socialist groups and the labour movement, preserving their economic capital, political truths, and ideals of order. This line of rhetoric is then traced through to the mid-twentieth century, when charges of 'materialism' were used to shore up support for the attack on Communism and the need for America's Cold War response.

Chapter 12 assesses how, in response to the proliferation of goods and the release of economic opportunities to the masses, 'materialism' was used to support value systems and to preserve social hierarchies. As part of this story, we see how the tensions created by the American identity of economic prosperity, which valued material progress over the spiritual, intellectual, and cultural pursuits of the elite, led the intellectual and religious elite to debase various social groups: in the early 1900s, it was the nouveau riche, and in the 1920s, it was the upper-middle-class Babbitts. Social critics likewise wielded the concept of materialism as part of an assimilative tactic aimed at the middle class. It was used to ensure the middle class did not reach beyond their social class.

Chapter 13 exposes the arbitrariness of the way the term has been attached to goods and practices. The intellectual and religious elite at the turn of the twentieth century created the division between appropriate and inappropriate consumer behaviours—and conjured up consequences for wrongful choice. Classifications divided along elements that the intellectual and religious elite valued versus disparaged. Spiritual experiences, ideals of brotherhood, the family unit, classical books and artwork, and meaningful conversations were the esteemed essences of a non-materialistic life. Gowns, feasts, cars, movies, and amusement parks were symbolic of a materialistic life. The intellectual and religious elite proclaimed 'truths', alleging that materialism led to a hollow, misguided, and corrupted life. It was the cause of misery, family strife, and dissatisfaction with life. I draw a line from these divisions and truths to the

assumptions consumer research scholars believed and later imbedded within their materialism scales.

Chapter 14 picks up the tempo through the later decades of the twentieth century. It notes the variability in what behaviours and groups were classified as materialistic and what consequences were propagated. It pulls to the fore the interests being mobilised, noting that 'materialism' was manipulated to advance a call for a return to a simpler way of life, and at other times it was manipulated to encourage an embrace of America's prosperity.

Throughout Part IV, I recognise how accused groups responded. To counter allegations of 'materialism', the accused either i) sanctioned ideas or behaviours associated with materialism by highlighting their virtuous aspects; ii) deflected the accusations towards others; or iii) tried to refute or neutralize the derogatory nature of the accusation. A consideration of these responses is instructive, as it often points to the interests being mobilised and demobilised, and the power contestations at play.

In Part V, I pull together the key themes of this thesis and bring them to bear on the questions in consumer behaviour. In Chapter 15, I conclude the etymology of 'materialism', looking at how the pejorative associations have woven their way into the consumer behaviour literature. Combining a review of the literature with the insights I gained from the interviews I conducted with key academics (Moschis, Belk, Richins, and Ger), I describe how the consumer

behaviour literature on ‘materialism’ emerged and was taken forward. In Chapter 16, I summarise the concept of delegitimizing discourse. I conclude by noting how our continued use of the ‘materialism’ scales reinforces the delegitimizing power that resides behind the word. I call into question the interests we continue to advance through our studies and through labelling consumers as ‘materialistic’.

Part I

Materialism: Shifting Perspectives

Chapter One

Setting the Scene: The Pejorative Nature of 'Materialism'—Then and Now

The 1600s

On July 21,1683, prominent members of the University of Oxford gathered in convocation to pass a judgement and a decree. They gathered to silence atheistic ideas they argued were contributing to societal upheaval and a moral abyss.

> [T]he books which contain the impious Doctrines, are fitted to deprave good manners; corrupt the minds of unwary men, stir up seditions and tumults, overthrow States and Kingdoms, and lead to Rebellion, murder of Princes, and Atheism itself: and therefore we interdict all members of the University from the reading the said Books, under the penalties in the Statutes expressed. We also order the before recited Books to be publicly burnt, by the hand of our Marshal in the court of our Scholes.[21]

Amongst the books listed and publicly burned was Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*. Hobbes' (1588-1679) stood accused of breeding rebellion and revolutionary ideas because he suggested that religion and civil society were merely man-

[21] University of Oxford, *The Judgment and Decree of the University of Oxford Past in Their Convocation July 21. 1683, against Certain Pernicious Books and Damnable Doctrines Destructive to the Sacred Persons of Princes, Their State and Government, and of All Humane Society: Rendred into English, and Published by Command* (Oxford: Printed at the Theater, 1683), 7.

made ideals. His publications and theories were viewed as undermining the Divine Right of Kings and the authority of the Church.

Hobbes was charged with a newly coined sin—'materialism'. The phrase was first used by Philosopher Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688) in 1678, but was popularized by Bishop George Berkeley (1685-1753) over the next fifty years. Bishop Berkeley asserted in 1733:

> That Atheistical Principles have taken deeper root, and are further spread than most People are apt to imagine will be plain to whoever considers, that Pantheism, Materialism, Fatalism are nothing but Atheism a little disguised; that the Notions of Hobbes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, and Bayle are relished and applauded; that as they who deny the Freedom and Immortality of the Soul in effect deny its Being, even so they do as to all Moral Effects and Natural Religion, deny the being of God, who deny him to be an Observer, Judge, Rewarder of humane Action; that the course of arguing pursued by Infidels leads to Atheism as well as Infidelity.[22]

Hobbes, like other indicted materialists, did not use the word 'materialism' in his writings, nor did he deny the existence of God. His philosophy, however, imagined a purely material world comprised of self-governing atoms. He argued that, 'there can be no Image of God; nor of the Soule of Man; nor of Spirits; but onely of Bodies Visible'.[23] Hobbes' view of society was likewise premised on man-made contrivances: people did things and obeyed laws and Kings because man-made forces in society pushed them to do so, *not* because a

[22] George Berkeley, *The Theory of Vision, or Visual Language : Shewing the Immediate Presence and Providence of a Deity, Vindicated and Explained.* (London: printed for J. Tonson in the Strand, 1733), 9.
[23] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, Or, The Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common Wealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (London: Printed for Andrew Crooke, 1651), 359.

spiritual world granted some divine power over others, as was the presumed view of the era. God existed, yet his existence was misconstrued to advance a set of interests: 'Religions' were made by men 'with a purpose to make those men that relyed on them, the more apt to Obedience, Lawes, Peace, Charity, and civill Society.'[24]

Hobbes' ideas contained the seeds of what we now recognise as scientific thought and a modern world. During his era, however, his thoughts represented a challenge to the power of religion and state, which was already experiencing traumatic upheavals. Battles raging between Protestantism and Catholicism threatened to weaken the position of the Church. The succession of the Crown and which state religion it would impose were in dispute. There was a general dissuasion from religion beginning to take root. Contemporary elites, including clergy, scholars (who, unless they dangerously renounced their faith, were clergy in the minor order), civil society, and court officials, feared that a theory of a world governed by mindless, random atoms and created by chance would only increase levels of irreligiosity, and drive men to rebellion and irreligious practices: If there was no God, there was no God-ordained King or posthumous Judgement Day, nor reason to follow laws or to uphold oaths or a sense of honour.[25] Hobbes' ideas needed to be suppressed.

[24] Ibid., 54.
[25] Henry More, *An Antidote against Atheism : Or, an Appeal to the Naturall Faculties of the Minde of Man, Whether There Be Not a God*, The second edition corrected and enlarged: with an appendix there unto annexed. (London: J. Flesher, 1655), 2.

From this milieu, 'materialism', 'materialist', and 'materialistic' emerged. The words acted to brand threatening ideas as 'heretical' and 'athesitical'.[26] In this era, charges of atheism were severe. It meant not only denying God's existence but also supporting acts of godlessness.[27] Across Europe, clergy of various dominations, university dons and scholars, court officials, and lawyers united in common defence of God and piety, using books, pamphlets, the pulpit, Parliamentary proceedings, and university decrees to denounce Hobbes and other materialists such as the Dutch philosopher, Benedict de Spinoza.[28] They built up a body of evidence, proving that 'materialism' caused public impiety. Scholars who proclaimed to be 'a Hobbist' were forced to flee or confess to holding 'wicked, blasphemous, and Atheistical' ideas'. Their impious behaviours of 'licentiousness, swearing rashly, drinking intemperately, boasting' and general 'corrupting' were blamed on holding these immoral ideas.[29] We see,

[26] John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion : The Age of Enlightenment in England, 1660-1750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 9–15, 34–37; Glen Newey, *The Routledge Guidebook to Hobbes' Leviathan* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 290–300.
[27] Charles Wolseley, *The Unreasonableness of Atheism Made Manifest : In a Discourse Written by the Command of a Person of Honour*, The second edition revised and enlarged by the author. (London: Printed for Nathaniel Ponder, 1669); John Bramhall, *Castigations of Mr. Hobbes: His Last Animadversions, in the Case Concerning Liberty, and Universal Necessity. With an Appendix Concerning The Catching of Leviathan Or, The Great Whale* (London: Printed by E.T. for JCrook, 1658); Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan : Seventeenth-Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 39-41.
[28] Steven M. Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell : Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age* (Princeton, NJ; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2011); Pierre-françois Moreau, "Spinoza's Reception and Influence," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. Don Garrett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 408–34.
[29] Daniel Scargill, *The Recantation of Daniel Scargill : Publickly Made before the University of Cambridge, in Great St Maries, July 25. 1669* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1669); James L. Axtell, "The Mechanics of Opposition: Restoration Cambridge v. Daniel Scargill," *Historical Research* 38, no. 97 (1965).

since its origins, 'materialism' has been a pejorative wielded by academics to protect the established order.

The 1980s

Let us move forward, three hundred years later to a *Time* magazine cover story of May 25, 1987:

> What's Wrong: Hypocrisy, betrayal and greed unsettle the nation's soul
>
> Lamentation is in the air, and clay feet litter the ground. A relentless process of forlorn faces assaults the nation's moral equanimity, characters linked in the public mind not by any connection between their diverse dubious deeds but by the fact that each in his or her own way has somehow seemed to betray the public trust: Oliver North, Robert McFarlane, Michael Deaver, Ivan Boesky, Gary Hart, Clayton Lonetree, Jim and Tammy Bakker, maybe Edwin Meese, perhaps even the President. Their transgressions—some grievous and some petty—run the gamut of human failings, from weakness of will to moral laxity to hypocrisy to uncontrolled avarice. But taken collectively, the heedless lack of restraint in their behaviour reveals something disturbing about the national character. America, which took such back-thumping pride in its spiritual renewal, finds itself wallowing in a moral morass. Ethics, often dismissed as a prissy Sunday School word, is now at the center of a new national debate. *Put bluntly, has the mindless materialism of the '80s left in its wake a values vacuum?*[30]

Less than five years later, a *Time* Magazine's cover story of April 9th, 1991, announced a reversal:

[30] Walter Shaprio, "What's Wrong," *Time*, May 25, 1987, 28. (Emphasis added.)

> The Simple Life Comes Back
>
> Goodbye to having it all. Tired of trendiness and materialism, Americans are rediscovering the joys of home life, basic values and things that last.
>
> These are the humble makings of a new American revolution in progress: macaroni and cheese. Timex watches. Volunteer work. Insulated underwear. Savings accounts. Domestic beer. Local activism. Sleds. Pyjamas. Sentimental movies. Primary colors. Mixed-breed dogs. Bicycles. Cloth diapers. Small-town ways. Iceberg lettuce. Family reunions. Board games. Hang-it-yourself wallpaper. Push-it-yourself lawn mowers. Silly Putty.
>
> …After a 10-year bender of gaudy dreams and Godless consumerism, Americans are starting to trade down. They want to reduce their attachments to status symbols, fast-track careers and great expectations of Having It All. Upscale is out; downscale is in. Yuppies are an ancient civilization. Flaunting money is considered gauche: if you've got it, please keep it to yourself—or give some away!
>
> In place of materialism, many Americans are embracing simpler pleasures and homier values. They've been thinking hard about what really matters in their lives, and they've decided to make some changes. What matters is having time for family and friends, rest and recreation, good deeds and spirituality.[31]

Reflected in these *Times* articles are the current 'truths' told about 'materialism'. Although referring to consumer behaviour rather than a philosophy, the truths still resonate with those of three hundred years past:

- Materialism leads to moral corruption destructive to the state and to society at large: It leads to 'transgressions', 'moral laxity', 'human

[31] Janice Castro, "The Simple Life Comes Back," *Time*, April 8, 1991, 42.

failings', 'hypocrisy', 'uncontrolled avarice';[32] It is a malaise of 'Godless consumerism'.[33]

- The antidotes is a re-establishment of piety: a return to 'ethics' and 'values';[34] repression of consumerism; embracement of 'simpler pleasures and homier values'; and prioritization of 'time for family and friends, rest and recreation, good deeds and spirituality.'[35]

Consumer Research on Materialism

The excesses of the 'Me Decade' and the greed of the Reagan era brought new consumer symbols to stand for and against 'materialism', although it had long been commonplace in America for this term to act as a shorthand for certain unbecoming behaviours and inappropriate goods. Against the backdrop of the 1980s, a new cadre of academics came forward: consumer behaviour scholars began to research the 'materialism' decried by media pundits. Taking as their premise the social views spread about 'materialism', they delved into studying 'materialism's' social ills. A controversial literature review of the humanities' assessment of consumption, written by Richard Pollay, reached back to the origins of 'materialism', but failed to understand how the divisions it enacted—between approved and disparaged consumerism—reflected contextual power

[32] Shaprio, "What's Wrong," 28.
[33] Castro, "The Simple Life," 42.
[34] Shaprio, "What's Wrong," 28.
[35] Shaprio, "What's Wrong," 28.

shifts.[36] On the heels of his article came the widely read studies by Russell Belk and Marsha Richins. Their seminal articles made 'materialism' appear objective. These articles

- defined 'the domain of materialism';[37]
- developed 'a measure of material values' to represent 'the construct of materialism';[38]
- identified 'factors' contributing to 'individual materialism';[39]
- provided 'insights' into the cultural 'roots of materialism';[40]
- gathered 'evidence' for 'a negative relationship between materialism and happiness in life;[41] and
- examined 'the human and social impact' and 'alleged antipathy of materialism to both personal and societal well-being'.[42]

Scales were developed to measure the ostensible embeddedness of 'materialism' within the characters of individual consumers. Two became most predominant. One, devised by Belk in the mid 1980s, was based on an analysis of historical and religious perceptions and commentaries by social scientists.[43] The other,

[36] Richard W. Pollay, "The Distorted Mirror: Reflections on the Unintended Consequences of Advertising," *Journal of Marketing* 50, no. 2 (April 1986): 18–36.
[37] Richins and Dawson, "Measuring Material Values," 170.
[38] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 313–314.
[39] Ibid., 303.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 274.
[42] Ibid., 265–266.
[43] Belk Russell W. Belk, "Worldly Possessions: Issues and Criticisms," in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research*, ed. Richard P. Bagozzi and Alice M. Tybout, vol. 10 (Ann Abor, MI: Association for Consumer Research, 1983), 514–19, http://www.acrwebsite.org/search/view-conference-proceedings.aspx?Id=6172; Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism"; Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World."

created by Richins and Dawson in the early 1990s, also incorporated interviews with ordinary Americans as source material.[44] Belk's psychometric scale measured three 'subtraits':

- 'envy';
- 'nongenerosity'; and
- 'possessiveness'.[45]

Richins and Dawson's scale measured three values:

- 'acquisition centrality'[46] (i.e., 'materialists worship things, and the pursuit of possessions take the place of religion');[47]
- 'the pursuit of happiness through acquisition rather than through other means (such as personal relationships, experiences or achievement)';[48] and
- 'possession-defined success'.[49]

Since the time of 1980s 'malaise' in which these scales were produced, a significant body of research has used them, asking consumers questions meant to unveil their undesirable propensity towards 'materialism' (refer to Appendix I). It is assumed that the scales objectively 'prove' that materialistic people: place 'greater emphasis on financial security and less on interpersonal

[44] Richins and Dawson, "Measuring Material Values"; Fournier and Richins, "Some Theoretical and Popular Notions Concerning Materialism"; Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement."
[45] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 265.
[46] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 304.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

relationships;' prefer 'to spend more on themselves and less on others;' engage 'in fewer voluntary simplicity behaviours;' are 'less satisfied with their lives';[50] and experience 'stronger feelings of anxiety, guilt, and other negative emotions' in the weeks following purchases.[51] 'Materialism' has become framed as: resulting from disruptive family structures;[52] conflicting with collective-orientated values (family and religion);[53] and leading to lower ethical standard.[54] The 'truths' about materialism have become validated, proliferated, and entrenched.

The current consumer behaviour literature makes it clear that many struggle to imagine 'materialism' as anything but a value, trait, or motivator that leads to negative consequences. Like the academics and clergy of the seventeenth century, we are surrounded by a truth system that tells us it must be so. We cannot get enough distance to see otherwise, so we take no notice of how current findings align with the 'truths' that critics have, for three hundred years, applied to materialism: whether it be a philosophy or a consumer value, the 'evidence' has consistently 'proven' materialism to be indicative of moral failings.

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[50] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 303.
[51] Marsha L. Richins, Kim K. R. McKeage, and Debbie Najjar, "An Exploration of Materialism and Consumption-Related Affect," ed. John F. Sherry Jr. and Brian Sternthal, vol. 19, NA - Advances in Consumer Research (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1992), 229–36, http://www.acrwebsite.org/search/view-conference-proceedings.aspx?Id=7301.
[52] Aric Rindfleisch, James E. Burroughs, and Frank Denton, "Family Structure, Materialism, and Compulsive Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research* 23, no. 4 (1997): 312–25.
[53] James E. Burroughs and Aric Rindfleisch, "Materialism and Well-Being: A Conflicting Values Perspective," *Journal of Consumer Research* 29, no. 3 (2002): 348–70.
[54] James A. Muncy and Jacqueline K. Eastman, "Materialism and Consumer Ethics: An Exploratory Study," *Journal of Business Ethics* 17, no. 2 (January 1, 1998): 142.

To advance the scholarly work on materialism, I maintain that scholars need to break free from the negative associations that have become attached to the concept. Yet in order to do so, the negative associations, and the interests these supported, first need to be brought into consciousness. The subsequent chapters are a step in this direction.

Chapter Two

Plotting the Etymology of 'Materialism'

Throughout this thesis, I trace the history of 'materialism' as both a concept and a term. This reflects a hermeneutic tradition—that is, a tradition that looks to recover the 'meanings and truths from our everyday practices or from those of another age or culture'.[55] I extend upon this tradition by drawing upon the Foucauldian discourse analysis suggested by Hall to examine how discourses are used, and what role they play in society.[56]

To answer the research questions previously outlined, I concentrate on documenting the use of the words 'materialism', 'materialistic', and 'materialist' in texts. However, I also investigate the reception of texts that were foundational to either the transmission of materialistic ideas or the transformation of the terms, and I highlight people who were proponents of, or were perceived to embody, a materialistic orientation.

I present quotations from documents that contain the word 'materialism' or its derivatives to demonstrate the meanings attributed to the words and the associations made at the time the documents were published. I selected

[55] Dreyfus, Rabinow, and Foucault, *Michel Foucault*, xxiii.
[56] Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge and Discourse," 73–74.

passages for inclusion based on their ability to clearly demonstrate the subjective and judgemental nature typically embodied in the use of the word. Most excerpts capture what Foucault would call 'serious' speech acts; that is, speech that constitutes the opinion of the expert.[57]

In finding the texts, I used a number of sources, including:

- Dictionaries
- References from other texts
- Ngram Viewer
- Digital databases for selected historical American documents, letters, essays, speeches, newspapers, and magazines

The texts I include in this study span from the Renaissance era to the current journals in consumer research. This breadth enables me to trace the history of 'materialism' over a longer period of time and to present sufficient evidence to support my propositions. I merge the etymology of the word with the background context by drawing on secondary historical accounts of the relevant periods.

The initial search started with analyzing entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) (first published in 1884) and other precursory dictionaries from the seventeenth and eighteenth century, such as Nathan Bailey's *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (first published in 1721) and Samuel Johnson's

[57] Dreyfus, Rabinow, and Foucault, *Michel Foucault*, xxiv.

A Dictionary of the English Language (first published in 1755). I traced the quotes listed in the OED back to their original publications. This allowed me to elaborate on the one-sentence descriptions in the OED and to more accurately assess and clarify a specific meaning.

I did find that the dictionaries for 'materialism' and 'materialistic' incorrectly cited the first use of the terms. Moreover, changes in the meaning attributed to words in dictionaries often followed long after the word's meaning had changed in popular discourse. For example, the term 'materialist', although neologised by Henry More in 1668, was not recorded by Bailey in his *Dictionary* until 1724. When Bailey did record the term, he defined it as meaning 'a Druggist.'[58] It was only in Bailey's fifth edition, published in 1731, that he related 'materialist' to the Greek philosophy of atomism.[59] The dictionaries did provide a general indication of when semantic changes occurred and helped indicate the saturation of new meanings. As Thomas Jefferson once wrote, 'Dictionaries are but the depositories of words already legitimated by usage.'[60]

To locate texts containing 'materialism' or its derivatives, I used two approaches: a snowball strategy, and a more general search using Google and digitally available archives. With the snowball tactic, I followed citations given

[58] Nathan Bailey, "Materialist," *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (London: Printed for E. Bell et al., 1724).
[59] Nathan Bailey, "Materialist," *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (London: Printed for J. J. Knapton et al., 1731).
[60] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Cooper, Dec 11, 1823," in *Philosophical Writings of Thomas Cooper*, ed. Udo Thiel (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2001), Image 181.

in contemporary works. Quotes that contained the word 'materialism' or its derivatives, or accounts that attributed a materialistic orientation to certain individuals, were added to the list of examined material. For periods of transitions in meaning, all the works of relevant individuals were analyzed and the multiple editions of their works compared. For example, the works by Henry More (who neologised 'materialist'), Ralph Cudworth (who neologised 'materialism'), the major mechanical and Enlightenment philosophers (including French and English versions of their works), the Transcendentalists in America (who expanded materialism from a philosophical concept to a life orientation), and key preachers, politicians, reformists, journalists, novelists, and scholars (who framed its modern day meanings) were all searched for the terms 'materialism', 'materialistic', and 'materialist' (or the French equivalents). For French entries, I either quoted from the English edition, citing the English and French references, or I have provided the original French quote with my own translations.

Google's Ngram viewer formed the basis for the more general search.[61] Ngram uses Google books as its database and traces the existence of a word in all digitally available publications. I searched from the terms 'materialism',

[61] Ngram Viewer Search Results: 'Materialism', 'Materialistic', 'Materialist,'" *Google Books Ngram Viewer*, 2013, https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=materialism%2Cmaterialistic%2Cmaterialist&case_insensitive=on&year_start=1600&year_end=2010&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t4%3B%2Cmaterialism%3B%2Cc0%3B%2Cs0%3B%3Bmaterialism%3B%2Cc0%3B%3BMaterialism%3B%2Cc0%3B%3BMATERIALISM%3B%2Cc0%3B.t4%3B%2Cmaterialistic%3B%2Cc0%3B%2Cs0%3B%3Bmaterialistic%3B%2Cc0%3B%3BMaterialistic%3B%2Cc0%3B.t4%3B%2Cmaterialist%3B%2Cc0%3B%2Cs0%3B%3Bmaterialist%3B%2Cc0%3B%3BMaterialist%3B%2Cc0.

'materialistic', and 'materialist' from 1600 to 2008 (at the time of this thesis, 2008 was as far as the database extended). The graphical output of Ngram can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Results for 'Materialism', 'Materialistic', and 'Materialist' from Ngram Viewer (1600-2008)

The link between materialism's usage and key contextual events is evident in Ngram's graphical representation. For example, the significant increase in the use of 'materialism' from c.1830-1850 corresponds with the expansion of the meaning in America from a philosophy to a descriptor of the logical- and material-centrism of industrialization. Marxist's materialism added to the word's usage in the late 1800s. The post World War II and Cold War debates (late 1940s-1960s) increased the usage of 'materialism' as popular American

speech acts denounced Communism's anti-religious, philosophical materialism while sanctioning America's consumer-orientated materialism.

The Ngram chart in Figure 1 is linked to online books, some viewable and others not. Although this database could not separate out 'materialism' as it relates to science vis-à-vis consumerism, and did have errors (duplications, some erroneous publication dates, and non-English books), it provides the widest search mechanism currently available. This database generated more than 6,900 results of which approximately a quarter were appropriate for study after removal of errors and redundant entries, the latter having low significance due to saturation levels.

I assessed and segmented the Ngram results, choosing entries to explore in depth based upon:

- the meaning 'materialism' and its derivatives signified (i.e., philosophical, scientific, industrial, commercial, or consumer-based materialism);
- the date (with a focus on earlier works aligning with transitions in meanings);
- the popularity of publications or authors, determined by multiple publications of the book (Ngram listed these books multiple times), or by references from the era, or by contemporary secondary sources that indicated its popularity; and

- the accessibility of the book (i.e. it had to be accessible through Google books, the Bodleian library collection or online digital archives).

To supplement Ngram's results I searched databases of digital archives. These included: the open access Internet Archives of archive.org, Hathi Trust (hathitrust.org), Project Gutenberg (gutenberg.org), the Open Library (openlibrary.org), the Online Library of Liberty (oll.libertyfund.org), American History hypertexts (let.rug.nl/usa/), the Library of Congress (loc.gov), the American Presidency Project (presidency.ucsb.edu), as well as numerous original publications digitized by the Bodleian library. Most digital archive material was searchable, allowing the word 'materialism' and its derivatives, to be easily located in the texts.

To plot the initial uses of 'materialism' in America, books from the eighteenth century published in the European continent were traced to America through library stamps, publisher notions, or secondary sources that cited their existence. To supplement the American records, I searched through *Time* and *Harper's* digital archives. *Time*, founded in 1923, was one of the most widely read and influential magazines for aspiring middle- and upper-middle-class Americans—key targets of accusations of 'materialism' in the 1900s.[62] *Harper's*, founded in 1850, is the oldest general-interest monthly magazine produced in

[62] James L. Baughman, "Henry R. Luce and the Business of Journalism," *Business and Economic History On-Line* 9 (2011): 1–8; Alan Brinkley, *The Publisher* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 137–138.

America. From the 1920s onwards, in addition to its popular short stories, it published commentaries written by prominent intellectuals and political and social critics.[63] These articles captured prevailing associations made with 'materialism' during the pre- and post-Depression era, including the stereotyping of groups, individuals, and institutions perceived to embody a materialistic lifestyle.

In total, using the Ngram viewer, general search tactics, and snowball strategy, I searched more than 5,000 publications and recorded the contents of approximately 600 entries in detail.

The findings encouraged a narrative based on geographical regions. Although texts and concepts travelled between countries throughout the eras, meanings attributed to 'materialism' were shaped by the historical context of a region. Applying a longitudinal, and geographically-bounded approach means that some tangential story lines are not explored in depth although they feature in other discourses, including materialism's inclusion in German or Russian philosophy in the 1800s,[64] its usage to degrade specific races in America, such

[63] "Harper's Magazine," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 2015, http://www.britannica.com/topic/Harpers-Magazine.
[64] Friedrich Albert Lange, *The History of Materialism and Criticism of Its Present Importance*, trans. Ernest Chester Thomas, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1877); Ludwig Büchner, *Force and Matter or Principles of the Natural Order of the University with a System of Morality Based Thereon*, Newly translated from the fifteenth German edition (London: Asher and Co., 1884); Frederick Gregory, *Scientific Materialism in Nineteenth Century Germany* [Dordrecht, Holland ; Boston: DReidel PubCo, 1977]; James P. Scanlan, "Nicholas Chernyshevsky and Philosophical Materialism in Russia," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (1970): 65–86; Arnold Miller, *The Annexation of a Philosophe : Diderot in Soviet Criticism, 1917-1960* (Genève: Droz, 1971).

as the Jews or the rising black middle class,[65] and its association with non-American consumer markets such as post-Communist countries,[66] and the growth of luxury in Asia and Africa.[67]

Ngram's results supported my decision to focus my analysis on America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. England and France, took 'materialism' in different directions—predominately scientific and philosophical. In America, however, malleable social structures allowed industrialization to lead to new class structures and new value systems. This context contributed to radical changes in the word's positioning and to increases in its usage. Additionally, it is in America in the mid 1900s where scholars first undertook to study 'materialism as a consumer trait. This structure allows a clear line to be drawn through materialism's etymology to Belk and Richins.

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[65] "Says Bias Harms Harvard, Not Jews: Harold Riegelman Asks Parents to Ponder Charges of 'Greed' and 'Ostentation,'" *New York Times*, January 22, 1923, Page 5: Column 1; and Gerhart Saenger and Samuel Flowerman, "Stereotypes and Prejudicial Attitudes," *Human Relations* 7, no. 2 (May 1, 1954): 217–38; Jason Chambers, "Equal in Every Way: African Americans, Consumption and Materialism from Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Movement," *Advertising & Society Review* 7, no. 1 (2006), https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/advertising_and_society_review/v007/7.1chambers.html; "Races: America's Rising Black Middle Class," *Time*, June 17, 1974, 20; "A Penny Saved" in: Booker T. Washington, "A Penny Saved," in *Character Building: Being Addresses Delivered on Sunday Evenings to the Students of Tuskegee Institute* (London: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1902), 268.

[66] Ger and Belk, "Cross-Cultural Differences in Materialism,"

[67] Radha Chadha and Paul Husband, *Cult of the Luxury Brand: Inside Asia's Love Affair with Luxury* (London; Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2010), 52–53, 116–119; Sophie Song, "China Confirmed Most Materialistic Country In The World Even As Luxury Spending Slumps To Lowest Level Since 2000," *International Business Times*, December 17, 2013; http://www.ibtimes.com/china-confirmed-most-materialistic-country-world-even-luxury-spending-slumps-lowest-level-2000; Laurel Steinfield, "Consumer Types versus Stereotypes: Exploring Social Tensions in the Luxury Market of South Africa," SSRN Scholarly Paper, Saïd Business School Working Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, June 1, 2015).

To validate my recount of materialism's development in the consumer behaviour literature, I conducted interviews with authors of seminal works. These scholars included Moschis, Belk, Richins, and Ger. These semi-structured interviews explored what motivated these academics to study materialism, what resources, people, or personal opinions informed their studies, whether they were aware of the religious and social interests that led to the contemporary meaning of the word, what their current thinking is regarding materialism, and how they view the way other scholars have carried forward the work on materialism. These interviews were recorded and transcribed, with the transcriptions being sent to the respective individuals for additional comments. The interviews confirmed the history of how the scales emerged, and importantly the American normative perspectives and the cultural limitations inherent in the constructed scales.

On a final note, the method I use in this thesis—an etymology—is predominantly used by linguists; it has rarely been applied in consumer behaviour research. Although a few authors make reference to the origins of a concept (often by referring to the *Oxford English Dictionary*), they do not provide an in-depth tracing of a term to understand when the term changed, how it changed, or the historical and socio-cultural conditions that surrounded this change. For example, Arsel and Thompson describe how the 'hipsters' narrative transitioned from being used by black slaves to the current-day Indie

music aficionados.[68] Their narrative demonstrates who has used the concept; it does not delve into how the concept changed semantically, why it changed, what associations were appropriated with this changed, and what interests underlay these changes.

Historians, such as James Vernon, and sociologists, such as Raymond Williams, offer a comparable methodology in their recount of how concepts or words have changed over time. Vernon documents how our attitudes towards hunger have changed in the past century pending socio- and geopolitical pressures.[69] In his book, *Keywords*, Williams offers high-level descriptions of how certain words have undergone cultural transformations.[70] Vernon offers a good example of how to bring to the fore the background against which a word's transitions occur, although sometimes he does so at the risk of losing shifts in the meaning of the word 'hunger' itself. Williams, on the other hand, provides an example of how words change, but is void of any background to explain why the changes occur.

My method combines these two approaches, merging the etymology of the word with the background context. I attempt to put 'us' in the mindset of the era in which the quote was made so that the reader may more fully understand the meanings and motives behind 'materialism'.

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[68] Zeynep Arsel and Craig J. Thompson, "Demythologizing Consumption Practices: How Consumers Protect Their Field-Dependent Identity Investments from Devaluing Marketplace Myths," *Journal of Consumer Research* 37, no. 4 (February 2011): 791–806.
[69] James Vernon, *Hunger : A Modern History* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Belknap, 2007).
[70] Raymond Williams, *Keywords : A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1976).

Part II

The Origins of ‘Materialism’: Uncovering the Pejorative Associations and the Rise of a Delegitimizing Discourse

Chapter Three

Founding 'Materialism': The Origins of the Word and its Associated 'Truths'

To trace the etymology of materialism, let us start with the definitions we take as 'truthful' depictions. The entry for materialism in the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s reads:

1. Philos. The theory or belief that nothing exists except matter and its movements and modifications; (more narrowly) the theory or belief that mental phenomena are nothing more than, or are wholly caused by, the operation of material or physical agencies.
2. In extended use.
   a. An emphasis on or preference for that which is material, at the expense of spiritual or other values; (now) esp. the tendency to treat material possessions and physical comfort as more important or desirable than spiritual values; a way of life based on material interests.
   b. Theol. (depreciative). Excessive emphasis on the material aspects of the sacraments, at the expense of the spiritual aspects.
   c. Art. A tendency to emphasize the physical aspects of objects in painting.[71]

Most articles on materialism within the consumer behaviour literature assume these definitions have little to no relation to each other or that the only commonality is vested in the word 'material': a *materialist* philosophy is a belief

[71] Oxford English Dictionary, "Materialism, N.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed April 2, 2014, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/114925.

that nothing exists except *material* matter; the historical or dialectical theory of Marx and Engels focuses on the production and reproduction of the *material* requirements for life; the consumer orientation is a belief that *material* goods can bring fulfillment and happiness.[72] Yet, as the initial examples of Hobbes and the 1980 scandals in Chapter 1 illustrate, there is also another connection: materialism, in its original and extended uses, is equated to moral corruption. The original socio-historical context that set up the negative connotations has retreated into the past, leaving the word 'materialism' to stand alone, and the pejorative associations to be applied unconsciously.[73]

To bring consciousness to these negative biases, this chapter will start by laying out the initial 'truths' associated with 'materialism', bringing to the fore *who* created those 'truths' and *why*. The roots of these ideas can be traced through the historical reception of a key document of philosophical materialism*: De Natura Rerum* (DRN) (*On the Nature of Things*).

The Origins of Thought: Epicurus's Atomistic Theory

The idea of a world composed only of self-governing matter in atomistic form was first formulated in ancient Greece. During the Middle Ages, however, much of the work was lost. What remained was disparaging, incomplete accounts

[72] Belk, "Worldly Possessions"; Marsha L. Richins and Floyd W. Rudmin, "Materialism and Economic Psychology," *Journal of Economic Psychology* 15, no. 2 (June 1994): 217–231.
[73] Dreyfus, Rabinow, and Foucault, *Michel Foucault*, xxiii.

made by the early Church Fathers and favoured ancient Greek philosophers.[74] In the late fifteenth century however, humanist scholars, driven by a desire to find works of classical languages, uncovered *De Natura Rerum* (DRN). DRN, a poem written by Lucretius (c.94-c.54 BCR), preserved one of these atomistic philosophies: Epicureanism. Rediscovered, translated, and copied discreetly by scholars, DRN became the only full, favourable depiction of Epicurus's (341-270 BCE) theory of the world available to Renaissance scholars.[75]

Epicurus proposed an infinite universe with multiple cosmos, comprised of atoms moving through empty space. The gods existed in the empty space between cosmos, but stood aloof and uninvolved. When a person died, the soul (made of atoms) dissipated along with the body. Thus, because the soul was mortal and the gods were not concerned with humankind, there was no reason to fear gods, religion, or death. As Lucretius' described in DRN, by men recognising the 'first great principle, that nothing ever by divine power comes from nothing,' and that 'Things come into being without the aid of gods', they could 'discern more clearly' how the world truly worked, and liberate themselves from the 'fear' imposed by priests'.[76] Epicurus believed:

> …if men could but see
> A sure end to their woes, somehow they'ld find the strength
> To defy the priests and all their dark religion.

[74] Alison Brown, *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 2-3; Catherine Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), 11-15.
[75] James Hankins, "Humanism, Scholasticism, and Renaissance Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 31–32.
[76] Titus Lucretius Carus, *On the Nature of the Universe*, trans. Ronald Melville (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). Book 1: verses 148-158: 7.

> But as it is, men have no way, no power
> To stand against them, since they needs must fear
> In death a never-ending punishment.
> They do not know the nature of the soul,
> Whether it is born, or on the contrary
> Makes its way into us at birth, and whether
> It perishes with us, when death dissolves it,
> Or goes to Hades' glooms and desolate chasms,
> Or into other creatures finds its way.[77]

Rather than following the prescriptions of priests and religious creeds, Epicurus instructed people to follow their natural intuition for pleasure. This life of pleasure was not one of hedonism, but rather meant to seek a life absent of pain. 'Nature' cried for this, 'and only this':

> …that pain from out the body
> Shall be removed away, and mind enjoyed
> Sweet sense of pleasure, freed from care and fear?
> Therefore we see that human nature's needs
> Are small indeed: things that take pain away,
> And such as simply pleasures can supply
> Nature herself demands nothing more sweet.[78]

As the above excerpts demonstrate, DRNs recovery provided scholars with a radically different view of the world that could potentially undermine God. Combined with another ancient Greek manuscript on Epicurean philosophy, Diogenes Laertius' *The Lives, Opinions, and Remarkable Sayings of the Most Famous Ancient Philosophers*,[79] the poem is often credited with sparking the

[77] Ibid. Book 1: verses 101-115: 6.
[78] Ibid. Book 2: verses 14-23: 36.
[79] Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives, Opinions, and Remarkable Sayings of the Most Famous Ancient Philosophers Written in Greek, by Diogenes Laertius ; to Which Are Added, The Lives of Several Other Philosophers, Written by Eunapius of Sardis ; Made English by Several Hands*, trans. T. Featherstone et al., vol. 2, 2 vols. (London: Printed for R. Bentley, in Covent-Garden; W.

emergence of philosophical skepticism and endeavors to rethink natural philosophy that have traditionally marked the Renaissance period. These texts and their description of an atomistic theory started to shift scholars away from a humanist curiosity in classical literature and arts towards a curiosity about how the real world works. They culminated in the mechanical philosophy and theories of ideological power that dominated the Enlightenment era.[80]
From Italy, DRN spread in the sixteenth and seventeenth century to France, Holland, and England.[81] And unlike Diogenes Laretius's account of Epicurus's philosophy, which was eventually placed on the Catholic Church's *Index Librorum Prohibitrum* (The Index of Prohibited Books) (1559-1966),[82] the Latin version of Lucretius' DRN remained relatively uncensored[83] and consequently became one of the most widely, and frequently the only, available and known source of an atomistic theory of nature.[84]

Through DRN's six books of elegant Latin prose, Lucretius (a follower of Epicurus) gave a vivid depiction of, and a clear rationale for, Epicurus's natural and moral philosophies. He was enacting a central tenant of Epicureanism: by

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Hensman, in Westminister Hall; J. Taylor, in St. Paul's Church-Yard; and T. Chapman, in the Pall Mall, 1696), Book X: 181-282.
[80] Brown, *The Return of Lucretius,* vii–xi; David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science: The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, Prehistory to A.D. 1450, Second Edition* (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 364–365; Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2004), 475–476.
[81] David Butterfield, "Contempta Relinquas: Anxiety and Expurgation in Printed Editions of Lucretius' De Rerum Natura," in *Expurgating the Classics : Editing out in Greek and Latin*, ed. S. J. Harrison and Christopher Stray (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012), 95–114.
[82] National Library of Norway, "Index Librorum Prohibitorum," *Beacon for Freedom of Expression*, 2014, www.beaconforfreedom.org.
[83] Brown, *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence*, 14; Valentina Prosperi, "Lucretius in the Italian Renaissance," in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, ed. Stuart Gillespie and Philip Hardie [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 214–215).
[84] Ada Palmer, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance* (Harvard University Press, 2014), 238.

spreading the principles of the universe people could overcome the false opinions (i.e., ideologies) that emitted fear and prevented happiness.[85] Lucretius was also articulating one of the first theories of ideological power: his poem described how the elites protect their interests and maintain a submissive population by promulgating deceptive images of reality through myths, creeds, and ideals of morality.[86] Ideological power subsequently resonated as a theme picked up, time and time again, in the works of later materialists such as Hobbes, Spinoza, Holbach, and Marx. It was a primary cause for the disparaging references to Epicureanism in ancient texts, as well the acrimonious critiques that followed Renaissance and Enlightenment materialists.

As the ancient Greek philosopher Plutarch (c. 45-120 CE) stated in his letter, *Against Colotes, the Disciple and Favourite of Epicurus*:

> When then will our life become savage, unsocial, and bestial? When the laws being taken away, there shall be left doctrines inciting men to pleasure; when the world shall be thought not to be ruled and governed by Divine Providence; when those men shall be esteemed wise who spit at honesty if it is not joined with pleasure…. For this is the life of brutes, because brute beasts know nothing better nor more honest than pleasure, understand not the justice of the Gods, nor revere the beauty of virtue.[87]
>
> Those who abolish laws, governments, and policies of men subvert and destroy human life…by dehorting and withdrawing their friends from

[85] Don Fowler and Peta Fowler, "Introduction," in Lucretius Carus, *On the Nature of the Universe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), xi–xxx.
[86] Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, 6.
[87] "Against Colotes, the Disciple and Favourite of Epicurus" in Plutarch, *Plutarch's Morals, with an Introduction by Ralph Waldo Emerson*, trans. William Watson Goodwin (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1878), 377–378: verse 30.

> concerning themselves in public affairs, and hating those who intermeddle in them, by reviling the first most wise lawgivers, and by advising contempt of the laws provided there is no fear and danger of the whip and punishment.[88]

From its inception, we see a materialistic worldview had the potential to disrupt the ruling elite's hold over society. The philosophy made visible the power often hidden by religious dogmas, concepts of justice, and propagations for humankind to live a spiritual and virtuous life. It also challenged scholars to rethink fundamental premises of the truth system, such as the role of a Divine being in the universe and the immortality of the soul. Over the course of 300 years, the philosophy would infiltrate into scholarly thought. Yet this process was not without opposition. It is out of reaction to the threatening ideas raised by Epicureanism that the word 'materialism' originated.

The Origins of the Word 'Materialism'

The first entry for 'materialism' in the English language comes from Ralph Cudworth's (1678) *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, in which he wrote:

> Plato *and others concluded this Materialism, or Hylopathian Atheism, to have been at least as old as* Homer*; who made the* Ocean *(or fluid Matter) the Father of all the Gods. And that this was indeed the Ancientest of all Atheisms, which verbally acknowledging Gods, yet derives the Original of them all from* Night *and* Chaos*. A Description of this Atheistick Hypothesis in* Aristophanes*; That* Night *and* Chaos *first laid an Egg, out of which*

[88] Ibid., 384–385: verse 34 .

> *sprung forth Love, which afterwards mingling again with Chaos, begat Heaven and Earth, Animals and all the Gods*.[89]

> [Epicurus] fetched the original of all things in the Universe, even of Soul and Mind, *from senseless atoms fortuitously moved*. He together with *Democritus* hereby making the World to be in the worst Sense, an *Egg of the Night*, that is, not the off-spring of Mind and Understanding, but of dark Senseless Matter, of *Tohu* and *Bohu*, or Confused *Chaos*; and deriving the Original of all the Perfections in the Universe from the most Imperfect Being, and the lowest of all Entities, than which nothing can be more Atheistical.[90]

Cudworth's book, although considered by historians to be limited in its reception amongst Renaissance scholars due to its vast size and poor articulation,[91] did gain traction over time: multiple reprints and updated English editions were published between 1678 and 1845, and a 1678 edition bears the stamp of the American Founding Father, John Adams (1735-1826). By 1845 it was recognised as 'the greatest mass of learning and argument that was every brought to bear upon Atheism and Pantheism.'[92]

Cudworth (1617-1688) was part of a group of influential scholars at the University of Cambridge, commonly known as 'the Cambridge Platonists'. This group of philosophers, though not well known today, were very prominent in

[89] Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe : The First Part; Wherein, All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism Is Confuted; and Its Impossibility Demonstrated* (London: Printed for Richard Royston, Bookfeller to His most Sacred Majesty, 1678), Contents for Chapter 3: 102. (Formatting original).
[90] Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System*. Chapter 2: III, 61. (Formatting original).
[91] C. A. Patrides, *The Cambridge Platonists* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), 33.
[92] Ralph Cudworth and Johann Lorenz Mosheim, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe: Wherein All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism Is Confuted, and Its Impossibility Demonstrated, with a Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality. To Which Are Added the Notes and Dissertation of Dr. J. L. Mosheim*, ed. Thomas Birch, trans. John Harrison, vol. 1, 3 vols. (London: J. Haddon, 1845): iii.

their own time, actively engaging in debates and corralling or denouncing the propounded uncensored moral philosophies and natural philosophies (i.e. studies of nature), such as Epicureanism, to protect a theistic account of the world.[93] They were the first British philosophers to write predominantly and consistently in English and so they created many English words for important philosophical concepts, such as 'consciousness', 'Cartesianism', and 'self-determination', in addition to 'materialism'.[94] Importantly, they not only created words, but also imbued initial meanings and attached connotations.

The Platonists were the first English scholars to read and to engage with Rene Descartes (1596-1650) (whom they warned against leaning towards 'materialism').[95] They were the prominent critics opposing proponents of materialism, including Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677), and Hobbes (1588-1679).[96] They were composed of elite members who held key positions, had the ability to disseminate their works, and thus had sufficient cultural and social capital to call into question the legitimacy of contentious ideas. For example, Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683) was the Provost of King's College from 1644 until the Restoration (1660) and Vice Chancellor of the University for the annual term of 1650-1651. Henry More (1614-1687) was a prolific writer who

[93] Donald Rutherford, "Innovation and Orthodoxy in Early Modern Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Donald Rutherford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 11–38.
[94] Sarah Hutton, "The Cambridge Platonists," in *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Steven Nadler (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2002), 301.
[95] Danton B. Sailor, "Cudworth and Descartes," *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 23, no. 1 (1962): 133–140.
[96] Hutton, "The Cambridge Platonists," 308-319; Erin Frykholm and Donald Rutherford, "Hedonism and Virtue," in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Peter R. Anstey, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2013), 426–429.

translated all of his works into Latin, thereby enabling their dissemination and the Platonist ideas across the Continent.[97] The theological and philosophical writings of the Cambridge Platonists carried weight: they subsequently influenced other prominent scholars, including Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton (1642-1727) (who was a student of More), John Locke (1632-1704), George Berkeley (1685-1753), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804),[98] and the 'first homegrown American philosopher' Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)[99] (who was highly influenced by More's work).[100,] The Platonists' shadow of influence, combined with the power they held in creating new words and concepts, meant their initial negative framing of 'materialism' would shape future scholars' debates for hundreds of years.

For these scholars, materialism had to be renounced as it threatened to undermine the whole social order. Their beliefs about morality relied on the proof of immaterial elements. Virtue was intrinsically linked to the existence of God, the soul, and happiness: virtue and vice was not man-made, but inherent in the soul and reflected in God. Our sense of virtue pulled us towards emulating God, as God was the embodiment of perfection. By harnessing our

[97] Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump : Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life : Including a Translation of Thomas Hobbes, Dialogus Physicus de Natura Aeris by Simon Schaffer* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 207–224.
[98] Patrides, *The Cambridge Platonists*, 39.
[99] "Jonathan Edwards: Biography," *Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University*, 2011, http://edwards.yale.edu/research/about-edwards/biography.
[100] Wallace E. Anderson, ed., "Collegiate and Graduate Studies. 1716-22," *WJE Online* 6, no. Jonathan Edwards, Scientific and Philosophical Writings (1978): 21–24; Harry S. Stout, ed., "The 'Miscellanies' as Repository for a System of Thought," *WJE Online* 13, no. Jonathan Edwards, The "Miscellanies": (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1–500) (1994): 40–43; Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 93–115.

God-given 'mind and understanding' we could understand God and the Christian virtues one should adopt to be more like God. By living this virtuous life —comprised of humility, meekness, patience, and forbearance—happiness would be achieved.[101]

To these scholars, omitting God from an explanation of the world—as materialists were perceived to do—was akin to creating a world in which no sense of goodness prevailed. It was akin to reverting to a world, described by Cudworth, as full of 'dark senseless matter', as being desolate and empty holding only the primordial substances of 'Tohu and Bohu'.[102] It was a world of 'confused chaos'. Omitting the immortality of the soul rid mankind of the desire to achieve goodness. Accordingly, since 'no living Being can possibly have any security of its future Permanency, there is none that can be perfectly *Happy*.'[103]

When Henry More in the *Divine Dialogues* (1668) created the term 'materialist', it had a similar connotation in its meaning.[104] In those dialogues, Hylobares, although paradoxically described as a 'young, witty, and well-moralized Materialist'[105] framed his materialist beliefs as a 'disease of my mind, not to be

[101] Frykholm and Rutherford, "Hedonism and Virtue," 427–428; Henry More, *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings of Dr. Henry More* (London: James Flesher, 1662), Preface: x; John Sellars, "Is God a Mindless Vegetable? Cudworth on Stoic Theology," *Intellectual History Review* 21, no. 2 (June 2011): 121–133.
[102] Menahem Kister, "Tohu Wa-Bohu, Primordial Elements and Creatio Ex Nihilo," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (September 1, 2007): 229–56.
[103] Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System*, Chapter 2: XII, 75. (Formatting original).
[104] "Materialist, N. and Adj."
[105] Henry More, *Divine Dialogues Containing Sundry Disquisitions & Instructions Concerning the Attributes of God and His Providence in the World* (London: Printed by James Flesher, 1668), Preface: xxxii.

able to conceive anything that is not material or corporeal'.[106] At then end of the debate, Philotheus, the 'zealous and sincere lover of God and Christ, and of the whole Creation'[107] freed Hylobares from his naivety and 'mischievous conceit'.[108] Hylobares came to believe in the existence of an immaterial force: the providential and omnipotent God. This was the perfect ending that the Platonist scholars envisioned and attempted to bring to fruition through their works and engagements with fellow scholars.

Through the writings of the Cambridge Platonists, the following associations became attached to 'materialism': as an atheistic belief, it was assumed to result in 'Debauchery, Scepticism, and Infidelity';[109] as a descriptor of Epicurus's atomistic universe, it became tied to the vices commonly thought to result from Epicureanism—'Impiety, Gluttony, Drunkenness, Luxury, and all kinds of Intemperance';'[110] as a theory that proposed the World to be created from 'an egg of the night', it became equated to a state of inferiority—darkness and chaos versus enlightenment and wisdom; as a diseased mind incapable of appreciating immaterial forces, it became slated as leading to a life of hopelessness—man would lose the immaterial sense of goodness and

[106] Ibid., 45.
[107] Ibid., Preface: xxxii.
[108] Ibid., 57.
[109] Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System*. Dedication to Lord Finch, 2.
[110] Walter Charleton, trans., *Epicurus's Morals, Collected Partly out of His Own Greek Text, in Diogenes Laertius, And Partly out of the Rhapsodies of Marcus Antoninus, Plutarch, Cicero, & Seneca. And Faithfully Englished* (London: Printed by W. Wilson for Henry Herringman, 1656), Preface, "An Apologie for Epicurus", 2.

enlightenment that impelled him to live virtuously and allowed him to achieve a state of happiness.[111]

We see from these associations that from its inception the word 'materialism' has embodied a mode of delegitimized discourse. It was imbued with many accusatory, debasing connotations that were applied to ward of threatening ideas. Over time, society would lose sight of the context and the dogmatic perspectives that gave rise to these associations; yet these associations would stick, becoming unquestioned 'truths'. These are the very early roots of the consumer behaviourists' assumptions that materialism would lead to immoral behaviours and vices, social discord, emptiness, and unhappiness.

These 'truths were not something that Cudworth and More arbitrarily created on their own. The ideas registered as legitimate and believable because these scholars pulled from pre-existing truths espoused about Epicurus's atomistic theory. Accordingly, to understand the equation of 'materialism' with its negative consequences, we need to go back to understand how Epicurus's controversial philosophy survived.

The Renaissance Survival of Epicurus's Materialistic Philosophy

The late fourteenth century, when a civic culture flourished in Northern Italy, beget the re-birth of a materialistic worldview through DRN's survival. A shift

[111] Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System*, 660–665.

within the Catholic Church, which at that time became more concerned with politics, economics, and culture than morals and religion, combined with a demand for scholars to place more emphasis on teaching the art of debating to prepare men for engaging in worldly affairs, led to a focus on the *studia humanitatis* (a study of rhetoric, grammar, poetics, and a return to the elegance of classical Latin). As a result, there was a push to find suppressed classical language texts on politics, morals, history, and other topics, regardless of any pagan content.

Within those pages were radically different theories about the world, such as that of Epicureanism, which called into question the Aristotelianism favoured by the Catholic Church. Scholars began to assume they could find ancient texts with an earlier and purer source of Christian theology and a better explanation regarding the natural world and God's role. Accordingly, humanist scholars undertook great treks in hopes of finding these texts that were harboured in scattered medieval monasteries and in the Ottoman empire. They restored and translated ancient works, correcting for inaccurate representations and dogmatic influences of the mediaeval schools.

The treks, like the Renaissance works of art in this era, were made possible by Italy's accrued wealth, resulting from its industrialization and trade with the

Ottoman empire and by a lenient papacy.[112] Although atheism, especially vocalised atheism, was a rarity in this era and most scholars worked under the auspices of the Church, there was a tolerance for and even, at times, encouragement for a critical reflection about the natural world. This allowed the boundary markers between heterodoxy and orthodoxy to become more porous.[113] Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), for example, initially gained support for his heliocentric theory of the world as it contributed to the Catholic Church's calendar reforms. He did, however, ensure God was given the critical role as supreme creator.[114] Scholars also managed to advanced ancient hermetic theories on natural magic by 'christianising' these theories; that is, they framed the ideas so that they accommodated core Christian doctrines.[115]

DRN, however, was treated differently. Instead of christianising the materialistic ideas contained in DRN, scholars in the early Renaissance period chose to keep the work out of mainstream philosophical arguments to ward off church censorship. They adopted a 'dissimulatory code' [sic], referencing the work suspiciously, prudently denouncing its impiety, or capturing its message

[112] Richard Olson, *Science and Religion, 1450-1900 : From Copernicus to Darwin*, Johns Hopkins Paperbacks ed.. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 34–36; Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, 457–464.
[113] Brown, *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence*, viii–x, 1–15.
[114] Nicholas Copernicus, "De Revolutionibus (On the Revolutions) 1543 C.E.," trans. Edward Rosen, 2008, Chapter 10: 25; Chapter 9: 20; Robert S. Westman, "The Copernicans and the Churches," in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter Between Christianity and Science*, ed. David C. Lindberg, Ronald L. Numbers, and Robert S. Westman (London: University of California Press, 1986), 76–89; Olson, *Science and Religion, 1450-1900*, 7–10.
[115] Brown, *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence*, 16–33; Olson, *Science and Religion, 1450-1900*, 36–52.

through other artistic, culturally allowable forms (e.g., paintings and prose).[116] This 'dissimulatory code' thus allowed Lucretius's heterdoxical poem to survive.

The shifts in the heterodoxy-orthodoxy boundary markers and the tolerance of the Church for new philosophies, however, had consequences: it opened up the doors from which a brooding scepticism emerged. This scepticism resulted from, and grew in its intensity under several disruptive influences. In addition to the impact of the ancient Greek texts and their ideas, advances in astronomy and physiology, hermetic experiments on the natural world, discoveries of new lands, and a surge in economic opportunities influenced thinkers. All these gave the impression that man—not just God—could control nature. Furthermore, the rise of literacy encouraged by the printing press and the commercial revolution, bred a growing consciousness amongst the non-elite.

The scepticism that emerged called into question the Roman Catholic Church's dominion, beliefs and practices. It led to a powerful social movement—the Protestant Reformation (1517-1648). The Reformation encouraged ordinary people to seek a different religious experience: rather than relying on the Church and Priest to dictate God's judgments, people were encouraged to read the Bible themselves and know God personally. They were to hope for a better future order rather than compliantly suffering through this world, fearful of the beyond. These changes were profound and threatened to undermine the elite in power.

[116] Prosperi, "Lucretius in the Italian Renaissance," 214–226.

Eventually the elite—the Roman Catholic Church, mercantile elites, and aristocrats who were the patrons of arts and science—began to recognise that their tolerance of diverse views had become a danger to their own power, and so they shifted from encouraging explorations of culture and nature to severe censorship.[117] The Roman Catholic Church convened the Council of Trent, which from 1545 to 1563 organized the Counter-Reformation response. As part of its response, the Roman Catholic Church issued an extensive list of condemnations, ecclesiastical reforms, and censorship measures including the list of forbidden texts, the *Index Librorum Prohibitrum (Index)*. The elites sought to silence any scholar and censor any material that voiced theories about nature that ran contrary to the church's Aristotelian tradition and its doctrinal acts.[118] These protected truths included: transubstantiation (the belief that God causes the bread and wine consecrated at mass to become the actual body and blood of Christ, which the Aristotelian traditions supported); the authority of the Roman Catholic Church in interpreting Scripture (versus the Protestant's vested authority in individual Christians); the existence of purgatory (hence the need for an immaterial and immortal soul); and the ability to seek invocations from saints (thus the need to allow God and saints the ability to intervene in the

[117] Margaret C. Jacob, *The Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 19–20.
[118] Paul F. Grendler, "The Conditions of Enquiry: Printing and Censorship," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. C. B. Schmitt et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 47–48.

world and perform miracles).[119] A materialistic theory of the world, as proposed in DRN, ran contrary to all these principles.

[119] Gary B. Deason, "Reformation Theology and the Mechanistic Conception of Nature," in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter Between Christianity and Science*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (London: University of California Press, 1986), 167–169; Olson, *Science and Religion, 1450-1900*, 12–13; 59–66.

Chapter Four

Supressing 'Materialism': The Mechanisms of Control

The openings created by the shifting social context meant ideas contained in DRN could potentially be voiced and, like the Protestant beliefs, gain significant legitimacy. In an attempt to prevent this, the Church employed a number of mechanisms of control. These mechanisms can be can be broken down into two methods. The first method used what Foucault refers to as modes of sovereign power—power that stems from recognised authoritarian positions, such as the Divine Right of Kings and the God-given power of the Church—to mute the contentious ideas or silence the philosophers who promoted them.[120] The Catholic Church's *Index* was a key tool of this mechanism. As critical consequence of this method was that it anchored 'materialism' in a realm of offensive beliefs. The second method used the more pervasive modes of disciplinary power—the power that acts more subversively to shape actions, minds, and bodies, and to condition preferences, such as occurs with the internalization of social norms or the adoption of routines and self-censorship to avoid punishment. This mechanism continued to build off of 'materialism's'

[120]Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 2nd Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1995): 47-57; Cynthia R. Nielsen, "Foucault and Subjectivities," in *Foucault, Douglass, Fanon, and Scotus in Dialogue: On Social Construction and Freedom* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013], 17–43.

pejorative anchoring. It is within this latter disciplinary mode of power that we see the threat of materialism controlled through delegitimizing discourse.

Sovereign Modes of Power: 'Materialism' and the Censorship Regime

During the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, sovereign modes of power were enacted predominately by the Roman Catholic Church, which flexed its ecclesiastical authority to quash dissenting views. The Roman Catholic Church's *Index* set the precedent, listing works containing contentious, heterdoxical, or atheistic ideas. These works were banned from being printed and distributed in Catholic Europe. If unbanned, they were highly censored. Stipulations of what ideas were permissible were defined through decrees issued by churches, local clergy, university officials, and later in the seventeenth century, royal authority and Parliament.[121]

Incongruously, during the late Renaissance and Enlightenment eras, Lucretius's DRN escaped the *Index*. Many argued that it was 'merely' a work of poetic art.[122] When assessed by the Catholic Inquisition, the poem was classified as a book to

[121] Adam Murrell, *Essential Church History: And the Doctrinal Significance of the Past* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010), 122–123; Henry Phillips, *Church and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); William B. Ashworth Jr., "Catholicism and Early Modern Science," in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter Between Christianity and Science*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (London: University of California Press, 1986), 148–153; Trevor McClaughlin, "Censorship and Defenders of the Cartesian Faith in Mid-Seventeenth Century France," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40, no. 4 (1979): 564.
[122] Howard Jones, *Epicurean Tradition* (Routledge, 1992), 155–158.

be 'read as fables and not to be taken seriously.'[123] The dissumlatory code applied by earlier scholars had set a saving precedent.[124]

DRN was, however, the exception. The sovereign modes of control meant most other contentious works circulated clandestinely—a costly and risky proposition. Those in elite positions could procure censored works through the expensive illicit book trade, yet if caught reading a forbidden book, they could be excommunicated.[125]

The Church's sovereign mode of power was difficult to escape as it extended pervasively into the scholarly system. Since the Middle Ages and throughout much of the Renaissance period, the Church controlled education and philosophical advancements by being the primary provider of educational tutelage and employment.[126] In Catholic France, this meant theories that hinted at materialism, such as Cartesian theory and its hints of atomism, were suppressed from being taught. In 1624, for example, three Sorbonne chemical philosophers were forbidden to teach and to defend atomistic theories 'on pain of death'.[127]

[123] Brown, *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence*, 14.
[124] Prosperi, "Lucretius in the Italian Renaissance," 214–226.
[125] Jonathan I. Israel, "Censorship and Culture," in *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Chapter 5: 97–118; Ingrid D. Rowland, *Giordano Bruno : Philosopher/heretic* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 75.
[126] Brown, *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence*, 4; McClaughlin, "Censorship and Defenders of the Cartesian Faith in Mid-Seventeenth Century France."
[127] Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, 20.

Initially, under the rule of the Catholic Church, unrepentant materialists were burned along with their written ideas. As modes of control started to shift punishments from public displays of severity towards mechanisms that controlled private actions,[128] scholars experienced censorship pressures in other forms: they were imprisoned, interrogated by inquisitions, subjected to house arrests, prohibited against publicly articulating their heretical views, ex-communicated, denied prestigious posts and forced to abscond to the more liberal Germany, Russia, or the Dutch Republic.

From the 1600s onwards, there was a move in countries outside of the immediate power of Rome to move censorship controls away from the Church and to consolidate and award sovereign power to the King (as in France) or to Parliament. Unfortunately, this change often had the effect of increasing the stifling of materialistic theories as more actors became involved in controlling ideas. Throughout the dislocating conditions of the Reformation, Counter Reformation, and the English Civil War, books containing materialistic theories were placed on indexes, condemned, burned, or censored by various churches, universities, and governments. In England and Holland, they were repressed and kept from being printed through the use of print licenses. Governments passed blasphemy laws.[129] British colonies, such as North America, were likewise affected by the English-imposed Licensing Act (which lapsed in 1694)

[128] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 3–31.
[129] Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, 201.

and libel laws, as well as the controls set in place by community churches and universities.[130]

In response, scholars across Europe and the New World adopted a self-censorship regime. In Europe, scholars clandestinely circulated works and surreptitiously referred to them, as was the case with DRN in the early Renaissance period.[131] Scholars downplayed or whitewashed aspects of pagan theories that did not fit with Christian doctrines. For example, Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655) and Walter Charleton (1619-1707) 'baptised' Epicurus's atomism by ignoring Epicureanism's anti-providential materialism and infinite universes.[132] Many scholars, such as Boyle, Descartes and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), denounced materialism or attempted to prove that their works did not imply a materialistic or Epicurean theory by clearly stating the role of God.[133] Writers proclaimed their personal belief in God when translating risky pagan texts, as was clear in works such as DRN and its

[130] E. Digby Baltzell, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 173–175; Nelson R. Burr, *A Critical Bibliography of Religion in America*, ed. James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison, vol. 2, Religion in American Life (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 1012–1016; Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (New York: W.M. Norton, 1970), 164–182; Brooke Hindle, *The Pursuit of Science in Revolutionary America, 1735-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1956), 80–101; Harold L. Nelson, "Seditious Libel in Colonial America," *The American Journal of Legal History* 3, no. 2 (1959): 160–172.
[131] Prosperi, "Lucretius in the Italian Renaissance."
[132] Margaret J. Osler, *Divine Will and the Mechanical Philosophy : Gassendi and Descartes on Contingency and Necessity in the Created World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 36–79.
[133] Robert Boyle, *The Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle, Esq.* (London: Printed for J. Phillips at the King's Arms, and J. Taylor at the Ship in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1699), Chapter 1, Book 1: 2; René Descartes, *Les meditations metaphysiques*, trans. Louis-Charles d'Albert Luynes (Paris: Jean Camusat, et Pierre Le Petit, 1647), ii; Translation from "Letter of Dedication" in René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy : With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. Mike Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar* (New York: P. Eckler, 1889 [1762]), 28.

prefaces.[134] Alternatively, scholars avoided personal association with their works by publishing anonymously or posthumously, as occurred with Baron d'Holbach (who published all his works anonymously), Rene Descartes (who, after Galileo's convictions, withheld his heterodoxical works, *Le Monde* and *Treatise on Man*, which were published posthumously), and David Hume (who arranged to have his controversial work , *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, published posthumously).[135]

The censorship regime cast a long shadow as other works and philosophers that reflected Epicurus's materialistic philosophy, even from a distance, were caught in its grip. For example, Niccolo Machiavelli's (1469-1527) *Il Principe* (*The Prince)* echoed Lucretius' description of the elites' use of fear to control society. It appeared on a precursory index (issued in 1555), the *Index* (1559), and was banned in France in 1576 and in England in 1602.[136] Giordano Bruno advanced the multiple-universe theorem of DRN and provided the first Renaissance interpretation of the cosmological implications of atomism, which contributed

[134] Butterfield, "Contempta Relinquas: Anxiety and Expurgation in Printed Editions of Lucretius' De Rerum Natura," 95–114; "Dedicatory" in Titus Lucretius Carus, *Titus Lucretius Carus. The Epicurean Philosopher, His Six Books : De Natura Rerum*, trans. Thomas Creech, Second edition (Oxford,: Printed by L. Lichfield, Printer to the University, for Anthony Stephens, 1683), i–v; "The Interpreter to Him that Reads" in John Evelyn, *An Essay on the First Book of T. Lucretius Carus De Rerum Natura. Interpreted and Made English Verse by J. Evelyn Esq* (London: Printed for Gabriel Bedle and Thomas Collins, 1656), i–xii.
[135] Michael LeBuffe, "Paul-Henri Thiry (Baron) d'Holbach," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2014, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/holbach/; "Translator's preface" in René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 79; William Edward Morris and Charlotte R. Brown, "David Hume," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/hume/.
[136] Brown, *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence*, 68–87; Alison Brown, "Philosophy and Religion in Machiavelli," in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, ed. John M. Najemy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 157–172.

to his condemnation: Bruno was burned at the stake in 1600, and his works were burned and placed on the *Index.*[137] Galileo Galilei adopted Epicurus's atomistic theory (*particelle minimi*) to explain heat, light, and colour in *The Assayer* (1623) and in *Two New Sciences* (1638). After the Catholic Church's inquisition ruled his heliocentric publication, *Dialogue Concerning the Two World Systems* (1632) as heretical, all his works were placed on the *Index*, and Galileo was placed under house arrest, prohibited from disseminating his views. *Two New Sciences* was published by covertly sending it to Holland where it could be printed. The Catholic Church's condemnation of his work was a critical factor in shifting the discussion of mechanical philosophy and heliocentricity to Protestant Europe.[138] Rene Descartes argued for Epicurus's theory of nature (i.e., nature is composed of atomistic particles moving according to laws of motion) in his suppressed work, *The World* (published in 1664 in French), and in *Principles of Philosophy* (published in 1644 in Latin).[139] Although Descartes consistently maintained that God was the creator of the atoms, he was often lambasted for furthering a materialist philosophy. His works were accordingly placed on the *Index* in 1663 'until corrected', and his theories were inhibited

[137] Maurice A. Finocchiaro, "Philosophy versus Religion and Science versus Religion: The Trials of Bruno and Gallieo," in *Giordano Bruno : Philosopher of the Renaissance*, ed. Hilary Gatti (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 81–82; Monte Johnson and Catherine Wilson, "Lucretius and the History of Science," in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, ed. Stuart Gillespie and Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 133; Hilary Gatti, *Giordano Bruno and Renaissance Science* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 128–142.
[138] Pietro Redondi, *Galileo : Heretic*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 14–27; 59–67;191–202; 333–346; Jacob, *The Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution*, 24–26; Finocchiaro, "Philosophy versus Religion and Science versus Religion: The Trials of Bruno and Gallieo."
[139] Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, 55.

from being taught in France until 1720.[140] Thomas Hobbes, whose materialistic interpretation of social order in *Leviathan* (1651) and *De Cive* (1642) reiterated DRN's themes of ideological power, was not only accused of atheism but also had his works banned and burned by the University of Oxford (1683), suppressed from being printed in England, prohibited by the States General in Holland (1674), and placed on the *Index* (1654).[141] Benedict de Spinoza articulated similar themes about ideological power as per Hobbes, arguing that there was no incorporeal presence in the world (i.e., all things, including God, are corporeal and are extensions of the same infinite substance). [142] He was accused of materialism and atheism, excommunicated from the Jewish community, forced to leave Amsterdam, and his books, *A Theologico-Political Treatise* (published anonymously in 1670) and *Opera Posthuma* (a collection of his works published after his death in 1677), were prohibited by the States General in Holland (1674) and placed on the *Index* (1679 and 1690, respectively).[143] Robert Boyle's praise of the revival of Epicurus's atomism in his essay, *Of the Atomicall Philosophy* (1652-54), led him to withhold his work from the public and to give instructions to burn the manuscript after his death.[144] Numerous other examples abound.[145] Although these sovereign-imposed censorship regimes became less stringent in Protestant Europe over the course

[140] McClaughlin, "Censorship and Defenders of the Cartesian Faith in Mid-Seventeenth Century France," 563–581.
[141] Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan*, 61–62.
[142] Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, 125–135.
[143] W. N . A. Klever, "Spinoza's Life and Works," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. Don Garrett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 13–60; National Library of Norway, "Index Librorum Prohibitorum".
[144] Catherine Wilson, "Epicureanism in Early Modern Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism*, ed. James Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 266–267.
[145] Johnson and Wilson, "Lucretius and the History of Science," 131–148.

of the eighteenth century, and France in the nineteenth century, they had lingering effects: they branded 'materialism' as a dissenting and condemnable belief.

Disciplinary Modes of Power: 'Materialism' and Delegitimizing Discourse

Working in tandem with authoritarian controls, critics of materialism used another tactic to dissuade the theory's advancement: the establishment of truths that delegitimized, distorted, and debased the philosophy of materialism. This mode of discursive power eventually became the key mechanism used to shape and to control ideas about 'materialism'.

Initially, this delegitimizing discourse centered on a twisted rendering of Epicureanism and DRN. It labelled them as the inspiration for atheism and, ironically, as the sources of 'false opinions' since they promoted a life contrary to the 'truthful' biblical and church teachings. In actuality, Epicurus did not deny the existence of gods, yet his relegation of them to another sphere, disconnected from the human race, was interpreted as denying the existence of an omnipotent God. This accusation originated from the works of the early Church Fathers, such as Lactantius (c. 250 – c. 325). Lactantius explained in his censure of Epicurus:

> He is not God, if He is neither moved, which is peculiar to a living being, nor does anything impossible for man, which is peculiar to God,

> if He has no will at all, no action, in short, no administration, which is worth of God. And what greater, what more worthy administration can be attributed to God, than the government of the world, and especially of the human race, to which all earthly things are subject? What happiness, then, can there be in God, if He is always inactive, being at rest and unmoveable? If He is deaf to those who pray to Him, and blind to His worshippers? What is so worthy of God, and so befitting to Him, as providence? But if He cares for nothing, and foresees nothing, He has lost all His divinity.[146]

Epicurus's denial of God was, in turn, framed as leading to an impious life full of 'folly' and 'wickedness':

> If God takes no trouble, nor occasions trouble to another, why then should we not commit crimes as often as it shall be in our power to escape the notice of men and to cheat the public laws? Wherever we shall obtain a favourable opportunity of escaping notice, let us take advantage of the occasion: let us take away the property of others, either without bloodshed or even with blood.[147]

The above passage also reflects the other theme of this delegitimizing discourse: Epicurus's moral philosophy of pursing a life of *modest* pleasure. Rather than meaning the absence of pain that allowed a Man to live 'Prudently, Justly, and Honestly,'[148]as originally formulated, this teaching was distorted to mean the pursuit of decadence and physical, hedonistic pleasures. The early Church Fathers, as well as Cicero (106-43 BCE) and Seneca (c. 3 BCE – 65 CE), advanced this perception to protect the 'truths' they wanted to esteem. They believed a moral, dignified life entailed living for the sake of duty, loyalty, and

[146] Lactantius, *The Works of Lactantius*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1871), Chapter 4: 5.
[147] Ibid., Chapter 8: 12.
[148] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives, Opinions, and Remarkable Sayings*, 2:267–268.

country, with pain often being a consequences of such an honourable life.[149] As Seneca vividly depicted:

> Virtue is something lofty, elevated, regal, unconquered and untiring; pleasure is something lowly and slavish, weak and destructible, whose haunt and living-quarters are brothels and taverns. Virtue you will find in a temple, in the forum, in the senate house, standing in front of the city walls, dusty and stained, with hands that are calloused: pleasure you will find more often lucking out of sight and searching for darkness around the baths and sweating-rooms and places that fear the aedile, soft and drained of strength, soaked with wine and perfume, with features that are pale or painted and tricked out with cosmetics like a corpse.[150]

> [T]hose who have yielded first place to pleasure…lose virtue, and yet they do not possess pleasure but are themselves possessed by pleasure, being tortured by the lack of it or choked by its excess, miserable if it abandons them, more miserable if it overwhelms them;…this is the result of an excessive lack of self-control and blind love for some commodity; for when a man seeks bad things instead of good it is dangerous…. [H]e leaves more important things and abandons many duties.[151]

I ask readers to notice the direct connections being made, even this early, between 'pleasure', vice, moral weakness, and a 'blind love' of commodities.

Even though the recovery of DRN and Diogenes' *Lives* in the 1400s demonstrated that the connotation of hedonism with Epicurus's concept of pleasure was unfounded, scholars continued to carry it forward. In 1621, for example, the English poet, Richard Braithwaite, described how Epicurus, who

[149] Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, 8–19.
[150] "On the Happy Life" in Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Dialogues and Essays* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), §7 : 90–91.
[151] Ibid., §14 : 96–97.

'thought that the *chiefe good* consisted in a voluptuous and sensuall life, expecting no future doome after the tearme and end of this life,'[152] was, in essence, promoting a philosophy that led to debauchery:

> As a hogge wallowing in the mire of their vaine conceits, roue from the marke of pietie and sobrietie, into the broad sea of intemperance and sensuality…which like a noisome and spreading Canker, eats into the bodie and soule of the professor, making them both prostitute to pleasure, and a very sinke of sinne.[153]

This accepted association between hedonistic, impious behaviour and 'materialism' had the most pervasive and longstanding effect, especially as it was reinforced by censorship regimes. It was taken as 'truth', as the criticisms levelled at Hobbes and Cudworth's initial framing of materialism attest. But why, when there was counter-factual evidence to dispel the association of 'materialism' with hedonism, did scholars choose to turn a blind eye? Why did they continue to perpetuate a pejorative association? Answering these questions is relevant not only for the past but also for casting a light on our current-day, misconstrued perceptions of 'materialism'.

Reconsidering the Association of 'Materialism' with Hedonism

I contend that scholars chose to reproduce questionable 'truths' about 'materialism', as it allowed them to wield the word to advance their interests. By wielding 'materialism', scholars could delegitimize threatening ideas, and

[152] Richard Brathwaite, *Natures Embassie, Or, the Wilde-Mans Measures Danced Naked by Twelve Satyres* (London: Printed for Richard Whitaker, 1621), 128. (Formatting original.)
[153] Ibid., 129.

protect their desired truth system. In the modern era, although we have shifted our popular meaning of 'materialism' from a philosophy to a focus on consumption and consumers, our purpose for maintaining a pejorative association remains the same. The question becomes: What interests are we mobilising or demobilising?

History reveals how this discursive power was wielded to oppress yet also to produce change. In the case of Renaissance Europe, the positions of power, moral authority, and cultural and symbolic capital of the elite rested on affirming the truth of God's existence and validating Judeo-Christian ideology. The Church in Catholic Europe used the pejorative associations as an aide to foster self-censorship, thereby protecting its Aristotelian tradition: scholars avoided association with Epicurean theory to prevent accusations of advocating an immoral life.[154] Additionally, by associating debauchery with a pagan, heretical philosophy, the early Renaissance Roman Catholic Church stifled accusations of impiety from being openly voiced against the Pope and clergy, who were engaged in their own considerable amount of unethical and immoral behaviour.[155] To accuse the church leaders of such behaviour equated to denying the legitimacy of the Pope and the Catholic Church. Those who attempted to expose the immoral actions of church leaders could thus be charged with promoting heresy and either excommunicated or crucified (as

[154] Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, 8–18.
[155] Thomas A. Fudge, *Jan Hus: Religious Reform and Social Revolution in Bohemia* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2010), 108–114.

occurred with Jan Hus who was burned at the stake).[156] The context in Catholic Europe was accordingly one that used discursive power to oppress as the interests pushed for preserving tradition and silencing alternative theories of nature.

In Protestant Europe, some scholars chose to re-invoke the derogatory associations, but their interest in doing so was not for the sake of preserving traditional scholarship; rather, it was for the sake of protecting a non-negotiable truth—God's existence—from being written out of a emerging natural philosophies. Protestant Europe was interested in finding an alternative theory of nature that might support their new truths about God and His relationship to mankind and nature, yet boundaries had to be set on what was acceptable. Thus, as Protestant Europe strove to redefine elements of the truth system, it kept 'materialism' as the common enemy. By holding 'materialism' as the end-point on a god-versus-godless continuum of theories of nature, they could gain support for their alternative theory of the world: a mechanical philosophy. This philosophy was an adjusted version of a materialistic atomistic world: it kept the atoms but ensured God remained in the picture, in the very least as the recognised source of creation. In emphasizing God, the fears clergy and scholars had about losing their moral hold over society were appeased. The hedonism associated with an atomistic worldview could be repudiated because unlike a materialistic world, a mechanical world had God's judgement day still

[156] Ibid., 136–146.

looming over society. In this instance, discursive power was used to produce change: it allowed a mechanical philosophy of the world to gain legitimacy partially because it could differentiate itself from the ideas of a materialistic world that were abhorrent to the elites.

Chapter Five

Shaping ‘Materialism’: Shifting Contexts and the Development of Truth-Systems

Over the course of the next centuries, lingering effects remained from the censorship regimes. They had established a truth system that delegitimized, distorted, and debased the philosophy of materialism. This mode of discursive power prevailed, and eventually was used to shape and control ideas about ‘materialism’ in our own time. Throughout the life of ‘materialism’, counter-attempts to reshape the concept have arisen from historical events and new political agendas. Enlightenment Europe was formative in this process.

‘Materialism’ was born in a Europe divided. There were dynastic contestations, civil wars, and the perpetual religious fragmentations that occurred between and within the Protestant and Catholic denominations. Battle lines formed, resulting in an observable split between Catholic and Protestant Europe. France, Italy, and Spain, clung to their legacy of staunch Catholicism and philosophical traditions, while Northern Europe, in turning to Protestantism, was impelled to create distance from Catholicism, thus becoming fertile ground for the proposition of alternative theories of the world. The censorship regime in Roman Catholic Europe thus had the ironic counter-effect of encouraging

Protestant Europe to ally itself with the new science and to support developments of a new natural philosophy.

The Shifting English Landscape

In England, religious fragmentation amongst Protestants created an atmosphere of dissension. Although new philosophies could be voiced, theoretical advancements were affected by the debates the religious and intellectual elite had over the new creeds of Protestantism. They disputed the role and nature of God, man, the Church, religion, and the material and spiritual world. The truth system was in flux.

An unstable monarchy magnified religious tensions. The religion of the monarch determined the state religion, set the tolerance levels for religious diversity, and gave the regent the right to order executions for heresy. A change in the monarch could even result in a return to Catholicism and thus halt philosophical and scientific advancements.

From 1537, when Henry VIII (1491-1547) rejected Catholicism and established the Anglican Church as the ecclesiastical power, religion in England and its creeds were unstable. When Queen Mary (1516-1558) came to rule from 1553-1558, there was a reversion back to Catholicism, resulting in persecution against Protestant Calvinists. In 1558, Queen Elizabeth (1533-1603) came to the throne, re-establishing the Protestant faith. She supported tolerance for

diverse religious views and pushed for reforming the Church. Religious tolerance, however, led to the preponderance of many theories about the role of religion, government, and monarchs, God and His involvement in the world, and the relationship of mankind to nature. In turn, this led to fears of social radicalism and religious tensions, which, under the rule of King Charles I (1625-1649) became realised. [157]

When King Charles I ascended the throne, his appointment of an aggressively orthodox Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, resulted in an attempt to reinstate a ceremonial high-Anglican Church and to purge Puritan sympathizers. To hold civil office or positions in universities, men were ordered to submit and to conform to the Church of England's articles of faith and to recognise the Church of England's authority.[158] Religious tensions under Charles I contributed to the increase in migration of dissenting Puritans to New World settlements (1630-1640), including to North America,[159] and to the onset of the English Civil War (1642-1646). The War ended with the execution of King Charles I and a period of Puritan domination over England (1649-1660) under Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658). As the historian Charles Webster contends, during this time authoritarian controls fell away, bringing in an era of uncensored publications and free thought that was unrivalled in Europe.[160]

[157] Olson, *Science and Religion, 1450-1900*, 83–92.
[158] Charles Webster, "Puritanism, Separatism, and Science," in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter Between Christianity and Science*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (London: University of California Press, 1986), 204–207.
[159] Susan Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims : New World Settlers and the Call of Home* (New Haven, Conn; London: Yale University Press, 2010), 16–34.
[160] Webster, "Puritanism, Separatism, and Science," 192–217.

Scholars advanced many new theoretical positions about the world during this time, including the aforementioned mechanical philosophy, which described the world as operating like a complicated machine, functioning according to laws of motion and the collision of matter, which mankind could explain through mathematical equations. In proposing such a world, however, scholars had to be careful not to write God out of the equation. Warnings increased and were issued through publications and the pulpit about verging too close to a godless materialistic theory of the world. Concerns about the moral consequences of falling into materialism were repeatedly invoked and denounced, as the reaction to Hobbes' exemplified in my earlier discussion.[161]

With the state and religious regimes in flux, the mechanisms of control shifted. England's sovereign controls were increasingly replaced by a mode of discursive power—delegitimizing discourse. This disciplinary mechanism of control grew in popularity as scholars pushed to establish themselves as an entity unto their own, separate from the Church and the Crown.

In 1660, when Britain restored its monarchy by acceding the throne to Charles II (1630-1685), scholars secured Charles' protection for the newly established *Royal Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge*. This move formalized the separation of natural philosophy from a dominant religion, 'freeing' scholars from state-imposed religious dogmas. Yet this did not mean

[161] "Science in the Crucible of the English Revolution" in Jacob, *The Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution*, 73–98.

complete freedom, rather, it merely shifted the burden of guardianship and censorship of tolerable philosophies to natural philosophers and scientists.[162]

It is within this context that atheism, as it pertained to theories of the natural world, became a critical concern of lay and clergy scholars. As with the Cambridge Platonists, this generation of scholars sought to define in their works and through debates what was and was not an atheistic view. Once again, scholars stamped 'materialism' as 'athesitical', elevating a God-centric world as more legitimate and superior. In so doing, they protected the idea of 'God's providence' that they wished to advance.

Materialism was not eliminated. In fact, over time and in reaction to a shifting context, it gained acceptance with religiously tolerant, politically motivated, and scientifically interested elites. A new opening for materialism came about in 1685 when James II (1633-1701) ascended the English throne. Fears of a reversion back to Catholicism increased as Anglican clergy and natural philosophers were excluded from James' court. Britain's elite, concerned that James might try to duplicate France's absolute monarchy, arranged for his disposition and supported William III of Orange (1650-1702) and Mary II (1662-1694) accession to the English throne (1689). As part of the agreement, Parliament constitutionally secured its rights to exist, to regulate society, and to limit the powers of the Crown as well as the Church. Through Parliament's Act of Toleration (1689), tolerance for Protestant sects that did not conform to

[162] Olson, *Science and Religion, 1450-1900*, 96–110.

Anglicanism, such as Baptists, Quakers, and Puritans, became legally enforced throughout England and its colonies.[163]

These events eventually opened the way for dissenting religious views and scientific thought to develop. During the Enlightenment period and beyond, the boundaries between orthodoxy and heretical views became completely malleable, allowing materialism to gradually be adapted and absorbed into mainstream thought.

The Shifting American Landscape

America, as a colony of Britain, was likewise effected by the Act of Toleration. In the British North American colonies there was no dominant state-imposed religion, rather, the laws issued by organized colonial government, royal governors, or ministers defined what was right and wrong. In religiously regulated colonies, societal leaders (predominately respected church men) became exemplars of morality, and the community at large rebuked dissenters. In 1708, when the British Crown ordered American states to rescind the Act and any anti-toleration laws, areas such as New England's Massachusetts Bay Colony, which was governed by Congregationalist Churches run independently based on the local congregation's ecclesiastical doctrines, were severely effected. These local churches lost their key mechanism of control. Churches were no longer allowed to forbid heresy or prohibit the circulation of books

[163] ibid.

containing condemnable ideas. New churches were legally allowed, which opened up an alternative source through which community members could secure their cultural capital. These churches welcomed dissenters and those who had been excommunicated for misconduct.[164]

A resurgence in religiosity known as 'The First Great Awakening', (1730-1760) led to further schisms amoung the churches, the clergy, and scholars. The First Great Awakening preached new theologies of universal salvation, personal rebirth, and the spiritual awakening of the Holy Spirit's outpouring, which challenged the old ecclesiastical order of rituals, ceremonies, prescribed ways to live, and social hierarchies. Its modes of religious practices stretched Puritan piousness and self-control to allow for individual liberation and enthusiasm.[165] As occurred in England, the Protestant Church became fragmented and could no longer control the community members nor the influx of contentious ideas.

The Shifting French Landscape

In France, there was similar instability with many religious wars, civil infighting, and hostile and deadly tensions between Catholics and the Calvinist Huguenots. France, unlike England, strove to preserve the established order of

[164] Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, Refer to Chapter I: Law and Authority, 3–21, and Chapter XI: Dissent, 164–182.
[165] William Gerald McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform : An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 66–80.

Catholicism. As a result, contentious ideas faced a sovereignly protected regime of truth.

In 1594, King Henry IV (1533-1610) succeeded to the French throne, and converted from Protestantism to Catholicism. Although he brought an end to the French Wars of Religion (1562-1598) by agreeing to protect the civil rights and religious freedom of the Protestant Huguenots through the Edict of Nantes (1598-1685), he reinforced Catholicism as the dominant religion of the country. The French royals, preferring to have absolute rule rather than fall under the authority of Rome, did not ratify the Council of Trent's prescriptive decrees. However, in 1615, when the Clergy of France recognised the Council of Trent's doctrinal positions, it gave the provincial church councils and bishops permission impose the decree's disciplinary and sanctioning measures upon Catholic scholars, both lay and clergy. Any theories counter to church doctrine, especially those promoting a materialistic-atomistic worldview, were suppressed.

In 1685, King Louis XIV (1638-1715) revoked the Edict of Nantes. Huguenots who refused to convert to Catholicism fled to Protestant states. For scholars remaining in France, any publications about natural philosophy had to appeal to orthodox positions and to recognise the Divine Right of Kings if they were to be legally published. Materialism clearly defied both. It was a threat not only to the Catholic Aristotelian-based articles of faith, but it also made obvious the unnaturalness of those in positions of power. The King supported its repression.

The regime in Catholic Europe, however, was not foolproof. Dissenting voices could find expression. Protestant countries, especially the Dutch Republic, became printing havens for scientific books and the centres of an illicit trade in censored books. Catholic scholars whose work had tinges of materialism published their work through these alternative channels. Other scholars fled to Protestant countries to work, such as the lay Catholic Rene Descartes (1596-1650), who lived most of his life in the Dutch Republic. Some converted to Protestantism, as did Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), who also fled to and lived in the Dutch Republic. And others participated in the risky advancement of scholarship through the trade of clandestine manuscripts: if caught, however, imprisonment was sure to follow.[166]

It would only be upon Louis XIV's death that the Catholic censorship regime relaxed enough for scholars to circulate materialistic theories, and even that was done subversively, mostly through the clandestine trade in manuscripts and informal gatherings.[167] The ideas that circulated uncensored in this underground movement significantly contributed to the overthrow of the power structures in the French Revolution. Uncensored material, such as DRN, had its poetic stripped and its ideas about ideology used to advance a call for

[166] Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 100-104, 331-341, 684-685; Edward John Kearns, *Ideas in Seventeenth-Century France : The Most Important Thinkers and the Climate of Ideas in Which They Worked* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), 1–11.
[167] Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (London: FontanaPress, 1997), 22–82; Dena Goodman, "Governing the Republic of Letters: The Politics of Culture in the French Enlightenment," *History of European Ideas* 13, no. 3 (January 1, 1991): 183–199; Alan Charles Kors, *D'Holbach's Coterie : An Enlightenment in Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 9–40; 120–148.

revolution. As Holbach, in his anonymously published *Le Bon Sens* (*Common Sense*) urged: scholars should emulate Epicurus and 'déchirer le voile épais du préjudgé, & délivrer la philosophie des entraves théologiques.'[168] (Tear off the thick veil of prejudice, and deliver philosophy from theological shackles.[169])

The repressiveness of Catholic Europe had consequences: it bred resentment towards religion. This anti-religious movement culminated with some of the most radical materialistic theories, void of God's governing hand or the control of any 'Divinely' appointed King, as articulated by Julien Offray de la Mettrie (1709-1751), Denis Diderot (1713-1784), and Holbach (1723-1789).[170] The ideas expressed by these French Enlightenment scholars resulted in a profound shift in the truth system: their interests advanced the power of reason over the power of the Church and the Crown, and promoted the freedom of enlightened thought over the preservation of tradition.[171] This shift was however, not without bloodshed. Indeed, France came to epitomize the social mayhem that could happen if God was written out of the picture.

[168] Paul Henri Thiry Holbach, *Le Bon Sens, ou Idées Naturelles Opposées aux Idées Surnaturelles* (Londres, 1772), §204: 247; (Published under the Pseudonym of Jean Meslier).
[169] Paul Henri Thiry Holbach, *Common Sense: Or, Natural Ideas Opposed to Supernatural* (Philadelphia: sn, 1795), §204: 201.
[170] Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 704-713.
[171] Jonathan I. Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas : An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from the Rights of Man to Robespierre* (Princeton ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 6–29.

The Development of Modern Science and the Advancement of a 'World Politick'

Catholic Europe came to represent the two extremes of philosophical pursuits that Protestant Europe sought to avoid: at one end were the traditionalists—Catholic Church scholars who, to their own detriment, clung to their traditional Aristotelian philosophy, denouncing any scholarship that threatened this as verging towards 'materialism'; at the other end were the Enlightenment diviners—the anti-religious scholars who sought to gain legitimacy for a materialistic rending of the world, and who in the end, would win.[172]

Protestant Europe, on the other hand, developed as a scholarly center for advancing—rather than silencing—alternative theories of nature, allowing scholars to progressively develop and to advance a mechanical theory of the world. This theory aligned with one of the few shared truths among them: God's existence. It also aligned with another emerging truth: the supremacy of man over nature. This truth became dominant in Protestant Europe and America in the Enlightenment era and beyond, validating industrial progress.[173] It supported what Margaret Jacob argues to be a vision of a 'world politick'. As Jacob describes:

> The ordered, providentially guided, mathematically regulated universe of Newton gave a model for a stable and prosperous polity, ruled by the self-interest of men.… [I]t allowed them to imagine that nature

[172] Ibid., 14–29.
[173] Jacob, *The Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution*, 24–38; Olson, *Science and Religion, 1450-1900*, 83–110.

> was on their side; they could have laws of motion and keep God; spiritual forces could work in the universe; matter could be controlled and dominated by God and by men. Stability was possible without constant divine intervention; the spiritual order could be maintained; the church was necessary and essential; yet at the same time men could pursue their worldly interests.[174]

Establishing a 'world politick' was still a drawn out process: it required scholars to repudiate the competing Aristotelian and occult (or natural magic) theories and to find a way to manipulate an atomistic theory of the world that could be palatable enough for other scholars to support.

Aristotelianism and occult theories limited man's ability to influence nature. Aristotelianism held matter to be controlled by intrinsic, God-given forms that man could only observe and not change. The occult theories (e.g., astrology or alchemy), although they gave early Renaissance scholars initial impetus for studying the effects of matter, assumed that hidden properties (colours, odours, tastes, magnetic pull, etc.) were a product of magic, and much like other things in nature, could only be observed but not explained or controlled by men.[175] The assumptions of Aristotelianism and occult theories thus ran contrary to the natural and geographical worlds being discovered, the mercantile reality, and the new truth of man's dominance over the physical world.

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[174] Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1976), 18.
[175] Ron Millen, "Occult Qualities in the Scientific Revolution," in *Religion, Science, and Worldview : Essays in Honor of Richard S. Westfall*, ed. Margaret J. Osler and Paul Lawrence Farber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 185–216.

Epicurus's theory on atoms aligned more with the interests and truths that scholars wanted to advance. However, to adopt the more plausible theory of atoms, scholars had to create a role for God and to navigate the hedonism associated with Epicurus. The mechanical theory of the universe responded to this need. It also deposed Aristotelianism and the occult theories by arguing that nature was made of up matter governed by laws of motion—not by God-imbued essences or magical properties.[176]

The mechanical theory gained in legitimacy as prominent scholars contributed to extending its conceptualization and substantiating it with proofs. For example: Francis Bacon (1561-1626) legitimized a scientific method for investigating nature; Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), Marin Mersenne (1588-1648), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Rene Descartes (1596-1650), Isaac Newton (1642-1727) and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) debated metaphysical postulations and developed mathematical proofs and the laws of physics; William Harvey (1578-1657) advanced theories of circulation and motion to explain human anatomy; Robert Boyle's (1627-1691) scientific experiments established the field of chemistry; and Pierre Bayle's (1647-1706) *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, and his French *Dictionnaire* and scholarly journal *Nouvelles de la République de Lettres*, circulated the new philosophical ideas.[177]

[176] Ashworth Jr., "Christianity and the Mechanistic Universe," 61–84; Osler, *Divine Will and the Mechanical Philosophy*, 1–12; Jacob, *The Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution*, 26–28.
[177] Olson, *Science and Religion, 1450-1900*, 26–55; Olson, *Science Deified & Science Defied*, 2:15–60; Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720*, 22–71; "Chapter 8: Epicurus

The popularity of the mechanical philosophy grew as its ideas, scientific discoveries, and advancements were exchanged across the Continent, not only through Bayle's publications, but also through the clandestine manuscripts and Republic of Letters sent between philosophers, and the journals and pamphlets made possible by the printing press.[178] The growth of the new sciences was further supported by the creation of spaces and institutional structures that sought to bring about the 'Advancement of *Real Knowledge*'.[179] These included the Parisian salons of elites such as Margaret and William Cavendish (who brought Gassendi, Hobbes, Mersenne, and Descartes together in the mid-1640s),[180] informal gatherings in coffee houses and taverns,[181] the establishment of scientific academies (e.g., England's scholar-run *Royal Society of London* (1660) and France's government-controlled *Académie Royale des Sciences* (1666)),[182] and the convening and reprinting of public lectures, such as the Robert Boyle lectures.[183] These institutions subsequently supported the dissemination of Enlightenment theories regarding freedom of thought and

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Britannicus" in Jones, *Epicurean Tradition*, 186–213; Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal-Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (London: Printed by T. R, Printers to the Royal Society, 1667), 28–35.

[178] Grendler, "Conditions of Enquiry"; Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 25–26.

[179] Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, 2.

[180] Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, 27–28.

[181] Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion*, 41.

[182] Colin Archibald Russell, *Science and Social Change : 1700-1900* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), 72–76.

[183] Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720*, 162-200; Russell, *Science and Social Change*, 41–43; Margery Purver, *The Royal Society : Concept and Creation* (London: Routledge, 2009), 235–239; Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, 52–119; Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment : An Interpretation, The Science of Freedom*, vol. 2 (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967), 6–12.

reason, and they were central to the transfer of ideas—and thus the notion of 'materialism'—between Europe and America.

In the 1700s, for example, American-based intellectuals engaged increasingly with the Royal Society of London, publishing in its *Philosophical Transactions*. They exchanged ideas with Continental scholars through letters, acquired books to be used as college texts as well as for their personal collections and public libraries, and visited the European continent to attend formal and informal gatherings and to work on the development of scientific discoveries.[184] Benjamin Franklin, for instance, spent a considerable amount of time in Europe meeting with prominent scholars such as David Hume, Adam Smith, and the materialist and Enlightenment philosophers in French coteries.[185] He also conversed with Joseph Priestley to develop theories and experiments about electricity.[186] Additionally, prominent continental scholars, such as George Berkeley, Joseph Priestley, and Thomas Cooper emigrated to or lived for substantial periods in America.[187] It was through these channels that Americans absorbed—and adapted according to their Puritan and Quaker stances—the concepts of materialism and mechanical philosophy stemming from the Continent.

[184] Hindle, *The Pursuit of Science in Revolutionary America, 1735-1789*.
[185] Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (Simon and Schuster, 2003): 180–183, 195–196, 280–281, 350–381.
[186] I. Bernard Cohen, *Benjamin Franklin's Science* (Harvard University Press, 1996), 67–70.
[187] Edwin Gaustad, *George Berkeley in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 60–80; Schofield, *The Enlightened Joseph Priestley*, 317–343.

Central to the advancement of scholarship in the Continent and in British North America was a new truth system rooted in the belief that matter and nature were something scholars could—and should—understand, study, and control, as well as a truth system mobilised by the intellectual elites' drive towards a 'world politick'. However, in a mechanical universe postulated to operate perpetually like a clock, with no spiritual intervention needed, the critical—and often debated—question arose: What was God's role? Scholars wanted the Aristotelian and occult alternatives replaced with a philosophy that could explain their real-world experiences, but the majority of scholars still wanted to keep a role for God— or at least the possibility of God— in that philosophy.

It is under consideration of this question, taking into account the unstable context and the shifting truth system, that we go back to the Cambridge Platonists. Their negative reactions against 'materialism' came at the beginning of the mechanical theory's development out of fear that the 'Atomicall Philosophers [were] becoming over-credulous of the powers of Matter'.[188] There was a risk that 'the very Notion of a *Spirit* or *Substance Immaterial*' might become 'a perfect Incompossibility and pure No-sense.' They warned scholars that if they denied an immaterial essence, they would make 'God', 'Soul', 'Good or Bad', 'any Immortality of Life to come' 'impossible.'[189] In such a world, there would be:

[188] Henry More, *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings of Dr. Henry More* (London: James Flesher, 1662), Preface: xviii-xix.
[189] Henry More, *The Immortality of the Soul* (London: Printed by James Flesher, for William Mordes Book-feller in Cambridge, 1662). Book 1: 37. (Formatting original).

> [N]o Religion, no Piety nor Impiety, no Vertue nor Vice, Justice nor Injustice, but what it pleases him that has the longest Sword to call so. That there is no Freedome of Will, nor consequently any Rational remorse of Conscience in any Being whatsoever, but that all that is, is nothing but *Matter* and corporeal *Motion*.[190]

A pure materialist theory of the world, in which only matter exists, would '*undermine* Christianity, *and all* Religion; [*by*] *taking away all* Guilt *and* Blame, Punishments *and* Rewards, *and plainly rendering a* Day of Judgment *ridiculous*'.[191]

The Cambridge Platonists, through their writings, were attempting to advance their interests: protecting God and the immortality of the soul. 'Materialism' consequently became the targeted enemy. Others would take this forward.

[190] Ibid. (Formatting original).
[191] Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe : The First Part; Wherein, All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism Is Confuted; and Its Impossibility Demonstrated* (London: Printed for Richard Royston, Bookfeller to His most Sacred Majesty, 1678), Preface: i. (Formatting original).

Chapter Six

Defining ‘Materialism’: The Debates and Defended Interests

Delving into the literature of the era and specific texts containing ‘materialism’, we see in this chapter how the varying social context, religions regimes, political agenda, and scholarly interests melded together to affect the use of, and the meanings applied to, ‘materialism’.

In general, the evolution of ‘materialism’ in England can be summarised as one of amelioration. The Cambridge Platonists in the years of overlap between Renaissance and Enlightenment thought, had successfully positioned ‘materialism’ as a socially unacceptable belief. However, as the Enlightenment scholars’ continued to focus on advancing science, physics, and physiological explanations of the mind and body, ‘materialism’ became a persistent accusation that the intellectual elite became tired of navigating. In reaction, scholars in the 1800s challenged the negative views held about ‘materialism’, partially redeeming it. Over an extended period of time, their efforts resulted in ‘materialism’ becoming a more neutral term, associated with progress in scientific and medical studies.

In France, on the other hand, their materialistic rendering of the world led to an anti-religious and anti-authoritarian movement, resulting in a revolution and

the quest for the supremacy of natural rights. Ultimately, they inspired Marx's materialism. As Marx surmised in his essay, *French Materialism*, just as the mechanical philosophy's materialism branched into natural science, the radical irreligious materialism of the French merged directly into socialism and communism.[192]

In America, 'materialism' aligned closer to its meanings applied in England than France due to its Protestant beliefs. Even though thinkers in France and America shared revolutionary ideas of freedom of thought and natural rights, the materialistic aspect of these themes did not appear in the America Revolution's (176501783) rhetoric and communiqués. Like England, America had a vested interest in using Christianity as a source of regulating moral and social order.[193] Consequently, 'materialism' in America remained as a branch of England's new science, signifying an orientation toward material-based (versus spiritual- or immaterial-based) explanations, until the mid 1800s when America's industrialism, commercialism, and consumerism brought new meanings.

[192] Karl Marx, "French Materialism," in *Selected Essays*, trans. H. J. Stenning (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2012), 115–24.
[193] "The American Revolution" in Jonathan Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 443–479.

‘Materialism’ in Protestant Europe and America

In 1713, the godlessness of ‘materialism’ was reinforced by Bishop George Berkeley’s (1685-1753) *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*. In this publication, he popularised the conceptions of ‘materialism’ versus ‘immaterialism’. (This is the first entry the OED erroneously records for materialism.)[194] Bishop Berkeley, following a similar structure to Henry More’s *Divine Dialogues*, built a dialogical debate towards an ending in which the immaterialist (represented in the character of Philonous, meaning ‘lover of mind’) converts the materialist (represented in the character of Hylas, meaning ‘matter’ in Ancient Greek). In the conversation, Philonous used the word ‘materialism’ to embody the opposite of ‘immaterialism’: ‘materialism’ represented a belief that all things, including ideas, originated from our interaction with matter; ‘immaterialism’ represented a belief that all things were perceptions of the mind that originate from God. The materialistic theory was criticised by Philonous as a ‘jejune Notion’ that had ‘furnished the *Atheists* and *Infidels* of all Ages, with the most plausible Argument against a Creation.’[195]

This use of ‘materialism’ marked a development of the word in English usage. Although the word still retained its atheistic connotations, ‘materialism’ expanded from Cudworth’s association with atomistic theories to an association

[194] Oxford English Dictionary, “Materialism, N.”
[195] George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous. The Design of Which Is Plainly to Demonstrate the Reality and Perfection of Humane Knowledge, the Incorporeal Nature of the Soul, and the Immediate Providence of a Deity: In Opposition to Sceptics and Atheists. Also, to Open a Method for Rendering the Sciences More Easy, Useful, and Compendious* (London: Printed by G. James, for Henry Clements at the Half-Moon, 1713), 153–154. (Formatting original.)

with the origins of ideas. George Berkeley, a bishop of the Church of Ireland, feared that the theory of the mind being promoted through the debates surrounding John Locke's (1632-1704) popular *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* was opening new doors to religious scepticism and atheism.[196] Locke's argument in the *Essay* initially appeared in 1688 as a long abridged version in French in Jean Le Clerc's (1657-1736) *Biblothèque Universal et Historique* before the first English version (1690) and French translation (1700). Locke's work was disseminated widely across the Continent and even to the New World colonies of America. (Locke's *Essay* was printed by Benjamin Franklin's brother).[197] With its dissemination came a movement towards questioning truths. In his publications, Locke contested the assumption that ideas of God and of virtue and vice were innate. He postulated that 'an external cogitative Being' gives our mind the ability to think but does not give us our thoughts themselves: 'Nôtre Espirit est au commencement ce qu'on appell *tabula rasa* : c'est à dire, sans idée & sans connoissance.' (Our Mind begins as what one calls a *tabula rasa* [blank slate]: that is to say, without ideas and without knowledge.)[198]

His theory threatened to disrupt common beliefs about God and how He reflects Himself within humankind's consciousness. It was perceived as leaning

[196] McDougall William, *Body and Mind; a History and a Defence of Animism*, 5th ed. (The Macmillan company, 1920 [1911]), 64–67.
[197] Benjamin Franklin, *Works of the Late Dr. Benjamin Franklin; Consisting of His Life, Written by Himself, Together with Essays, Humourous, Moral & Literary; Chiefly in the Manner of the Spectator*, vol. 1 (New-York: Samuel Campbell, 1794), 26–27.)
[198] Jean Le Clerc, *Bibliothèque universelle et historique*, vol. 4, 25 vols. (Amsterdam: Wolfgang, Waesberge, Boom, & van Someren, 1688) Book II: 40. (Formatting original.) (Translation by author.)

towards materialism: If matter could be made to think, then what was the need for the immaterial component, which was believed to be the origin of our thoughts? Locke argued that our origin of thoughts and thus our ideas of right and wrong, and of God, and of the immorality of the soul came from two sources: sensations and reflections. Initially our ideas of the world were acquired through sensations (imprints received in interacting with 'external material things', such as the knowledge babies and children gain), and then, as we grow older and acquire sufficient sensations to form our own ideas, we create ideas from reflections ('operations of our own minds within').[199] Locke substantiated his point by demonstrating how constructed ideas were about what was material (body) versus immaterial (soul); he even called into question the idea of God. He reasoned, man had 'few superficial *Ideas* of things' that were discovered 'by the Mind' based on what it experienced in itself. Man's minds lacked the 'Faculties' to attain, on its own, 'internal Constitutions' and knowledge about the 'true Nature things':

> [T]herefore…we have as much Reason to be satisfied with our Notion of Spirit, as with our Notion of Body, and the Existence of the one, as well as the other…. I know not why we may not as well allow a thinking thing without Solidity, *i.e. Immaterial*, to exist, as a solid thing without Thinking, *i.e. Matter*, to exist; especially since it is no harder to conceive how Thinking should exist without Matter, than how Matter should think…. But the…*Ideas* that make [the Body or Spirit] up are no other than what we have received from Sensation or Reflection: and so it is of all our *Ideas* of Substances, even of God himself.[200]

[199] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*, First edition (London: Printed by Eliz. Holt for Thomas Basset, 1690), Book II, Chapter I, § 4: 38.
[200] Ibid., Book II, Chapter XXIII, § 32: 147. (Formatting original.)

Locke's theory sparked debates in journals and reviews, and even though his works were banned in France and placed on the *Index*, they still circulated clandestinely. Scholars and religious authorities voiced concerns: Locke's theories were seen as not only disrupting the assumed dichotomy of immaterial (soul, mind) versus material (body), but also as undermining religion, the immateriality and immortality of the soul, conceptions of God, and the veracity of God's existence.[201]

Bishop Berkeley's work was representative of the response amongst other English scholars and clergy: they attempted to re-center God in the empiricist debates.[202] Bishop Berkeley did so by attributing to God the source of consensus reality (what we agree exists) and arguing that involuntary ideas originated from some spiritual force. According to Bishop Berkeley, matter did not exist outside of the mind but was rather held within the mind and in ideas, and thus, without God, nothing could exist.

Although many found Bishop Berkeley's theory to be absurd, his immaterialism established a subjective idealism that was taken forward by other scholars, such as Hume and Kant.[203] These philosophers continued to develop a theory of the world that allowed nature and human experience to be a materialistic

[201] John W. Yolton, *Thinking Matter : Materialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983); John W. Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).
[202] Hans Aarsleff, "Locke's Influence," in *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, ed. Vere Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 261–267.
[203] Harry M. Bracken, *The Early Reception of Berkeley's Immaterialism 1710–1733*, Revised Ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 1–24.

experience in its essence, but for God to still plausibly exist. For example, Hume argued that Locke was correct in stating that our knowledge of the world was based on sensory experiences, and that Bishop Berkeley was correct in stating that we could never confront our experiencing-self having these experiences. But unlike Bishop Berkeley who proposed an immaterial world, Hume concluded that we experienced the material world but that we could never know for certain that the experiencing-self existed. He used scepticism to develop a theory of God that gave scholars a way to have their materialistic experiential world without having to prove God: in his posthumously published (and highly controversial) *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779) he asserted that because God could not be observed (much like our experiencing-self), scholars should not try to establish His existence as factual but rather base the belief of God's existence on faith.[204] Kant echoed Hume's theory. In developing Locke's sensualism further, Kant surmised that we could know only that which we experienced through our body (our five senses, brain, and nervous system), and since we could not experience God we would always lack the ability to have knowledge of God. God's existence could not be proved or disproved—it must be based on faith alone.[205] Through these writings, the existence of a materialistic world became separated from the existence of a spiritual world. This separation, however, did not end the contentiousness concerning materialism; if anything, it opened up new pathways and new

[204] "Introduction" in David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Bruce M. 'Ewen (William Blackwood, 1907), i–cviii; "Hume: A Modified Sceptic" in Bryan Magee, *The Story of Philosophy* (London: Dorling Kindersley, 1998), 112–117.
[205] "Kant: Rationalism and Empiricism Come Together" in Magee, *The Story of Philosophy*, 132–137.

counter-arguments with which scholars could advance and debate a materialistic philosophy.

In America, the debate about materialism drew parallels to those ongoing in Protestant Europe. America in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was still primarily an importer of philosophical ideas. Works by Locke, Bishop Berkeley, Hume, and other prominent scholars were read in colleges, such as Harvard, Yale and Princeton, and discussed in letters sent within the circle of intellectual elites. Thomas Jefferson, for example, wrote in a letter to John Adams in 1820:

> When once we quit the basis of sensation, all is in the wind. To talk of immaterial existences is to talk of nothings. To say that the human soul, angels, god, are immaterial, is to say they are nothings, or that there is no god, no angels, no soul. I cannot reason otherwise: but I believe I am supported in my creed of materialism by Locke, Tracy, and Stewart.[206]

The few attempts initially taken to advance materialism did not denounce God's existence, but rather attempted to find how religion and materialism could co-exist. Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), a founding father of the American Unitarian church, and his friend Dr. Thomas Cooper (1759-1839), a radical politician and philosopher who held various professorship positions in American universities and colleges, employed this adapted materialistic philosophy in their works. Priestley and Cooper were well known before they

[206] Thomas Jefferson, "Thomas Jefferson to John Adams," August 15, 1820, Image 182, Image 178-183, The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series 1. General Correspondence. 1651-1827, http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mtj.mtjbib021117. (Formatting original.)

emigrated to America together in 1794, having personal engagements and letter exchanges with many of the Founding Fathers, including Jefferson and Adams.[207] In England and America, they published multiple works that denounced immaterialism yet maintained that God was still extant. Priestley, for example, argued that the mind and its thoughts had no immaterial essence but were rather produced through physiological interactions within the brain. However, he also assumed that the body and mind were subject to laws of causation, just as nature was, and that God had predetermined these laws.[208]

Thomas Cooper, likewise, published on the physiological argument for materialism, but went even further, finding a scriptural basis to substantiate his belief in materialism. He argued in his pamphlet, *The Scripture Doctrine of Materialism* (1823), that materialism, rather than immaterialism, was more consistent with Christianity as per his reading of the four gospels. Jesus had not explicitly declared that humans hold an immortal soul, rather, He had preached that the *human body* would be resurrected.[209]

Although Priestley and Cooper's publications met with criticisms in both England and America,[210] they were also upheld to be progressive and reflective of the era's preference for a free and 'enlightened Mind…to be the Guide of

[207] Schofield, *The Enlightened Joseph Priestley*, 236, 324–239; Stephen L. Newman, "Cooper, Thomas (1759–1839)," ed. Lawrence Goldman, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, October 2006), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6231.
[208] "Matter and Spirit" in Schofield, *The Enlightened Joseph Priestley*, 59–76.
[209] Thomas Cooper, *The Scripture Doctrine of Materialism* (Philadelphia: A Layman, 1823).
[210] William Ellery Channing, *The Works of William Ellery Channing, D.D.* (London: Edward Rainford, 1829), 480–483; William Belsham, *Essays, Philosophical, Historical, and Literary* (London: C. Dilly, 1789), 369–370, 377–382.

those who call themselves Men.'[211] In urban academic communities, such as Boston, the drive for liberty extended beyond politics to include religion. As the Unitarian church advocated, liberty was necessary for intellectual progress: an individual must have the ability to reason for himself, to 'search [the Scriptures] with honesty and perseverance and devotion'[212] to formulate truth for himself. Thus, a theory of materialism, so long as it kept God in the picture, was allowed to be voiced; however, its acceptance and tolerance outside of Christian liberal communities was a different matter. As Jefferson, an admitted materialist, wrote in a letter to Cooper:

> That the doctrine of Materialism was that of Jesus himself, was a new idea to me. Yet it is proved unquestionably…. I hope the physiological part will follow; in spite of the prevailing fanaticism, reason will make its way…. General education is the true remedy, and that most happily is now generally encouraged.[213]

'Materialism' was still often viewed as a radical idea, and consequently, its proponents were often sidelined. Cooper, for example, was nominated by Jefferson to the position of professor of chemistry, mineralogy, and natural philosophy at the University of Virginia, yet he was forced to resign because his materialistic philosophy was deemed unacceptable by the state legislature.[214] His reputation was tarnished. As a fellow natural philosopher José Corrêa da

[211] Charles Chauncy, *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England : A Treatise in Five Parts* (Boston: Printed by Rogers and Fowle, for Samuel Eliot, 1743), 326–327.
[212] Bernard Whitman, *Two Letters to the Reverend Moses Stuart on the Subject of Religious Liberty*, Second Edition (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1831), 63.
[213] Jefferson, "Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Cooper, Dec 11, 1823," 328. (Formatting original.)
[214] Dumas Malone, *The Public Life of Thomas Cooper, 1783-1839* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 234–247.

Serra wrote in a letter to Jefferson discussing the University of Virginia controversy:

> They had represented him as nearly an infidel, of a violent temper, and of intemperate habits, and I have found him only a bitter enemy of hypocrites, no violent man, but by no means an enduring one, and have not seen a single solitary instance of intemperance.[215]

Furthermore, Cooper's materialistic philosophy was a contributor to an attempt in 1830-32 to remove him from his position as president of South Carolina College. He stood accused of 'willfully and unnecessarily' advancing objectionable doctrines and religious opinions offensive and injurious to the college, its patrons, and South Carolina's citizens. He managed to defend himself against these accusations and be acquitted based on his argument that the charges against him were brought about by the 'Church militant' who was denying him freedom of religious opinion, and therefore violating his constitutional and natural rights.[216]

The common sentiments against materialism were perhaps best revealed in the story of Dr. Charles Knowlton (1800-1850), an unknown philosopher and rural physician, who attempted to 'become even far more famous than John Locke ever was, by publishing a work containing the only true explanation of the intellectual phenomena of man.'[217] His publication, *Elements of Modern*

[215] José Corrêa da Serra, "To Thomas Jefferson from José Corrêa Da Serra, 22 March 1819," March 22, 1819, Founders Early Access, http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/default.xqy?keys=FOEA-print-04-02-02-0251.
[216] Malone, *The Public Life of Thomas Cooper*, 337–367.
[217] Charles Knowlton, "The Late Dr. Knowlton's Autobiography," *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 45, no. 8 (September 24, 1851): 153.

Materialism (1829),[218] would not be sold: 'The bare title was enough to satisfy every bookseller. They would not look further; they wanted nothing to do with it.'[219] In describing his attempts to sell his book, Knowlton recounted how his book:

> So far from procuring [profitable business] for me, or a great and good (popular) name, only had an opposite effect. I was regarded as a deist, infidel, "bad man", &c., and the religious people—instigated, some of them, by the clergy—gave me no countenance. It is true that I had but very little professional business before I published my book, and most of what I did have was among the poor operative in the factories, who have never paid me; but in a very few respectable and religious families I had had some business, and thought I did well for them. I had reason to expect a continuance of their patronage; but it was withheld.[220]

What we find in England and America, thus, is a prevailing preference among scholars to maintain a truth system that recognised God and religion. The threat of materialism was staved off in part by deriding and shunning those who held opposing views, but also because scholars adapted and reinterpreted theories of the natural world and of the mind—always finding a role for God. Even though certain truths were challenged, the truth system itself was not overthrown.

In England, it was only in the nineteenth century that the hold religion had over science loosened enough that a materialistic theory of the world, *without*

[218] Charles Knowlton, *Elements of Modern Materialism: Inculcating the Idea of a Future State in Which All Will Be More Happy under Whatever Circumstances They May Be Placed than If They Experienced No Misery in This Life* (Adams, Mass.: A. Oakey, 1829), 391–396.
[219] Knowlton, "The Late Dr. Knowlton's Autobiography," 154.
[220] Ibid., 154–155.

God, could be advanced.[221] Secular laymen and scientists, such as the geologist and naturalist Charles Darwin (1809-1882), biologist and sociologist Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), the physicist John Tyndall (1820-1893), and the biologist Thomas Huxley (1825-1895) advanced their evolutionary-based materialistic philosophy by redefining it as the study of 'natural science' and adopting the label 'agnostic' as oppose to 'atheist'.[222] They did not deny the existence of God, but they did attempt to separate religion (spiritual faith and unseen spiritual forces) from science (rational knowledge and empirical evidence). Their interests lay in establishing a professional space and resources for the advancement of 'pure' scientific knowledge that was free from the influence of religious creeds. Yet to do so, they had to address the fears of a reductionist materialism—'a word which, to many minds, expresses something very dreadful.'[223] This fear came to prominence in the debates surrounding Charles Darwin's seminal publication, *On the Origins of Species* (1856). To advance their cause these scientists and laymen reframed materialism as something that was an inevitable aspect of science and its advancement of knowledge. As Tyndall attested:

> The physical philosopher…must be a pure materialist. His enquiries deal with matter and force, and with them alone. And whatever be the forms which matter and force assume, whether in the organic world or the inorganic, whether in the coal-beds and forests of the

[221] Frank M. Turner, "The Victorian Crisis of Faith and the Faith That Was Lost," in *Victorian Faith in Crisis : Essays on Continuity and Change in Nineteenth-Century Religious Belief*, ed. Richard J. Helmstadter and Bernard V. Lightman (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1990), 11–20.
[222] Ibid., 17–19.
[223] "Matter and Force: A lecture delivered to the working men of Dundee, September 5, 1867, with additions" in John Tyndall, *Fragments of Science*, vol. 2 (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1900), V: 78.

> earth, or in the brains and muscles of men, the physical philosopher will make good his right to investigate them.[224]

Secondly, they contended that advancements in our knowledge of nature, science, and technology could lead to new tools for moral reform.[225] Tyndall summarised:

> In man improvement [depends] largely upon the growth of conscious knowledge, by which the errors of ignorance are continually moulted, and truth is organized…. Materialism is therefore not a thing to be mourned over, but to be honestly considered—accepted if it be wholly true, rejected if it be wholly false, wisely sifted and turned to account if it embrace a mixture of truth and error. Of late years the study of the nervous system, and its relation to thought and feeling, have profoundly occupied enquiring minds. It is our duty not to shirk—it ought rather to be our privilege to accept—the established results of such enquiries, for here assuredly our ultimate weal depends upon our loyalty to the truth. Instructed as to the control which the nervous system exercises over man's moral and intellectual nature, we shall be better prepared, not only to mend their manifold defects, but also to strengthen and purify both. Is mind degraded by this recognition of its dependence? Assuredly not. Matter, on the contrary, is raised to the level it ought to occupy, and from which timid ignorance would remove it.[226]

The result was the establishment of what became an amoral (although still highly contested) 'scientific' materialism.

[224] Ibid., 2: V: 78–79.
[225] Thomas F. Gieryn, "John Tyndall's Double Boundary-Work: Science, Religion, and Mechanics in Victorian England," in *Cultural Boundaries of Science: Credibility on the Line* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 37–64; Roger Smith, *Free Will and the Human Sciences in Britain, 1870-1910* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), 1–16; 103–131.
[226] "Apology for the Belfast Address" in Tyndall, *Fragments of Science*, 2: X: 232–233.

These debates and issues had parallels with the development of natural science in America. However, within America, which had recently reaffirmed its Christian ideological foundations in the Second Great Awakening (1800-1830),[227] scholars were heavily invested in defending the existence of God.[228] Asa Gray (1810-1888), for example, the American counterpart to Darwin and key contributor to Darwin's theory, explained how:

> The English mind is prone to positive and kindred forms of materialistic philosophy, and we must expect [Darwin's] derivative theory to be taken up in that interest. We have no predilection for that school, but the contrary. If we had, we might have looked complacently upon a line of criticism which would indirectly, but effectively, play into the hands of positivists and materialistic atheists generally. The wiser and stronger ground to take is, that the derivative hypothesis leaves the argument for design, and therefore for a designer, as valid as it ever was.[229]

Publications by American scholars that addressed Darwinism tended to either adapt the theory, reconciling evolution with faith and biblical interpretations, or they outright denounced it as a theory that 'leads inevitably to Atheism and

[227] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 138–140.
[228] Mark A. Noll, "Science, Theology, and Society: From Cotton Mather to William Jennings Bryan," in *Evangelicals and Science in Historical Perspective*, ed. David N. Livingstone, Darryl G. Hart, and Mark A. Noll (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 99–119; Allen C. Guelzo, "'The Science of Duty': Moral Philosophy and the Epistemology of Science in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Evangelicals and Science in Historical Perspective*, ed. David N. Livingstone, Darryl G. Hart, and Mark A. Noll (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 267–289; David A. Hollinger, "Justification by Verification: The Scientific Challenge to the Moral Authority of Christianity in Modern America," in *Religion and Twentieth-Century American Intellectual Life*, ed. Michael James Lacey (Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars ; Cambridge University Press, 1989), 116–135; Ronald L. Numbers, "The Creationists," in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter Between Christianity and Science*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (London: University of California Press, 1986), 391–394.
[229] Asa Gray, *Darwiniana: Essays and Reviews Pertaining to Darwinism* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1876), 176.

Materialism.'[230] In the latter instance, the usage of 'materialism' as a defensive mechanism and its corresponding associations with delegitimized ideas were reinforced. Charles Hodge (1797-1878), an influential and prominent professor at Princeton, revealed in his critique of Darwinism and its English supporters, such as Tyndall and Huxley, how those 'advocates of these extreme opinions [who] protest against being considered irreligious'[231] could not escape the truth that Darwinism was in 'conflict not only with Christianity, but with the fundamental principles of natural religion.'[232] In his recollection of the testimonies of the advocates of the theory, Hodge recounted numerous examples of how these scholars had shown disdain for religion and God, cementing a view that Darwinism could lead to an irreligious and materialistic theory of the world. Consider his comments about the German scientist Carl Vogt (1817-1895):

> [Vogt] says that it cannot be doubted that Darwin's 'theory turns the Creator—and his occasional intervention in the revolutions of the earth and in the production of species—without any hesitation out of doors, inasmuch as it does not leave the smallest room for the agency of such a Being…. Man is not a special creation, produced in a different way, and distinct from other animals, endowed with an individual soul and animated by the breath of God; on the contrary, Man is only the highest product of the progressive evolution of animal life springing from the group of apes next below him.'
>
> After this no one can be surprised to hear him say, that 'the pulpits of the orthodox, the confessionals of the priests, the platforms of the interior missions, the presidential chairs of the consistories, resound with protestations against the assaults made by Materialism and Darwinism against the very foundations of society.' This he calls 'Das

[230] Charles Hodge, *What Is Darwinism?* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1874), 95.
[231] Ibid., 47.
[232] Ibid., 52.

> Wehgeschrei der Moralisten' (the Wail of the Moralists)…. All Vogt thinks is necessary to reply to these Moralists is, 'Lasst sie bellen, bis sie ausgebellt haben' (Let them bark till they are tired).[233]

Similar to prior advocates of materialism, those who openly professed and sought to teach Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection tended to be met with opposition, accusations of heresy, and were often dismissed from their academic posts.[234]

Accordingly, during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, England was pushing forward materialism in an agnostic, scientific direction, while America was still holding to a God-given world and often disparaging materialism.

Materialism in France

In France, the censorship mechanisms imposed by the Crown and the Church in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries resulted in an escalating resentment towards religion and state controls, and consequentially, led to an embrace of the anti-religious undertones in John Locke's works. French Enlightenment philosophers, through an underground system of clandestine literature,

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[233] Hodge, *What Is Darwinism?*, 86–87.
[234] Bert James Loewenberg, "The Reaction of American Scientists to Darwinism," *The American Historical Review* 38, no. 4 (1933): 687–701; Ronald L. Numbers, *Darwinism Comes to America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 24–48, 58–75; "Spiritual Crisis and the New Science" in: Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Profession : American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970* (Grand Rapids, Mich; Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 63–87; David N. Livingstone, "Situating Evangelical Responses to Evolution," in *Evangelicals and Science in Historical Perspective*, ed. David N. Livingstone, Darryl G. Hart, and Mark A. Noll (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 193–219; Thomas F. Glick and Edward J. Pfeifer, eds., "United States," in *The Comparative Reception of Darwinism* (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 181–206; Numbers, "The Creationists," 391–423.

developed Locke's more radical concepts of 'thinking matter' and socially constructed beliefs about the soul.[235] The scholars shifted the British concept of atomistic matter (believed to be lifeless and passive, moving only because it is acted upon by the God-given force of gravity or impact) to a concept of matter that was self-active. They called into question the nature of the soul, shifting the view from the soul as an immaterial and immortal substance imbued with innate notions of virtue and vice to a material and mortal *tabula rasa* of the human body. As Voltaire, in his *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (1733) (*Lettres sue les Anglois*, 1734) explained, when Locke postulated that, 'We shall, perhaps never be capable of knowing whether a Being, purely material, thinks or not',[236] he was also asserting that 'Human Reason is so little able, merely by its own Strength, to demonstrate the Immortality of the Soul.'[237]

By leveraging these points, scholars advanced an agenda that was politically (versus scientifically) motivated: they undermined the ecclesiastical prerogative over knowledge, pushing forward the right to freedom of thought and legitimizing the ability of man to reason about nature and about right and wrong. Taken completely out of the equation was a role for God, and thus for the religious authorities. These theories were taken forward by what became known as the radical French materialists. Their materialism equated to an amoral world able to operate smoothly without spiritual forces. Yet unlike their

[235] Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, 124–139.
[236] "Letter XIII on Mr. Locke," in Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (London : Printed for C. Davis in Pater-Noster-Row, and A. Lyon in Russel-Street, Covent Garden, 1733), 100.
[237] Ibid., 102.

British Anglican and agonistics counterparts, their arguments attempted to disprove God and the immateriality of the soul. Their interests lay with pushing forward the right to advance observed knowledge about nature and mankind, which often ran contrary to religious traditions and scriptures. They wanted to replace the power of the Church and State with the power of reason.[238]

The *Encyclopédie*, edited predominately by Diderot from 1751-1772, embodied these interests and became one of the vehicles through which the prevailing truth-system was challenged. Although the French State, acting in accordance with the Catholic Church's authorities, attempted to shut down the *Encyclopédie* for its threatening and radical content and 'impious maxims'[239] that were 'hostile to the royal authority and to religion',[240] the *Encyclopédie* continued to be produced, albeit unofficially and only on the condition that the Catholic Church was allowed full censorship rights. The Crown of France could not easily snub the employment and revenues such an expansive undertaking brought, especially given France's accumulating debts from wars (such as the French and Indian war (1754-1763) being fought between Britain and France in America). Additionally, the *Encyclopédie* was of interest to many elites, including Madame de Pompadour, the official chief mistress of Louis XV. It became an element of prestige and pride for France. Its purpose spoke to the

[238] Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, 24–27; David Garrioch, "The Party of the Philosophes," in *Enlightenment World*, ed. Martin Fitzpatrick et al. (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 437–439.
[239] John Morley, *Diderot And The Encyclopaedists*, vol. 1 (London: Bradbury, Agnew & Co., 1878), 154.
[240] Ibid., 1:147.

interests of the Enlightenment era: 'to assemble the knowledge scattered over the surface of the earth; to explain its general plan…[in order that] our descendant, by becoming better instructed, may as a consequence be more virtuous and happier.'[241] There were many willing patrons outside of France who were eager to take over the printing, revenue, employment opportunities, and prestige of the *Encyclopédie*, including Catherine of Russia and Frederick the Great of Prussia, who offered asylum and freedom of press for many of the French scholars during this era. Yet Diderot, even when under threat of being imprisoned (as he had been for a previous publication) kept the publication of the *Encyclopédie* within France in part because it was a means to advance the objective of French scholars to gain freedom of thought.[242]

The *Encyclopédie* enabled French scholars to push the boundaries of what could be published and read widely. It did so by enlisting the best talents of France and experts on subjects, regardless of their religion or affiliations. Church scholars made contributions as did radical French materialists, such as Voltaire and Holbach. By using this strategy it could claim to be offering an unbiased account of 'knowledge'. However, although the *Encyclopédie* was highly censored (a censorship that grew more rigorous in later years), Diderot still managed to advance the position of French materialists by endorsing the theories of other materialists (such as Spinoza) and interspersing questions calling into God's existence, origins of thought, and morality through

[241] As quoted in: Douglas Huntly Gordon and Norman Lewis Torrey, *The Censoring of Diderot's Encyclopédie and the Re-Established Text* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), 13.
[242] Gordon and Torrey, The Censoring of Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, 10–26.

subterfuges (he would cross-reference and add critical perspectives to entries written and signed by unsuspected orthodox contributors).[243]

The materialistic arguments that Diderot drew upon stemmed in part from the scepticism raised by Locke's *Essay*. In France, the word 'materialist' and concepts associated with it were most likely introduced through the French translations of John Locke's works. The word *matérialiste* (materialist) is evident in the French debates about John Locke's works (c. 1698)[244] and in numerous debates about Cudworth's *True Intellectual System* that were published in Le Clerc's journal, *Bibliothèque Universelle* (renamed the *Bibliothèque Choisie*).[245] The ideas and concepts contained in the Le Clerc's journals spread through discussions and informal gatherings between scholars.[246]

A materialistic philosophy grew further roots through its dissemination in anonymously published clandestine works, such as: Jean La Mettrie's *Histoire Naturelle de L'Ame* (1745) (*Natural History of the Soul*), *L'Homme Machine* (1748) (*Man a Machine*, 1749) and his *Systêm D'Epicure* (1750) (*System of Epicurus*), Voltaire's chapter on Locke in *Lettres sur les Anglois* (1734), Diderot's *Pensée Philiosophiques* (1746) (*Philosophical Thoughts*), and Holbach's, *Système*

[243] Ibid., 13–40; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 711–713.
[244] The Oxford English Dictionary, "Materialist, N. and Adj."
[245] Jean Le Clerc, *Bibliothèque choisie: pour servir de suite à la Bibliothèque universelle*, vol. 3, 28 vols. (Amsterdam: Henri Schelte, 1704); Jean Le Clerc, *Bibliothèque choisie: pour servir de suite à la Bibliothèque universelle*, vol. 7, 28 vols. (Amsterdam: Henri Schelte, 1705); Jean Le Clerc, *Bibliothèque choisie: pour servir de suite à la Bibliothèque universelle*, vol. 9, 28 vols. (Amsterdam: Henri Schelte, 1706).
[246] John W. Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 209–210.

de la nature ou des loix du monde physique & du monde moral (1770) (*The System of Nature, or Laws of the Moral and Physical World* (1797)).[247] These publications focused not so much on scientific advancements, but rather on the moral consequences of a godless world: if religion and God were to be eradicated, what would stop humankind from pursuing pleasurable acts and personal gratification over the common good? Would a materialistic world lead to hedonism, as represented in the works of La Mettrie, or would it lead to a rational, socially beneficial outcome, as represented in the works of Holbach? These arguments shaped the meaning of 'materialism' in France.

La Mettrie was one of the first French philosophers to use the word *matérialisme.* Although the OED notes the first entry for *matérialisme* as 1754,[248] readings of La Mettrie's works demonstrate his usage of the word by 1745.[249] His works cast a long, dark shadow over *matérialisme,* as he revived fears of irreligiosity and hedonism. His publications, which were banned and burned, forced him to flee France and Holland, and to take refuge in Prussia.[250]

La Mettrie positioned his theory of the *matérialisme* of the soul against the prevailing theories of the *spiritualisme* of the soul supported by the Catholic

[247] "Locke among the 'Philosophers," in Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism*, 182–206; "Appendix," in Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *Man a Machine: Including Frederick the Great "Eulogy" on La Mettrie and Extracts from La Mettrie's "The Natural History of the Soul,"* ed. Gertrude Carman Bussey (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1912), 173–174; "Introduction," in Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *La Mettrie: Machine Man and Other Writings*, ed. Ann Thomson (Cambridge University Press, 1996), xii.
[248] Oxford English Dictionary, "Materialism, N."
[249] Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *Histoire naturelle de l'ame* (La Haye [Paris]: Chez J. Neulme, 1745), 398; *L'Homme Machine* (Leide: D'Elie Luzac, Fils., 1748), 1.
[250] Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 704–709.

Church. The Catholic Church advocated that God gave man an immaterial soul with an innate sense of virtue and vice, which allowed man to have revelations about God and the nature He created.[251] La Mettrie argued that philosophers and the Catholic Church had misused this argument to advance their own interests. When he introduced the word *matérialisme* in his essay, *Natural History of the Soul* (1745), he wrote*:* 'Traités du Matérialisme sont donc beaucoup moins à craindre qu'un Janseniste impitoyable, our qu'un Pontife ambitiqeux.'[252] (Discourses about materialism are less threatening than the ruthless Jansenists [Catholic sect denying human free will and ability to seek grace] and the ambitious Pontiff [a high or chief priest of the Roman Catholic Church such as the Pope or Bishop]). He advocated that a materialistic view of the world might be better than a view determined by competing religious beliefs.

La Mettrie's provocatively written, hedonistic moral philosophy, embraced the controversial aspects of Epicureanism, reconnecting the misconstrued associations of 'materialism' with the pursuit of immoral self-interests. La Mettrie did so by adding evidence to prove that the soul was a fiction, man was a machine, and the whole universe was made of atomistic substance: formerly a physician before fleeing to France, La Mettrie documented his observations about and experiments with human physiology. He argued, since there was no

[251] *L'Homme Machine*, 1–2; Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *Man a Machine*, trans. Marquiss D'Argens, First edition (London: Printed for W. Owen, at Homer's Head, near Temple-Bar, 1749), 1–2.
[252] La Mettrie, *Histoire naturelle de l'ame*, 398.

innate idea of right or wrong, and since happiness stemmed not from a soul but from the reaction of atomistic-based senses and organs, men should run their 'machine bodies' as they desired, seeking pleasure that brought them happiness:[253]

> Si non content d'exceller dans le grand Art des Voluptés, la crapule & la débauche n'ont rien de trop fort pour toi, l'ordure & l'infamie son ton partage; vautres toi, comme font les porcs, & tu seras heureux à leur manière.[254]
>
> ('If not content to outdo yourself in the great art of sensual pleasures, and if debauchery and dissolution are not to your taste, perhaps filth and infamy will be more to your liking. Wallow in slime like a pig, and you will be happy in their fashion.')[255]

Yet again, 'materialism' was marked as a worldview that could lead to the proliferation of wanton behaviours and the undermining of society. The reception of his theory was acrimonious. The preface for the 1748 English translation of *Man the Machine* described how it incurred 'the severest and bitterest treatment', with 'some representing it as a system of atheism' and others as a work 'that had a tendency to subvert all order, encourage every vice, and in a word, destroy the essence of virtue itself.'[256]

Although La Mettrie's work provided evidence for a self-active, atomistic world that other materialists, such as Diderot and Holbach, wanted to advance, his

[253] Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *L'école de la volupté* (Dans l'isle de Calypso: aux dépens des Nymphes, 1747), 44–56.
[254] Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *Œuvres Philosophiques de M. de La Mettrie*, Nouvelle éd. Corrig & augmentée, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1764), 210.
[255] As translated in: Martin Fitzpatrick et al., eds., *Enlightenment World* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 172.
[256] La Mettrie, *Man a Machine*, Preface: i.

conclusions about the moral and ethical consequences tainted 'materialism'.[257] It was and remained a condemnable and contentious term.

Examples of 'materialism's' chastisement abounded in the entries for the *Encyclopédie*. Concepts that could potentially lead to accusations of materialism were either omitted or qualified by the writers. For example, the entry for 'mort' (death) read: 'je parle toujours du corps, & qu' on ne vienne pas m' accuser de matérialisme'.[258] ('I am only speaking about the body, so let no one accuse me of materialism.') Additionally, the author of the entry for *immatérialisme* and *ame* (mind), Claude Yvon, had to leave France after the censorship regime deemed his entries to be infected with atheism and advancing a materialistic philosophy.[259] Perhaps the most obvious example of materialism's tainted status was the omission of an entry for '*matérialisme*' from the *Encyclopédie* altogether.

Accordingly, when Holbach used the word 'materialisme' in what is considered to be a seminal text proposing a materialistic theory, *System of Nature* (1770), he framed it in a way that sought to neutralise the word. He positioned it as a

[257] Darrin M. McMahon, "Pursuing an Enlightened Gospel: Happiness from Deism to Materialism to Atheism," in *Enlightenment World*, ed. Martin Fitzpatrick et al. (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 164–176; Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism*, 182–206; La Mettrie, *La Mettrie*, Introduction: xii–xiii.
[258] Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt, "MORT," ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d' Alembert, *Encyclopédie, Ou Dictionnaire Raisonné Des Sciences, Des Arts et Des Métiers* (Paris: Briasson, 1772 1751), 717, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.9:2010.encyclopedie0513.
[259] Jean Barthélemy Hauréau, *Histoire Littéraire Du Maine*, vol. 4 (Paris: Julien, Lanier et Co., 1852), 366–367.

study of the material aspects of life that contributed to shaping a man's moral disposition:

> The doctrine of the spirituality of the soul has rendered morals a conjectural science, that does not furnish a knowledge of the true motives which ought to be put in activity in order to influence man to his welfare.
>
> In short, morals and politics would be equally enabled to draw from *materialism* advantages which the dogma of spirituality can never supply…. Man will ever remain a mystery to those who shall obstinately persist in viewing him with eyes prepossessed by theology, or to those who shall pertinaciously attribute his actions to a principle of which it is impossible to form to themselves any distinct idea. When man shall be seriously inclined to understand himself, let him sedulously endeavour to discover the matter that enters into his combination, which constitutes his temperament; these discoveries will furnish him with the clue to the nature of his desires, to the quality of his passions, to the bent of his inclinations, and will enable him to foresee his conduct on given occasions; will indicate the remedies that may be successfully employed to correct the defects of a vicious organization and of a temperament as injurious to himself as to the society of which he is a member.[260]

Holbach continued this line of thought, expressing how a man's temperament might be better understood by studying man's physiology, 'which are entirely material' [and] commonly result [in] the dispositions or faculties, called sensibility, wit, imagination, genius, vivacity, etc., which give the tone to the passions, to the will, to the moral actions of man.'[261] For Holbach, to study the materialism of the soul was to study morals as a 'science of the relations that

[260] Paul Henri Thiry Holbach, *The System of Nature or Laws of the Moral and Physical World. With Notes by Diderot*, trans. H.D. Robinson, vol. 1 (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), Chapter IX: 66. (Formatting original.) For the original French entry, refer to: Paul Henri Thiry Holbach, *Système de la nature, ou Des loix du monde physique & du monde moral*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Londres: [s.n.], 1781), Chapitre IX: 106.
[261] Holbach, *The System of Nature*, 1: Chapter IX: 67; Holbach, *Système de la nature*, 1: Chapitre IX: 107.

subsist between the minds, the wills, and the actions of men'.[262] Nearly a century later, Marx would draw from this theory in his historical and dialectical materialism, extending Holbach's study of materialism vis-à-vis morals to a study of materialism vis-à-vis economical, political, cultural and social forces, and relations.[263]

In *Systems of Nature* and subsequent publications, Holbach used his argument of a naturally occurring and socially embedded moral order to redeem 'materialisme' from its immorality and hedonistic associations. He advocated that knowledgeable minds knew that happiness did not reside in the pursuit of personal gratification, but in the pursuit of the common good. It was through the association with other men that a man would learn what was right and what was wrong; if he behaved in a way that other men approved of, he would be accepted into society and gain an ultimate sense of happiness. For a man to do otherwise was 'wicked—the man who injures himself, is an imprudent being, who neither has a knowledge of reason, of his own peculiar interests, nor of truth.'[264]

In *Bon Sens, ou Idées Naturelle Opposes aux Idées Surnaturelles* (Common Sense, or Natural Ideas Opposed to Supernatural) (published in French in 1772, with

[262] Holbach, *The System of Nature*, 1: Chapter XI: 109–110; Holbach, *Système de la nature*, 1: Chapitre XI: 181.
[263] Richard C. Vitzthum, *Materialism : An Affirmative History and Definition* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995), 74, 95.
[264] Holbach, *The System of Nature*, 1: Chapter IX: 72; Holbach, *Système de la nature*, 1: Chapitre IX: 115.

an English edition printed in Philadelphia as early as 1795), Holbach further challenged the 'false' notion that materialism corrupts. He did so by flipping the prevailing associations around: the Church, rather than being the moral compass became the degrader; a materialistic view of the world became the enlightened philosophy that led to a more natural (and superior) sense of moral order. Like Hobbes, he made apparent the manipulation of ideological power by the Church and the arbitrariness and unreasonableness of its imposed beliefs. I quote at length a few of his entries to demonstrate the tactic he used to tear apart the prevailing truths:

> We are incessantly told, that religion has infinite consolations for the unfortunate, that the idea of the soul's immortality, and of a happier life, is very proper to elevate man, and to support him under adversity, which awaits him upon earth. It is said, on the contrary, that materialism is an afflicting system, calculated to degrade man; that it puts him upon a level with the brutes, breaks his courage, and shews him no other prospect than frightful annihilation, capable of driving him to despair and suicide, whenever he is unhappy. The great art of divines is to blow hot and cold, to afflict and console, to frighten and encourage.
>
> You say, christian ministers! that the idea of a happier life is joyous. Admitted. Every person would desire a more agreeable and solid existence, than that, he enjoys here below. But, if paradise is inviting, you will grant, that hell is frightful. Heaven is very difficult, and hell very easy to be merited. Do you not say, that a *narrow* way leads to the happy regions, and a *broad* way to the regions of misery? Do you not often say, that *the number of the elect is very small, and that of the reprobate very large*? Is not grace, which your God grants but to a very few, necessary to salvation?…Nothing but enthusiasm or folly can induce a man to prefer improbable conjectures, attended with uncertainty and insupportable fears.[265]

[265] Paul Henri Thiry Holbach, *Common Sense: Or, Natural Ideas Opposed to Supernatural* (Philadelphia: sn, 1795), §108: 90–91 (Formatting original.); Paul Henri Thiry Holbach, *Le Bon*

> The dogma of another life is incessantly extolled, as useful. It is maintained, that even though it should be only a fiction, it is advantageous, because it deceives men, and conducts them to virtue. But is it true, that this dogma makes men wiser and more virtuous?… [L]egislators, crafty, ambitious and corrupt, have every where found it shorter to amuse nations with fables, than to teach them truths…. Priests undoubtedly had reasons for making the soul immaterial…. Material souls would, like all bodies, have been subject to dissolution. Now, if men should believe, that all must perish with the body, the geographers of the other world would evidently lose the right of guiding men's souls towards that unknown abode; they would reap no profits from the hope with which they feed them, and the terrors with which they oppress them. If futurity is of no real utility to mankind, it is, at least, of the greatest utility to those, who have assumed the office of conducting them thither.[266]

> It is declared with much emphasis, that without a God there would be no *moral obligation*…. Moral obligation supposes a law; but this law arises from the eternal and necessary relations of things; relations, which have nothing common with the existence of a God…. Whether there exists a God, or not; whether this God has spoken, or not, the moral duties of men will be always the same, so long as they are sensible beings…[he] has only to feel and think, in order to discover what he must do for himself and others. I feel, and another feels like me; this is the foundation of all morality.[267]

It is through these types of arguments that the interests of the French materialist were given the space to be advanced, albeit clandestinely in France and amidst much controversy and debate across the Continent[268] The debates that raged on, however, also spread the views of what a materialistic world

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Sens, ou Idées Naturelles Opposées aux Idées Surnaturelles (Londres, 1772), §204: 247; (Published under the Pseudonym of Jean Meslier), §108: 133–136.

[266] Holbach, *Common Sense*, §107: 89; Holbach, *Le bon-sens*, §107: 131–132.

[267] Holbach, *Common Sense*, §171: 164–165 (Formatting original.); Holbach, *Le bon-sens*, §171: 250–253.

[268] Nicolas Sylvestre Bergier, *Examen Du Matérialisme: Ou, Réfutation Du Systéme de La Nature*, 2 vols. (Paris: Humblot, 1771), xvi; LeBuffe, "Paul-Henri Thiry (Baron) d'Holbach."

governed by enlightened self-interested and reasonable men, not religion, could look like. The boundaries of what was possible to be thought and voiced shifted. Matter became capable of thinking and being shaped by bodily experience. Humans, in this philosophy, became capable of living in a moral fashion in a God-free world.

The French materialists challenged the established truths and replaced them with their own enlightened ideals. They turned arguments around so that assumptions about the origins of virtuous citizens, happiness, and orderly society became the product of a naturally occurring world and reason, not religious dogmas. Consequently, liberty and equality became possibilities: in a natural world, religion and politics had no higher claim to truth and power than other reasonable (and thus knowledgeable) men. These philosophical positions, supported by a materialistic theory, succeeded to undermine the legitimacy of France's social hierarchy, religion, and moral code. The works of the French materialists led to a '*grande révolution morale*',[269] where knowledge rather than faith became the ruling cause. They ultimately contributed to the French Revolution.[270] The freedom of thought they advocated would travel to the United States, although with the anti-religious undertones muted.

[269] Pierre-Louis Ginguené (1748-1816), as quoted in: Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, 16–17.
[270] Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, 14–29.

Summarizing Thoughts

From this historical analysis of the emergence of materialism as a philosophy, we see the roots of its pejorative nature: 'materialism' was initially imbued with negative associations that scholars *chose* to reinforce because the concept challenged the protected truth of God's existence. A material view of reality posed an implicit threat for religion, and thus for the institutional and personal power that rested on the authority of the churches. 'Materialism's' social purpose was thus to delegitimize contentious ideas. And this purpose remains today, albeit under different regime of truth.

Tracing the etymology of 'materialism' reveals how its emergence represented cracks in the established order, and how its meaning and directionality were shaped by social context and sets of interests. The differing discourses of England and France in the Enlightenment era bred two schools of thought: the scientific materialism of science and physiology, and the political or historical materialism that developed out of the recognition that all things—including concepts of God—were constructions of men.[271] Although different in their meanings, as alluded to in dictionaries and philosophical writings, they had a shared history that cast a taint on the word long after the origins were forgotten.

[271] Friedrich Albert Lange, *The History of Materialism and Criticism of Its Present Importance*, trans. Ernest Chester Thomas, 3 vols. (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1877); Vitzthum, *Materialism;* Magee, *The Story of Philosophy*, 158–171.

Part III

The Establishment of ‘Materialism’ in America: Exploring the Modes of a Delegitimizing Discourse

Chapter Seven

Framing the Advancement of 'Materialism' in America

In America, as materialism in the metaphysical sense remained sidelined, the word was transformed in a way that reflected the country's industrialization and the challenges presented by the new structures of capitalism and democracy. It was here in America that the meaning of 'materialism' shifted to denote 'an emphasis on or preference for that which is material'.[272]

The context in which this happened was one of intense changes that affected nearly every phase of life—from politics and commerce to religion and education. These dislocating conditions challenged, and eventually overturned, the established order. During these transitional years, the established and contending elite wielded moral judgements as they fought for social standing and legitimacy for their way of life. By the late 1800s, many of the moral claims that defined inappropriate behaviours or values became embodied in the epithet of 'materialism'. To understand the meanings attributed to 'materialism' thus necessitates a consideration of the discursive power plays of the late 1700s and early 1800s, especially the 'truths' different social groups sought to legitimize, the moral codes they created to protect these 'truths', and the resulting division between inappropriate and appropriate modes of living.

[272] Oxford English Dictionary, "Materialism, N."

The Established Order

The members of the established elite were predominately composed of eminent families whose legacy and wealth dominated Northern cities. They held high levels of cultural and social capital, which meant their ideals of culture, manners, and education defined what it meant to be a 'gentleman'. These families often sent their sons to achieve a liberal education at Harvard, William & Mary, Yale, Princeton, or overseas at a European institution, securing their intellectual dominance. They maintained their societal hegemony through intermarriages and by controlling property and wealth. For example, by 1828 forty percent of New York's property was owned by one percent of its citizens. Before 1850, wealth shifted little. The familial origins for the wealthiest two thousand citizens from 1828-1848 is shown in Table 1.[273]

Table 1: Familial Origins for Wealthiest Two Thousand Citizens in Northern United States (1828-1848)

	Status of Family of Origin		
City	Rich/ Eminent	Middling	Humble
New York	95%	3%	2%
Brooklyn	61%	16%	3%
Philadelphia	92%	6%	2%
Boston	94%	4%	2%

Central to the elite's sense of established order and control were lingering ideals from England. These included Protestant beliefs promoted by the Founding Fathers in which they envisioned America's progress to be directed by

[273] Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution : Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 238–239.

a Providence—or the 'will of the Almighty'[274]—and a respected 'natural aristoi' capable of embracing the Enlightenment era's power of reason.[275] The idea of a 'natural aristoi' emerged in response to the American Revolution (1765-1783). Benevolent, politically elected rulers (i.e., the established elite) were to replace the old monarchical society controlled through patronage and kinship: 'Love and gratitude' were to 'replace fear and favour as social adhesives.'[276] Knowledge and ideals of virtue, spread through education, were to unite its people, or rather, to acculturate the masses to accept the elite's ideals. Education was alleged capable of stemming the growth of 'Levity Vanity Luxury Dissipation & indeed Vice of every kind'.[277] The learned elite adopted Enlightenment theories: since culture and society were man-made constructions, men's minds could be moulded to produce a new society. Nations, they espoused, could be 'educated like individual infants. They are what they are taught to be.'[278]

Americans were also indoctrinated to believe that a *formal* education (versus an informal education) was critical in cultivating the minds of the next generation

[274] Thomas Paine, *Common Sense; Addressed to the Inhabitants of America* (Philadelphia: W. and T. Bradford, 1776), 71.
[275] Thomas Jefferson, "Thomas Jefferson to John Adams," October 28, 1813, Image 1277, The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series 1. General Correspondence. 1651-1827, http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mtj.mtjbib021548.
[276] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 189.
[277] Letter from Samuel Adams to James Warren, February 12, 1779, as quoted in: Ira Stoll, *Samuel Adams: A Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 202.
[278] Joel Barlow, *Oration Delivered at Washington, July Fourth, 1809: At the Request of the Democratic Citizens of the District of Columbia* (Washington City: R. C. Weightman, 1809), 6.

of natural aristocracy.[279] As Thomas Jefferson envisioned, in place of the monarchy, Americans would have laws 'wisely formed, and honestly administered…. [by] those persons…whom nature hath endowed with genius and virtue…rendered by liberal education.' These natural aristoi would 'guard the sacred deposit of...rights and liberties of their fellow citizens.'[280] By elevating their college-based, liberal arts education over the informal, family-based education of the masses, the elites could maintain their social distinctions and their higher standing in the social hierarchy.

These 'truths' about benevolent, formally educated leaders are important to note because they were the guise under which social groups could legitimize their claims to moral leadership of the nation. Over the course of the nineteenth century, as economic and social conditions radically transformed America, social groups vied for dominance of institutionalised structures. Pushed out of politics and contending for economic capital, the elite precariously vested their position in the social hierarchy in amassing cultural and symbolic capital. The story of 'materialism's' transitions and use as a mode of delegitimizing discourse emerges from these upheavals and battles over social status.

[279] Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty : A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 469-507.
[280] "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge," in Thomas Jefferson, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford, vol. 2 (New York; London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 415.

The Shifting Context, Transitioning Value System, and Emergence of New Truths

I. A Change of the Old Guard

In the 1800s, the gentry elite's command over the nation's political and economic sphere started to wane. A new generation of politicians rose to the fore. The Federalist's notions of a country ruled by a gentry elite were displaced by a Republican electoral victory and their support of the yeoman and individual rights. Thomas Jefferson, the first President under the Republican rule (1801-1809), believed America's prosperity was vested in the independent small land-owning family farm, not the North's merchant class and bankers. He advocated for the rights of individuals to assume prominence, and for the federal government to play a lesser role so as to not infringe upon the rights of the individual. He assumed, however, that because citizens owned property they would be motivated to ensure society flourished for their own well-being, and they would be able to separate out and to elect the 'natural aristocracy' versus the 'artificial aristocracy'.[281]

Ironically, over the course of the subsequent elections, political representation actually shifted from the assumed natural aristocracy to an unruly system of popular politics. Andrew Jackson's (1767-1845) rise to the presidency (1829-1837) solidified this shift. Jackson represented the self-made man: he lacked a

[281] Jefferson, "Thomas Jefferson to John Adams," October 28, 1813.

formal education and distinguished family legacy. He appealed to the masses.[282] Liberty and democracy had come to mean that ordinary people should control the choice of public officials and public policy formation. As more states entered the Union with constitutions providing for white male suffrage, and as older states dropped requirements for property ownership for voters, poor farmers and labourers gained the ballot. In 1824, 355,000 voters cast ballots; by 1828 this had risen to 1,155,000 voters; and between 1828 and 1848 this number would triple even though the population merely doubled.[283] Richard Hofstadter argues that a new type of politician emerged as poor farmers and workers became voters: the new leadership was orientated toward mass sentiment and thus 'spread the conviction that politics and administration must be taken from the hands of a social elite or a body of bureaucratic specialists and opened to mass participation.' [284] The common man was encouraged to achieve success through politics.

This result was the epitome of the fears of the Founding Fathers—democracy run amuck. In reaction, many of the Federalists pulled away from their political posts: politics was supposed to be an unpaid honour, not a vocation; election to political posts represented the esteem of the people for the wise, natural rulers, not a charade of electioneering or contrived campaigns.[285] Their belief in the

[282] John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson Symbol For An Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 166–180.
[283] Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 65.
[284] Ibid., 65–66.
[285] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 276–277, 286–289, 302–314; Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, 23–86.

ability of men to make 'wise' decisions based on the 'common good' and the 'conviction of an enlightened understanding'[286] proved to be a false dream.

Their vision was further eroded by attrition: by 1815, of the forty-one Founding Fathers who were delegates at the 1787 Constitutional Convention (where the Constitution was drafted), only eleven were still alive, and only two were actively participating in national politics. Politics became filled with a new breed of competing professional politicians. These politicians ran for office under a diverse array of political party banners and were increasingly swept up with promoting economic development. The value system of the gentry, in which idleness and leisure were esteemed, and in which the management of economic and political affairs was supposed to be for pleasure or for the common good of the people, was being replaced with the values and modes of life of the common, middling people.[287]

II. The Consequences of an Industrialising Economy and the Rise of a Middling Class

Over the course of the nineteenth century, as the government improved transportation modes and encouraged domestic industry and trade, America transitioned from a predominately rural, agricultural society governed by an elite gentry to a capitalist, industrial society with an ambitious middling class

[286] Tunis Wortman, *A Treatise Concerning Political Enquiry and the Liberty of the Press* (New York: George Forman, 1800), 18.
[287] Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 35–37.

dominating its culture. The 'middling class' included self-employed bankers, businessmen, shop owners, tradesmen, artisans, and professionalised farmers who often classified themselves as merchants, politicians, lawyers, and doctors. They shifted what were once unpaid gentry vocations to income-producing professions.[288] As Gordon Wood notes, by appropriating the values of gentility from the aristocracy, and industriousness from the working class, 'the middling sorts gained a powerful moral hegemony over the whole society'.[289] This, in turn, led to a diminishment of the aristocracy's ideals and the exclusiveness of labour to the working class: leisure became idleness, work became reputable, and every family could become respectable through reading books about culture and manners.[290]

The rise of the middling class was further supported by the advancement of a new 'truth'. Americans believed they had a 'manifest destiny…to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.'[291] God had blessed America with ample resources and an ever-expanding frontier so that America could demonstrate to the world the 'immutable truth and beneficence of God'. God had chosen them to be 'the nation of human progress': to develop 'freedom of conscience, freedom of

[288] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 701–710.
[289] Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 347.
[290] ibid.
[291] John O'Sullivan, "Annexation," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17, no. 1 (August 1845): 5.

person, freedom of trade and business pursuits, universality of freedom and equality.'[292]

Yet as part of achieving this destiny, America experienced the unsettling disruptions of a country grappling with an emerging capitalist economy and an underdeveloped monetary system, including the Panic of 1819 (1815-1821), the Panic of 1837 (1837-c.1844), and many other Panics caused by recessions or depressions over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although the word 'materialism' was not used, the response to the Panic of 1819 established classifications of inappropriate behaviour—a destructive focus on wealth—and subjects that personified the unethical behaviour—the opportunistic or exploitative capitalists. In subsequent years, these would be associated with the word.

The Panic of 1819, which began in 1815 with the Napoleonic post-war recession and which was intensified by lax rules around the printing of money and excessive land speculations, led to the general collapse of the American economy.[293] It was blamed on the unrestrained self-advancement and self-interest that the capitalist economy encouraged, and on the 'weakness of men's minds' that made them susceptible and easily disillusioned.[294] One pamphlet

[292] John O'Sullivan, "The Great Nation of Futurity," *The United States Democratic Review* 6, no. 23 (November 1839): 427, 430.
[293] Samuel Rezneck, "The Depression of 1819-1822, A Social History," *The American Historical Review* 39, no. 1 (1933): 28–47.
[294] J. S. Crawford, *Cause Of, and Cure For, Hard Times: A Definition of the Attributes and Qualities Indispensable in Money as a Medium of Commerce, and Also an Investigation of the Effects of the Banking System* (New York, 1818), iii.

decried that '[W]ise and honest Americans [were] embracing phantoms for realities'. They erroneously trusted and allowed 'paper-money' to define their lives, and were thus 'running mad in schemes of refinement, tastes, pleasures, wealth and power'.[295]

An address from the Society of Tammany (the organization governing politics in New York) surmised the wealth acquired from the war had contaminated 'many classes of society'. It created a 'pamper[ed] youth' who lived a life of 'unrestrained passion', causing the young to contribute to (rather than resolve) the misfortunes of the nation. The banks were to blame. They had deceived the 'unwary holder', and added the fuel (money) that instigated 'all the causes which have poisoned the public welfare'.[296]

For Americans, the Panic had started to shake core aspects of their truth system, specifically their belief in being able to create a 'new world'[297] based on 'peace, prosperity, liberty and morals'.[298] But it had also started to make visible a shifting class-base structure. Colonial America had a truncated hierarchy: there was the gentry, followed by a sizeable land-owning population (mostly small-land holder farmers), indentured immigrants or young men waiting to acquire land, and then, in the South, slaves. America lacked the European

[295] Ibid., iv.
[296] Tammany Society, or Columbian Order (N.Y.), *Address of the Society of Tammany, or Columbian Order to Its Absent Members: And the Members of Its Several Branches throughout the United States* (New York: George L. Birch & Co., 1819), 7–8.
[297] Paine, *Common Sense; Addressed to the Inhabitants of America*, 87.
[298] Thomas Jefferson, "Thomas Jefferson to George Logan," October 3, 1813, Image 1256, The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series 1. General Correspondence. 1651-1827, http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mtj.mtjbib021541.

bottom layer. With approximately two-thirds of adult males holding land (in comparison to only one-fifth of the English population holding land), Americans prided themselves on being self-sufficient.[299] As a result of the Panic, many small-land holders lost their land and source of livelihood. A bottom layer not only became apparent but also substantial. Class structures were in sway. This Panic, which persisted until 1821, affected approximately one-third of the population.[300]

America's industrialization also contributed to the growth of the middling class, which further threatened the social order. These self-made men had little need for the kinship and patronage structures of the gentry system, nor the wisdom and embellished virtuousness of a benevolent natural aristocracy: they had a need for their rights and liberties to be recognised and to be protected by the government, or at the least, for the government to not interfere in their economic progress. The middling class accordingly often walked a fine line between being viewed as the American archetype of a self-made man versus being viewed as the epitome of wickedness in America and opponent to the ideals of the gentry. They were often accused of being selfish, opportunistic men who duped the poor and exploited their labourers. The perceived veracity of the 'truths' spun about the middling class' corruptibility grew as America was one again plunged into another recession. The Panic of 1837, which lasted until

[299] Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 122–123.
[300] Mathew Carey, *Essays on Political Economy: Or, The Most Certain Means of Promoting the Wealth, Power, Resources, and Happiness of Nations, Applied Particularly to the United States*, Sixth Edition (Philadelphia: H.C. Carey & I. Lea, 1822), 417.

the mid 1840s, made class structures more fluid. To prevent social deprivation, the elite elevated their cultural capital, spurring on the negative views of money-getters. Taken as 'truths', these pejorative associations eventually resonated in the meaning of 'materialism'.

Similar to the Panic of 1819, the Panic of 1837 was in part caused by America's lax monetary policy (with banks issuing paper money excessively and holding inadequate reserves), and a financial system overextended on land speculation and over-indebted to Britain. America had financed most of its infrastructure projects, westward expansion, and industrial development through British bank bonds, so when the Bank of England raised its interest rates in 1836, the American banks had to follow suit. Combined with a shift towards land payments based on gold and silver rather than unreliable printed bank notes, a depressed demand for cotton, and a recession in the economy, the financial system collapsed. Loans could not be repaid. Property was confiscated. Bankruptcy prevailed everywhere. Valuable merchandise became forfeited. The merchant community crashed, and with it came the loss of jobs and income for the labourers and farmers. Trade dried up, and business confidence vanished. The State banks crashed. Out of 850 banks in America, 343 closed and 62 partially failed. The government could not pay its debts.[301]

[301] Charles Smith Morris, ed., *The Great Republic* [New York ; London: Syndicate Publishing Co, 1914], 135-136; Edward Flaherty, "National Banking Acts of 1863 and 1864," *American History: From Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond*, 2012, http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/essays/general/a-brief-history-of-central-banking/national-banking-acts-of-1863-and-1864.php).

Although the economy eventually recovered and experienced an era of economic boom in the 1850s, spurred on by the California gold rush (1848-1855), the Panic of 1837 had left a severe scar on America, disrupting the political and social order. Many blamed the power of the banks and were encouraged by political lobbyists to find fault with an inept government and a corrupt merchant class—an amplification of the themes sounded during the Panic of 1819. The Panic of 1837 was a contributing factor to the large increases in voter turnouts, which reached 80.2 percent in the 1840 elections.[302] The Panics of 1819 and 1837 also augmented the problem of poverty: the resulting increase in the number of the poor meant that a larger-scale effort was needed. This effort contributed to the rise of social movements, and to redefining *who* and *what* should indoctrinate the nation.[303]

III. Reforming Society: The New Values and Truths Spread through the Social Movements

In reaction to the increase of poverty, squalor and the perceived vices caused by the Panics, writers, clergymen, politicians, and socialists joined social

[302] Michael F. Holt, "From Center to Periphery: The Market Revolution and Major-Party Conflict, 1835-1880," in *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway (Charlottesville, Va; London: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 228.
[303] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Religion and the Rise of the American City : The New York City Mission Movement, 1812-1870.* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), 30-39, 115–117, 245–261; Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class : Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 193–206; Clifford S. (Clifford Stephen) Griffin, *The Ferment of Reform, 1830-1860*, American History Series (Arlington Heights, Ill.) (Arlington Heights, Ill: H. Davidson, Inc., 1967), 32–64.

movements that pushed for a return to morals.[304] These speech acts, however, redefined what a moral life entailed. They created a dividing line between a God-blessed industriousness—the legitimate and virtuous way of living—versus a wicked 'materialism'—the illegitimate and corrupting way of living. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church had earlier denoted this moral stratification in a popular 1819 publication. At the one end of the value spectrum were 'habits of industry, temperance, moderation, economy and general virtue' that were encouraged and glorified. Members were to 'cultivate in themselves' and 'endeavour to promote in others' these habits, and 'train…their children in [these] principals' so that they might be 'useful members of the church and useful citizens.'[305] These values would allow America to return to its prosperity: by being sober and working harder (being more industrious) and by living within their means (economizing), Americans could free themselves from the burden of debt and stimulate the economy.[306] At the other end of the value spectrum were the discouraged evils that had contributed to the societal malaise: the 'spirit of cupidity [i.e., greed],[307]…adventurous and unjustifiable speculation,… extravagance and

[304] Smith-Rosenberg, *Religion and the Rise of the American City*, 157–158; Robert H. Bremner, *From the Depths: The Discovery of Poverty in the United States* [New York: New York University Press, 1956], 56–57, 80–81.
[305] Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. General Assembly, *Extracts from the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Thomas & William Bradford, 1819), 171; Reprinted in: Eliakim Little, *The Philadelphia Register, and National Recorder*, Saturday, June 19, 1819, vol. 1, January to July, 1819 25 (Philadelphia: Littell & Henry, 1819), 409; *The Religious Intelligencer*, July 3, 1819, vol. 4, For the Year Ending May 1820 5 (New Haven: Nathan Whiting, 1819), 76–77.
[306] Murray Newton Rothbard, *The Panic of 1819: Reactions and Policies* (Auburn, Alabama: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 1962), 30–35.
[307] "Cupidity, N.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/45894.)

luxury'.[308] Although this publication did not use the word 'materialism', by the late 1800s, 'materialism' became a catch-all to describe these societal ills.

This sort of discourse—its manipulation of words and ideals, and its calls for cultivation and indoctrination—were mechanisms of assimilative reforms that supported an underlying interest of the elite (specifically those religions and civil society leaders trained at respectable institutions such as Yale) to maintain social order. In comparison to the older gentry elite, these elite adapted the value system to the times. They believed America could become a democratic and progressive society if its materialistic aims could be appropriately directed: Its manifest destiny could be achieved by offsetting the vices of economic progress with the virtues of moral living.

Yet indoctrinating the population was not an easy thing to achieve. For in addition to the disruptions in the economic, political, and moral systems, America also experienced major demographic shifts and religious fragmentation that significantly challenged the social order of protected societies, such as New England. These shifts weakened institutional acculturation strongholds, disrupting the family structure and displacing a last bastion of New England's cultural and symbolic capital—the Unitarian church.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, immigration increased dramatically. For example, in the early 1820s, the average number of immigrants per year

[308] Presbyterian Church, *Extracts from the Minutes*, 172.

was approximately 7,700; by 1832, more than 60,000 immigrants entered America per year; between 1825 and 1835, more than 365,600 immigrants came to the country. That number would double before the end of 1840 and approximately doubled again by the end of 1850s and 1860s. By the 1880s, more than 500,000 immigrants would enter the country on average per year.[309] With these immigrants came undesirable religions, such as Catholicism,[310] higher illiteracy rates,[311] and different customs that were deemed to be uncouth and blamed for societal ill, such as the drinking of the Irish and German immigrants that affected their industriousness and caused 'the corrupting of the citizen and the embruting of the man.'[312, 313] Additionally, the American nuclear family structures, neighbourhoods, and churches were torn apart as geographical mobility, an increase in land opportunities, and a desire for prosperity sent young men and families out West.[314] The ties that bound society together and ensured that proper values would be transferred and upheld were being strained.

To quell the fragmentation, Evangelical preachers called for religion distilled through missionary work to act as the homogenous glue. This formed the

[309] Frederick C Croxton, "Statistical Review of Immigration, 1820-1910. Distribution of Immigrants, 1850-1900," Senate Documents, Reports of the Immigration Commission (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), 4.
[310] James Hennesey, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 101–127; Smith-Rosenberg, *Religion and the Rise of the American City*, 173–175; Hartley, *Evangelicals at a Crossroads*, 65–75; "Chapter X: Perils—Romanism," in: Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York: Baker & Taylor Co. for the American Home Missionary Society, 1885), 46–59.
[311] Strong, *Our Country*, 43–44.
[312] Ibid., 85.
[313] Ibid., 74-74; Joseph R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade : Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement*, 2nd ed (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 4–8, 49–57.
[314] Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 124–134.

essence of the Second Great Awakening (1790-1840). Unlike the First Great Awakening (1730-1760), which redefined the meaning of salvation and religion for existing Christians, the Second Great Awakening sought to expand religion to the unsaved masses to remedy social evils in preparation for Christ's second coming. Lyman Beecher (1775-1863), a leader of the Second Great Awakening, argued that the established elite's reliance on 'knowledge and virtue' to hold the Republic together was insufficient. Families were failing to indoctrinate their young. Trusting the government would merely led to 'despotism'. 'The integrity of the Union demand[ed]…a more effectual and all-pervading system of religion and moral instructions' provided through 'the prevalence of pious, intelligent, enterprising ministers through the nation'. These ministers, 'at the ratio of one for 1000', would establish 'schools and academies, and colleges, and habits, and institutions of homogeneous influence'. They would 'produce a sameness of views, and feelings, and interest…[laying] the foundation of our empire upon a rock.'[315]

Beecher's evangelism and the growth of the Baptist and Methodist churches it supported, however, threatened the esteemed cultural, social, and symbolic capital of the Unitarian church—a mechanism of control that had historical ties to the American elite. Up until the early twentieth century, no less than two-

[315] Lyman Beecher, "Religious Intelligence: Societies for the Education of Indigent Pious Young Men, for the Ministry," in *The Panoplist, and Missionary Magazine*, October, vol. 11 (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1815), 478.

fifths of Bostonian leading businessmen professed to be Unitarians.[316] During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Unitarian church protected the social order. For example, it made visible the social hierarchy through its pew system, in which pews were rented or sold at different rates pending their location in the meetinghouse. Most long-time residents, however, maintained their family's status and circumvented the prohibitive costs by inheriting their pews.[317]

During the First Great Awakening, when converts reborn at Evangelical revivals were taught to rely on Christ for redemption rather than obedience to a congregational church or Puritan rules, the Unitarian church bolstered ideals that embraced the Evangelical ideas of self-emancipation while retaining social order.[318] By applying Enlightenment epistemology, Unitarian clergy used logical, biblical-based arguments to refute Puritan and Calvinist beliefs of predestination and the innateness of sin: heaven was not something restricted to a limited 'elect', rather, salvation could be achieved through seeking God, living morally, and using one's free will to do good.[319] They redefined religion

[316] Ronald Story, *The Forging of an Aristocracy : Harvard & the Boston Upper Class, 1800-1870* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1980), 172.
[317] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 11–23; Carolyn J. Lawes, *Women and Reform in a New England Community, 1815-1860* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 35–37; "The Old Fashioned Pews," in: Alice Morse Earle, *The Sabbath in Puritan New England* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 33–44.
[318] Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (New York: W.M. Norton, 1970), 193-194.
[319] Charles Chauncy, *The Mystery Hid from Ages and Generations, Made Manifest by the Gospel-Revelation: Or, The Salvation of All Men the Grand Thing Aimed at in the Scheme of God* (London, Printed for C. Dilly, 1784).

so that it encouraged a growing nation of middling-class members to seek God through doing good works and living virtuously.

Yet they also set a standard: a religious experience, to be respectable, needed to be explainable through logical interpretations of biblical passages. This stood in stark contrast to the unbecoming behaviour of the 'provincial' revivalists—where '*raised Affections*' and unexplainable spiritual awakenings defined religion.[320] These speech acts helped to keep in check the new mantras of religion and the expanding concepts of liberty, equality, and natural rights.[321] Within the preindustrial New England society, it also matched the elites' interest in growing the emerging commercial society in a progressive yet orderly way. [322] However, it also failed to address the needs of a large portion of the population. Many of the middling and common class sought a spiritual awakening—ill-defined by logic—to rectify the excessive material-centrism brought by industrialization. The traditional church failed to provide this. The Baptist and Methodist evangelical preachers responded to this need. They reached out to embrace and encourage the common man. They popularised new modes of religious preaching, using camp meetings, circuit riders, organized prayer and evening meetings, printed pamphlets, tracts, sermons, magazines and books, and organised associations to reach the masses. Their

[320] Charles Chauncy, *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England : A Treatise in Five Parts* (Boston: Printed by Rogers and Fowle, for Samuel Eliot, 1743), 327.(Formatting original.)
[321] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 60–80; Herbert W. Schneider, *A History Of American Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), 56–66; Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 183–220.
[322] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, 14–21.

congregations increased, and the values they preached of 'industry, temperance, moderation, [and] economy' became advocated and disseminated as the new creeds of the Republic.

Consequently, although religion was supposed to unify, it contributed to exacerbating the social schisms as it undermined institutional controls. The traditional Puritan churches in New England (precursors to the Unitarian churches) and the Anglican Church of England in the South, which accounted for more than forty percent of the congregations in America in 1760, dropped to twenty-five percent representation by 1790. They would continue to see this number decrease while new denominations multiplied.[323]

Evangelicals' new modes of preaching resulted in churches becoming, for many, little more than buildings used to host religious services. As religion was taken outside of church doors, the traditional church's reliance on pew systems and membership to define social hierarchies and maintain a semblance of order became increasingly muted.[324] By 1826, the Unitarian minister Joseph Tuckerman found that nearly one-third of Boston's residents did not attend church. Many could not pay for pews and were too proud to sit in the free seats reserved for the poor.[325]

[323] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 580–581.
[324] Ibid.
[325] Joseph Tuckerman, *The Principles and Results of the Ministry at Large in Boston* (Boson: James Munroe & Co., 1838), 18–27.

This raised concerns amongst the intellectual and religious elite as the lack of moral teaching was perceived to contribute to an increase in vices, specifically among the poor. Tuckerman envisioned that left unaddressed the poor would become indifferent to religion, sceptic, drawn into 'profligacy' and 'forms of infidel publications, of gambling-houses, or brothels and dram-shops,' which in turn would lead to further ensnaring more people and extending their 'poverty' and the 'debasement' of society.[326]

The elite watched these sins increase as the population moved out from under the established church's brick and mortar buildings and spread out to the American frontier, and as immigration expanded cities and their corresponding vices. These societal disruptions allowed alternative modes of indoctrination to emerge. New, interdenominational associations arose to perform the function of the nation's benevolent and moral administrator. What had once been the vested power of the politically elected natural aristocracy and the Church shifted to social activists and reformers. Their voluntary associations, such as the American Bible Society (1816), the American Society for Educating Pious Youth for the Gospel Ministry (1816), the American Colonization Society (1816), the American Temperance Society (1817), and the American Tract Society (1825), sought to extend their ideals and to combat the growth of vices through missionary and educational activities. They wanted to 'provide religious instruction for the nation'.[327] They were the means through which

[326] Ibid., 28-29.
[327] "New England Clergy," *The Reformer* 1, no. X (1820): 233.

Beecher's 'homogeneous character' was to be realized and the new value-system of the Republic instilled.[328,] These societal and institutional changes further weakened the Unitarian church's social, cultural, and symbolic importance. Contending groups leveraged this opportunity: the church's weakened position meant that it lacked the capital necessary to effectively stifle delegitimizing discourse.

IV. Challenging Institutional Orders: The Transcendentalists Redefine Religion

In the 1830s, a group of New England's Unitarian-indoctrinated clergy, in seeing their church lose its grasp and relevance in society, pushed to redefine what a religious experience could entail. Society was clamouring for a more 'fervent, living and soul-kindling' element to religion, as was made evident in the growth of Evangelical denominations and their spiritual awakenings and revivals.[329] This dissenting group, the Transcendentalists, wanted to inject a more spiritual experience into the overly-rationalized Unitarian faith and 'frigid utilitarianism' of life.[330, 331] In their speech acts, the Transcendentalists wielded

[328] Edwin S. Gaustad and Mark A. Noll, eds., *A Documentary History of Religion in America to 1877*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 299–300; T. Gregory Garvey, *Creating the Culture of Reform in Antebellum America* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 35–37.
[329] Orestes Augustus Brownson, *New Views of Christianity, Society, and the Church* (Boston: James Munroe, 1836), 55.
[330] ibid.
[331] "Background," in Ian Frederick Finseth, "'Liquid Fire Within Me': Language, Self and Society in Transcendentalism and Early Evangelicalism, 1820-1860" (University of Virginia, 1995), http://xroads.virginia.edu/%7Ema95/finseth/thesis.html; Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Transcendentalism in New England, A History* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), 105–141;

the accusation of 'materialism'. Importantly, they changed its meaning so that it not only reflected the nuances of the era, but also supported the interests they wanted to advance. In a similar vein to the Renaissance and Enlightenment scholars, they used it predominately to degrade. However, unlike the past, it was a discursive weapon employed by a contending—versus established—group. The Transcendentalists' manipulation of 'materialism' was vested in two motives: to demonstrate America's philosophical prowess in using old concepts (i.e., 'materialism' and 'spiritualism') in new ways, and to legitimize their theology.[332]

The Transcendentalists' opinions were influenced by Europe's Romantic movement and by a desire to achieve universal equality and spread freedoms. The Romantics encouraged people to counteract the effects of the Industrial Revolution's mechanical and impersonal progress by expressing the emotional and imaginative side of life through art and literature. Transcendentalists sought a similar remedy to America's industrial revolution, yet they also wanted to appeal to society, thus, Transcendentalists could not outright denounce America's material progress: 'truths' spun around America's blessed prosperity were too popular. Applying insights gained from rediscovered Buddhist and Hindu text, they envisioned a world in which the spiritual and material elements of life were fused. They redefined what religion entailed, choosing a middle ground between Unitarianism's rational exercise of virtue and

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Barbara L. Packer, *The Transcendentalists* (Athens ; London: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 20–31.
[332] Ibid., 319.

Evangelical Protestantism fanatical awakenings. Spiritualism was to be embraced in a cultured (versus evangelical, enthusiastic) way.[333] Religion became an inner spiritual striving towards communion with the Divine that could be experienced simply by walking through the woods.[334] By recognising how God spoke through and could be seen in nature, humankind could 'become conversant with the primal source of reality', and anyone—man, woman, and child—could achieve self-enlightenment.[335]

Rather than relying on the brick and mortar church to be the controller of society, they saw this self-enlightenment, termed 'self-truth', as the solution to regulating democracy's unleashing of rights and industry's unleashing of passions.[336] By aligning the 'inward condition' of men they could direct the 'outward reality'.[337] Accordingly, many of the Transcendentalists were involved in founding and supporting social movements to develop the 'inward condition' of humanity. These often mixed with initiatives by Evangelical reformists, yet they also involved the pioneering of new, and at times eccentric, ways to find self-truth and self-reliance. Moreover, they used their pens and voices to disseminate their new views to the masses. For example, Orestes A. Brownson (1803-1876) was a prominent intellectual, preacher, activist for the

[333] Finseth, "Liquid Fire Within Me"; McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 98–140; "Boston Unitarianism, 1790-1840," in Anne C. Rose, *Transcendentalism as a Social Movement, 1830-1850* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1981, 1–37.
[334] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1836).
[335] George Ripley, *Discourses on the Philosophy of Religion: Addresses to Doubters who Wish to Believe* (Boston: James Munroe and Co., 1836), 25.
[336] "Self-Reliance," in Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays* (Boston: James Munroe and Co., 1841), 35–74; "The Divine Elements of Human Nature," in: Ripley, *Discourses on the Philosophy of Religion*, 35–37; Brownson, *New Views of Christianity, Society, and the Church*, 111.
[337] Ripley, *Discourses on the Philosophy of Religion*, 25.

Workingman's Party of New York, and an advocate through which Marxist ideas (with a religious spin) took root in America;[338] Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was the leader of the movement and an influential higher education reformist, giving more than 1,500 public lectures and writing numerous essays and books that gained international recognition; George Ripley (1802-1880) was a social reformer and radical Unitarian minister who founded the short-lived Utopian community of Brook Farm; Elizabeth Peabody (1804-1890) and Bronson Alcott (1799-1888) were influential educational reformists, promoting experiential learning and the arts for early childhood education; Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) was an American journalist and women's rights activist; Theodore Parker (1810-1860) was a popular reforming Unitarian minister, social activist, and abolitionist; and Nathanial Hawthorne (1804-1864) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) were two prominent American authors who spread Transcendentalist ideals of living simply in nature through their novels.[339]

Although the Transcendentalists were still of the intellectual and religious elite, their involvement with the masses through their social initiatives, public lectures, and influence on popular future writers, such as Walt Whitman (1819-

[338] Orestes Augustus Brownson, *The Laboring Classes: An Article from the Boston Quarterly Review* (Boston: B. H. Greene, 1840), 11–12; 14; Orestes Augustus Brownson, "Socialism and the Church," in *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, vol. III, New Series, No. 1—January 1849 (Boston: Benjamin H. Greene, 1849), 91–126; "Introduction," in Orestes Augustus Brownson, *Orestes Brownson: Selected Political Essays*, ed. Russell Kirk (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 3–5.
[339] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance* (Boston : Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1852); Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854); Henry S. Salt, *Life of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. George Hendrick, Willene Hendrick, and Fritz Oehlschlaeger (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 15–28.

1892), meant that their ideas—and thus words—were transmitted beyond the New England elite.[340] Consequently, their works were one of the primary means through which 'materialism', as it related to American life rather than as a Renaissance philosophy or scientific notion, became established and popularised.

V. Transcendentalist's Initial Spins and Semantic Shifts of 'Materialism' (1830s-1840s)

The Transcendentalists brought about a semantic shift in 'materialism', equating it to over-emphasis on the material, outward, and sensual aspects of life and the money-getting stimulated by industrialism. This shift occurred initially in 1836 through the work of Orestes A. Brownson, just before the Panic of 1837 ravaged the land. Brownson, in an attempt to delegitimize Unitarianism and its overly-rationalization of religion, and in a ploy to contain industrialism's utilitarianism, accused them both of embodying 'materialism'.

In his *New View of Christianity, Society, and the Church* (1836), Brownson decried: 'Under the reign of Materialism' the church had erroneously put 'full confidence in reason.' By elevating the ability of men to reason, and by

[340] Rose, *Transcendentalism as a Social Movement, 1830-1850*, 38–69; Russell Goodman, "Transcendentalism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2013, 2013, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entriesranscendentalism/; "Emerson as a Lecturer," in: Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Selected Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2005), xi–xxvii; Ed Folsom, "Transcendental Poetics: Emerson, Higginson, and the Rise of Whitman and Dickinson," in *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism*, ed. Joel Myerson, Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, and Laura Dassow Walls (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 263–90.

allowing 'our senses [to be] our only inlets of knowledge', the Unitarian church had caused 'the spirit [to be] overlooked'.[341]

In his writings, Brownson built up descriptions that related 'materialism' to the 'Outward' aspects of life, often conjuring up images that equated it with lower 'animal wants' and the pursuit of pleasure.[342] He started by contrasting 'spiritualism' and 'materialism' as 'two social, rather than two philosophical systems': they represented the age-old designations of '*spiritual* and *temporal* or *carnal*, *holy* and *profane*, *heavenly* and *worldly*'.[343] He wove in stories and distinct images to bring these contrasts to life, unfolding how, in the history of these social systems, 'spiritualism' was taken over by 'materialism' under the accession of Pope Leo X. He described Leo as an Atheist and a sensualist, 'sunk in his sensual pleasure, and perhaps a great sufferer in consequence of his excesses.'[344] He argued that 'materialism' continued to drive society: it was personified in the 'low business world' and its 'money-getting' and focus on 'physical utility', the 'desire for worldly wealth and renown' and strivings 'to get up, keep up'.[345] Materialism-inspired conquests stood in contrasted to: the regard for the welfare of mankind, a personal pursuit of 'studious ease', 'leisure', benevolent causes, and a redeeming quest for knowledge—values that

[341] Brownson, *New Views of Christianity, Society, and the Church*, 41.
[342] Ibid., 55, 61.
[343] Ibid, 11. (Formatting original.)
[344] Ibid., 29-30.
[345] Ibid., 55, 61–62.

interestingly reflected a romanticisation of the older gentry class ideals.[346] Although Brownson argued that America had benefited from its 'materialism'—the Protestant 'industrial direction' gave men the sharpened faculty and leisure time to 'attend to the spiritual part of their being'—his writings continued to perpetuate the negative and positive dichotomy between 'materialism' and 'non-materialism' pursuits.[347]

A review of Brownson's book noted his 'novel application' of 'materialism' and 'spiritualism', repeating his polarized classifications: 'spiritualism' 'denoted…God, the priesthood, faith, heaven, eternity'; 'materialism' represented a focus on 'man, the state, reason, the earth, and time.'[348] The article, published in *The Christian Review* (1837), was printed in Boston as well as London. The 'novel application' of 'materialism' had started to spread. This article was also one of the first works to use the word 'materialistic', consequently establishing its associations to the man-made elements of social life.[349]

Although Transcendentalists shared some beliefs, ideals, and goals, they also had many opposing opinions about issues and differing interests they sought to

[346] Ibid., 61–62.
[347] Ibid., 62.
[348] F. W. P. Greenwood and James Walker, eds., "Review: New Views of Christianity, Society, and the Church. By O.A. Brownson.," in *The Christian Examiner*, vol. 22, Third Series, Vol. IV (Boston; London: James Munroe and Company; Rowland Hunter, and R. J. Kennett, 1837), 128–129.
[349] "Materialistic, Adj.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed December 27, 2014, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/114927.

advance.[350] Consequently, their articulations about 'materialism' also varied and inspired alternative applications. Emerson, for example, described 'materialism' not as an inducer of pleasure or as a sign of social degradation, but as an alternative way of looking at the world. The 'materialist' denied the idealist notion that facts are illusions of the senses; he valued the material representation of ideas. 'Materialism' represented a respect for 'sensible masses…social art, and luxury,…extent of space, or amount of objects', 'establishments' of 'Society [and] Government' and 'social action'.[351]

This application of 'materialism' became reflected in the works of authors of the era. For example, Edgar Allen Poe, in the short story, *The Landscape Garden*, (which appeared in a number of ladies' journals in 1842 and 1847)[352] equated 'materialism' to the 'poetic sentiment' and 'physical loveliness' that a poet created.[353] Walt Whitman, in the poem *Song of Myself* (1855), praised the 'reality [of] materialism', relating it to the material elements upon which the lexicographer, chemist, mariners, geologist, mathematician, and Whitman himself, experienced life.[354]

[350] Carey, *Orestes A. Brownson: American Religious Weathervane* (Grand Rapids: WIlliam B. Eerdmans, 2004), 63–96.
[351] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature; Addresses, and Lectures* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1849), 323.
[352] *Columbian Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine*. (Dawn B. Sova, *Critical Companion to Edgar Allan Poe: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 423.
[353] Edgar Allan Poe and Author Gordon Pym, *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, Revised Edition, vol. 4 (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1884), 339.
[354] Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 1st ed. (Brooklyn, New York, 1855), 28–29.

Many authors continued to employ this nuanced interpretation of 'materialism'. However, in the subsequent decades, 'materialism' increasingly became used in a derogatory fashion. Even Emerson, over time, came to relate the word to vulgar associations. His shift in perspective (examined in the Chapter 12) is a reminder that the ideas people hold, and likewise, the concept of 'materialism', are not static notions—they change often in reaction to, or influence by, external stimuli.

Chapter Eight

Regulating an Industrialising Society: 'Materialism' as an Assimilative and Defensive Device

By the mid 1800s, there were a number of divergences in the meaning of 'materialism'. It had come to mean: a philosophical and scientific theory carried over from England and France; a corrupting focus on the outward, material aspects of life, often equated to 'money-getting' and the 'low business world'; and a more neutral connotation that esteemed the material (versus idealist or imaginary) aspects of a man-made world (i.e., art, literature, objects, social action). The writings of Brownson and Emerson had efficaciously extended 'materialism' from its roots in science and natural philosophy to a concept used to describe elements of an industrializing era.

Going forward, the journal articles and polemics of the day continued to extend the ideas associated with 'materialism', pushing forward the pejorative usage of the word. This occurred as the challenges of industrialisation and shifting social context increased the perceived threats to social order. In this era, speech acts extended 'materialism' from its Renaissance and Enlightenment heritage in

which it was viewed as a danger to the Church, a threat to 'natural religion',[355] and a cause of 'impiety, gluttony, drunkenness, luxury and all kinds of intemperance';[356] it was instead framed as a 'danger' that threatened 'the rights of man' in America.[357] Equated to a focus on material progress and the acquisition of the 'almighty dollar', social commentators and clergy blamed 'materialism' for contributing to the perpetuation of slavery, exploiting workers, corrupting politicians, proliferating the vices of the city, inspiring selfish pursuits, and undermining democracy.

This section will highlight the two discursive modes of 'materialism': as part of the elites' desire to maintain social order it was used either as i) an assimilative weapon; and/or ii) a defensive ploy. 'Materialism' formed a part of the social reformists' assimilative methods by being used to describe inappropriate and unrespectable ways of life. It acted as an epithet that the middling class wanted to avoid, resulting in the reinforcement of their value system. It also formed a part of the intellectual and religious elites' defensive methods for ideas or behaviours that the elite judged as a threat to the 'common good', which in reality was an attempt to prevent status deprivation. Similar to the delegitimizing tactics used by the philosophers of the Renaissance and

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[355] Joseph Berington, *Letters on Materialism and Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind, Addressed to Dr. Priestley* (London: Printed for G. Robinson, 1776), 23.
[356] Walter Charleton, trans., *Epicurus's Morals, Collected Partly out of His Own Greek Text, in Diogenes Laertius, And Partly out of the Rhapsodies of Marcus Antoninus, Plutarch, Cicero, & Seneca. And Faithfully Englished* (London: Printed by W. Wilson for Henry Herringman, 1656), Preface, "An Apologie for Epicurus", Preface: ii–iii.
[357] Theodore Parker, "A Sermon on the Dangers Which Threaten the Rights of Man in America, Preached at the Music Hall, on Sunday, July 2, 1854," in *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker : Discourses of Slavery, Vol II*, ed. Frances Power Cobbe, vol. 6 (London: Trübner & Co., 1863), 130.

Enlightenment eras, the elites accused threatening elements and social groups of 'materialism'.

'Materialism' and the Perils of Progress

America was primed for discursive power: with no king and no officially imposed state religion, the elite struggled to employ effective mechanisms of sovereign control to temper disruptive changes. The freedom of the new democracy combined with its values of a Puritan-work ethic threatened to produce a society focused on pursuing self-interests. Manipulation of mankind, rather than benevolence, seemed to be the growing order of the day as men attempted to take advantage of America's industrialization: they wanted to get ahead and to acquire the growing mass of alluring possessions.

Francis Wayland (1769-1865), the president of Brown University and pastor of Rhode Island's First Baptist Church in America, opined in his sermon, *The Perils of Riches*, new possessions and accumulated riches merely resulted in 'temptation', 'foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.' He cautioned:'[T]he love of money is the root of all evil.'[358] It led to an 'insatiate striving for more' fed by a covetousness for prosperity and need to 'supply our exaggerated wants'.[359] It caused men to manipulate the market and to use their 'talent' to 'oppress' rather than bless fellow mankind: 'W]e wring

[358] Francis Wayland, *Sermons to the Churches* (New York : Sheldon, Blakeman, & Company; Boston : Gould & Lincoln; London : Trubner & Co., 1859), 206.
[359] Ibid., 211.

from the laboring masses as much of their dear bought earnings as we please, and thus enrich ourselves by impoverishing the community.'[360] To reign in the impending avarice, preachers, such as Wayland, called for moderation:

> We are…commanded not only to do with our might whatever our hand findeth to do, but to be in all things moderate in our desires, temperate, and self-denying.[361]

The 'love of money' called into question society's moral basis, yet it also created unpredictability in social hierarchies. It undermined the elite's ability to maintain their position and habitus. In response, the elite tried to either assimilate others to a middling-class value structure, or they employed debasement tactics. As part of this response, the idea that economic progress could advance a nation's civilization was turned on its head: economic progress was instead viewed as leading to a nation's demise.

The idea that economic progress and democracy could lead to a negative *or* a positive embracement of materialism was professed and popularized by Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) in his second volume of *Democracy in America* (published in 1840). His conceptualization of 'materialism', (which may have been a product of his own musings or picked up from his visit to American in 1831 or sourced from his American-based informants),[362] demonstrates how underlying interests can effect the denotation of 'materialism' as a negative versus positive force. Tocqueville, in writing *Democracy in America*, had a

[360] Ibid., 213.
[361] Ibid., 207.
[362] "The Materials for Tocqueville's Book," in: George Wilson Pierson, *Tocqueville in America*, John Hopkins Paperback edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 718–738.

vested interest in romanticising America's democratic experience: he thought that by studying America, Europe might learn how to move its men from having 'passions and opinions of revolution' to 'opinions and passions of democracy'.[363] Accordingly, in his writings Tocqueville stressed the negative consequences of materialism in Europe: the encouragement of 'a taste for physical gratification…if it becomes excessive, soon disposes men to believe that all is matter only; and materialism in its turn, hurries them [on] with made impatience to these same delights.'[364] Yet when he applied the concept to America, he reframed 'materialism' as a potentially virtuous force. He analyzed the interaction of America's civil society and democracy, contending that unlike European 'democratic' countries, America, because of its moral system that encouraged 'the sensuality of the public [to take] a moderate and tranquil course', would be able to keep its 'materialism' in check:

> Rich men who live amid democratic nations are…more intent on providing for their smallest wants then for their extraordinary enjoyments; they gratify a number of petty desires without indulging in any great irregularities of passion….
>
> [America's] principle of equality [does not] leads men away in the pursuit of forbidden enjoyments, but… absorbs them wholly in quest of those which are allowed. By these means a kind of virtuous materialism may ultimately be established in the world, which would not corrupt, but enervate, the soul….[365]

The reality on the ground, however, as described by Wayland and other religious advocates and social reformers, was that America was struggling to

[363] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. John C. Spencer, trans. Henry Reeve, vol. 2 (New York: J. & H.G. Langley, 1841), 272; See also "Preface", viii-xi .
[364] Ibid., 2:154.
[365] Ibid., 2:140–141.

control the negative repercussions of the acquisition of wealth. It was compromising their central modes of indoctrination: religion and the family. Charles Loring Brace (1826-1890), the founder of the Children Aid's Society in New York,[366] demurred in 1853 that American's home-life had become 'hollow': 'selfishness and coldness' ruled in families; children sough to 'get rid of it as early as possible'. The youth's 'hankering after exciting pleasures' and 'aversion to the simple and pure enjoyments of home' ate away at family life. Americans were 'not a happy people'. 'Materialism—the passion for money-making and excitement' was to blame. He, like others, described the remedy as 'something more genial and social and unselfish': 'a piety which prompts [and takes pleasure in] self-sacrifices'.[367]

Just as Tocqueville advanced interests through his musing about 'materialism', these advocates and reformers used the 'truth' that a 'love of money' caused social ills to support the implementation of reform movements. The shifts in the American social, economical, and political landscape—the immigration, the poverty, the exploitation of labourers, the rise of popular politics, etc.—were phrased in discourse in a way that justified and further fuelled reformists' actions. They *had to do* something to curb the enervating consequences of America's economic progress. Spiritual rebirth of their beneficiaries, renewal of

[366] Francesco Cordasco, "Brace, Charles Loring," *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, February 2000), http://www.anb.org/articles/15/15-00083.html.
[367] Charles Loring Brace, "Home Life in Germany," *The Literary World*, June 4, 1853, 458, American Periodicals Series II.

the family, and social justice in general became the redeeming goal.[368] Within this melee, the negative and pejorative quality that 'materialism' had gained in the Enlightenment era became reinforced, rather than the 'virtuous materialism' Tocqueville envisioned or the more neutral application of the word Emerson had inspired. The word became used as part of the elite's discursive mechanism of control.

'Materialism' as an Instrument of Assimilative Reforms

Theodore Parker was a key reformer whose lectures and sermons helped to solidify associations of 'materialism' with the condemnable behaviours of an industrialising society. Parker is often claimed as being the most influential minister in mid-nineteenth century America: he had the largest free church in America, with approximately two percent of the Boston population attending every Sunday; his lectures given across the country were listened to by approximately 50,000 people per year; and he influenced many prominent social activists, writers, intellectuals, and politicians, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Louisa May Alcott, William Lloyd Garrison, and Abraham Lincoln.[369]

As a Transcendentalist, Parker combined social reforms with a desire to perfect the nation and the soul of men. He wanted to instil in humanity a desire

[368] "The Rise of Social Work," in: Bremner, *From the Depths: The Discovery of Poverty in the United States*, 46–66; Smith-Rosenberg, *Religion and the Rise of the American City*, 278–281.
[369] Dean Grodzins, *American Heretic : Theodore Parker and Transcendentalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), xi–x.

towards divine inspiration and the acquisition of wisdom. He concluded that a properly guided inward life 'towards God' would correct mankind's outward deeds. Society was being ruined by 'the low morals of trade, of the public press;…poverty, intemperance, and crime;… depravity [in] political parties,…the slavery we still tolerate and support.' Society needed 'piety'.[370]

From the late 1840s until the American Civil War (1861-1865), Parker attempted to bring about 'piety' and reforms in society through his sermons and publications. In these discourses, he used the concept of 'materialism' to either support assimilative reforms or as a defense mechanism to push back against perceived social and political ills.

For Transcendentalists and the majority of elite in New England, the idealized state of society was one in which: 'universal principles of rights' were upheld; [371] where every man as a consumer and a producer could 'add something to the common wealth' rather than be a slave to debt or a slave to another man;[372] where piety was achieved through 'intellect', 'moral sense', and 'affections';[373] where 'true thrift', was realized through spending 'on the higher plane, to invest

[370] Theodore Parker, "A Sermon of the Spiritual Condition of Boston. Preached at the Melodeon, on Sunday, February 18, 1849," in *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker: Discourses of Social Science*, ed. Frances Power Cobbe, vol. 7 (London: Trübner & Co., 1864), 159–160.
[371] Theodore Parker, "The Nebraska Questions: Some Thoughts on the New Assault upon Freedom in America, and the General State of the Country in Relation Thereunto Set Forth in a Discourse Preached at the Music Hall, in Boston, on Sunday, February 12, 1854," in *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker : Discourses of Slavery*, ed. Frances Power 1822-1904 Cobbe, vol. 5 (London: Trübner & Co., 1863), 270.
[372] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1860), 71, 75.
[373] Parker, "A Sermon of the Spiritual Condition of Boston," 160.

and invest, with keener avarice…in spiritual creation, and not in augmenting animal existence';[374] and where wealth was 'mental' and 'moral', not based on the dollar.[375]

Under the assimilative reform approach, these elements of life were elevated, framed as being more superior, and were to be embraced. By following this advice, members in society could achieve perfection of the soul, and the nation could achieve its God inspired destiny. Thus, those elements the Transcendentalists and elite saw as affecting their ideal state of society and humankind were classified as 'materialistic' and were to be avoided. These elements reflected the beliefs that had been spread in previous decades about the corruptibility of wealth. They also often aligned with the inappropriate values the emerging millionaire merchant class were believed to exemplify—a view that narrowly defined the millionaire's life as resting upon a 'love for money' and pursuit of wealth. Thus, even when using assimilative tactics, an underlying debasement was occurring, which in turn encouraged the retention of social hierarchies: rather than striving for the immoral, materialistic life of a millionaire, people were encouraged to strive for the more honest and virtuous life of the middling class.

Parker for example, framed 'mere materialism' as being a product of the 'drudgery of daily life' from which men would be emancipated if they had

[374] Emerson, *The Conduct of Life*, 102.
[375] Ibid., 84.

something *appropriate* 'to poetize and idealize', such as 'books, music, flowers...science, poetry, and art', and chiefly, 'affections' for their families.[376] Rich men's pursuits were deemed to merely perpetuated materialism:

> [Their] beautiful homes, with costly furniture, with sumptuous food, and "wine too good for the table of pontiffs,"…only thicken[ed] and gild[ed] the chain which binds the soul to earth.[377]

In the article, *The Political Destination of America* (1849), Parker advocated for people to remedy the 'affliction' of 'practical materialism'—the 'Excessive Love of Material Things'—by esteeming morals and intellect. Man had placed 'too much the charm of life in mere material things,—houses, lands, well spread tables, and elegant furniture,' and 'not enough in man, in virtue, wisdom, genius, religion, greatness of soul, and nobleness of life'.[378]

He opined that America lacked the class of men 'living on inherited wealth who devote their lives to politics, art, science, letters, and so are above the mere material elegance which surrounds them.' Rather, America's young men who inherited wealth 'very rarely turn to any thing so noble; they either convert their talents into gold, or their gold into furniture, wines, and confectionary.'

[376] Theodore Parker, "Of Love and the Affections," in *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker : Sermons and Prayers*, ed. Frances Power Cobbe, vol. 2 (London: Trübner & Co., 1879 [1852]), 68.
[377] ibid.
[378] Theodore Parker, "The Political Destination of America," in *The Massachusetts Quarterly Review*, ed. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker, and James Elliot Cabot, vol. 2, No. V — December, 1848 (Boston: Coolidge & Wiley, 1849), 24–25.

They fall pray to an 'offensive materialism' in which 'Manliness is postponed and wealth preferred.'[379]

As the above quotes demonstrate, in his use of 'materialism' Parker reinforced and expanded upon the polarization of 'materialistic' versus 'non-materialistic' elements of life. 'Materialism' became directly associated with indulgences and acquisitive wealth, often linked to the rising merchant class. Brownson reiterated this, describing the 'follies of our materialistic age' as that which 'places the good of the body above every good, and glorifies the commercial speculator who succeeded in laying the Atlantic Telegraph as a rival Messiah'.[380]

Non-materialistic behaviour became associated with: virtue; wisdom; the things in life that could inspire intellectual growth (books, music, science); an appreciation for nature and art; the fostering of affection and love within the family; and the use of talents for 'noble' ends. These associations reflected the musings of the intellectual elite of New England and specifically the Transcendentalists who wanted nature, poetry, and scholarship appreciated, and brotherly and family love embraced. By putting these elements in the 'non-materialism' category and the value of wealth in the 'materialism' category, they elevated their own status and cultural capital to be morally superior to the rising merchant class. Additionally, by advocating for people to nurture

[379] Ibid., 25–26.
[380] Orestes Augustus Brownson, "Review: An Exposition of the Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle," in *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, vol. VI, Third Series (London: Catholic Publishing and Bookselling Company, Ltd., 1858), 519.

brotherly and family love they were ensuring that the system of indoctrination would be upheld and respected.

In advocating against the pursuit of wealth, however, social reformists had to be careful to not denounce it outright. The country's progress rested on industrious behaviour. The envisioned solution to the poverty and vices of society that social reformist sought to resolve was to emancipate people so that they could be self-sufficient. Elements that Parker and other Transcendentalists idealised—universality of freedom and equality—were bound to promoting prosperity. As Parker described, America's unparalleled 'abundance of material comforts' and 'the desire for those things…perform[ed] an important part in the divine economy of the Human Race'. Its 'good effects' were evident: 'in two generations the wild Irishman becomes a decent citizen, orderly, temperate, and intelligent.' It allowed people to 'realise our great national Idea…[of] Unalienable Rights of man.'[381]

Additionally, to call into question wealth would call into question the American truth system. This system was vested in the belief that America needed to embrace its 'manifest destiny' to demonstrate the 'immutable truth and beneficence of God'.[382] However, people also believed the rhetoric that the nation could be ruined by too much acquisition of wealth. Accordingly, similar to the conundrum that Evangelical preachers such as Wayland faced, Parker

[381] Parker, "The Political Destination of America," 29-30.
[382] O'Sullivan, "The Great Nation of Futurity," 430.

also had to walk a fine line in encouraging work but discouraging the pursuit of wealth. Parker responded by polarizing wealth: he separated the 'offensive materialism' of lustful wealth, which corrupted society, from the 'honest' wealth, which stimulated advancements. As he described:

> It is a great merit for a nation to secure the largest amount of useful and comfortable and beautiful things which can be honestly earned, and used with profit to the body and soul of man. Only when wealth becomes an Idol, and material abundance is made the end, not the means, does the love of it become an evil. No nation was ever too rich, or over thrifty, though many a nation has lost its soul by living wholly for the senses.[383]

'Materialism' was thus selectively and subjectively applied so that it renounced behaviours seen to threaten the social hierarchy. If merchants came into power, the ideals and values supported by the elite, especially the religious and intellectual elite, might lose further ground causing more social disorder, and lose their higher status in society. Like the older gentry-value system, their vision of society might die with them. This was a fight to determine the values with which Americans would be indoctrinated and the values that would guide the country's progress.

'Materialism' as a Weapon of Defensive Ploys

The Northern state elites also wielded 'materialism' productively as they attempted to defend against elements of society that threatened to disrupt their vision of America, such as slavery. They hurled accusations of 'materialism' at

[383] Parker, "The Political Destination of America," 29.

those members who defended and refused to change from these 'wicked' behaviours. Similar to the Enlightenment era, by debasing these aspects of a transitioning society, the elite were in essence attempting to protect their truth and value systems.

Parker, in a lecture protesting the Fugitive Slave Law, branded the 'monied interests' of the emerging capitalist and political elite with allegations of 'materialism'. Slavery was one of the major issues that divided America. In 1850 the Fugitive Slave Law was passed, which legislated that all escaped slaves had to be return to their masters even if found in the free Northern states. Northerners protested. Many assumed there was a conspiracy theory of 'slave power' in which America's political body was being controlled by rich Southern slaveholders. Many denounced the law, arguing that it undermined liberty and their confidence in democracy working 'for the people'.[384]

The law, however, also undermined the dominance of the Northern gentility over American ideals: rather than New England enforcing 'moral laws', '[t]he famous town of Boston' had become the law's 'hound'. 'The learning of the universities, the culture of elegant society, the acumen of lawyers, the majesty of the Bench, the eloquence of the Christian pulpit, the stoutness of Democracy,

[384] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Fugitive Slave Law, Address to Citizens of Concord, 3 May, 1851," in *Miscellanies*, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson, vol. 11, The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston ; New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1903), 183–184.

the respectability of the Whig party [were] all combined to kidnap [the poor black boy].'[385]

Allegations of 'materialism' tarnished the politics, man-made laws, and monied interests associated with slave-power. Parker, a leader of Boston's abolitionist movement that combated the Fugitive Slave Law,[386] blamed the self-interested merchant class for maintaining slavery,[387] advocating that the law 'was the result of a union of slave power of the South with the money power of the North.'[388] He blamed the 'national materialism'—its 'submission to money'—for an 'indifference to great universal principles of right'. The Whig and Democratic parties 'love[d] slavery' because it was 'a tool for making money'.[389] The corrupted merchant class 'controlled political affairs'. Even Congress was in their pockets: petitions relative to business gained Congress' attention, but petitions regarding the 'rights of men' were silenced and refused consideration.[390]

In the sermon, *The Consequences of an Immoral Principal and the False Ideas of Life* (1854), Parker struck at the immoral man-made laws. He claimed: the

[385] Ibid., 185.
[386] Philip F Gura, "Transcendentalism and Social Reform," *American History Online*, July 31, 2012, http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/first-age-reform/essays/transcendentalism-and-social-reform.
[387] Theodore Parker, "A Sermon of Merchants. Preached at the Melodeon, on Sunday, November 22, 1846," in *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker: Discourses of Social Science*, ed. Frances Power Cobbe, vol. 7 (London: Trübner & Co., 1864), 16–19.
[388] Theodore Parker, "The Chief Sins of the People - A Sermon Delivered at the Melodeon, Boston, on Fast Day, April 10, 1851," in *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker: Discourses of Social Science*, ed. Frances Power Cobbe, vol. 7 (London: Trübner & Co., 1864), 272.
[389] Parker, "The Nebraska Question," 270.
[390] Parker, "A Sermon of Merchants. Preached at the Melodeon, on Sunday, November 22, 1846," 19.

belief that '[t]here is no higher law', was merely a 'proclamation of objective atheism; it is the selfish materialism of Hobbes, Hume, of De la Mettrie, and Helvetius, gone to seed'. It had led American politicians to '[mock] at the law of nature and the constitution of mind…. [T]he politician has no objective restrain. No God is to check the momentum of his ambition.'[391] His speech act justified the North's 'duty' to break 'an immoral law'.;[392] He was reasserting their supremacy over defining American morality

Parker's uses of 'materialism' as a defensive tactic are but a few examples. Over the course of the late 1800s and 1900s, as Part IV documents, others took up this line of discourse. It is during these decades that we see the word's pejorative quality solidified in American colloquialism.

[391] Theodore Parker, "A Sermon on the Consequences of an Immoral Principle and False Idea of Life, Preached at the Music Hall in Boston, on Sunday, November 26, 1854," in *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker : Discourses of Slavery, Vol II*, ed. Frances Power Cobbe, vol. 6 (London: Trübner & Co., 1863), 205.
[392] Emerson, "The Fugitive Slave Law," 186.

Part IV

The Rise of ‘Materialism’ in America: Detailing the Advancement and Refutation of a Mode of Delegitimizing Discourse

Chapter Nine

The Industrialization of America and Shifting Accusations of 'Materialism': New Threats, New Meanings, and New Directions

In the late nineteenth century, 'materialism' and its derivatives continued to resonate and expand: this mode of delegitimizing discourse spread from being used to advance the idiosyncratic interests of the Transcendentalists to being used by other intellectual and religious elite. Social critics directed accusations of 'materialism' at different groups—both the working classes and the business elite—and used the epithet to denounce various issues. This delegitimizing language increased as the sense of social disorder increased.

Chapters 7 and 8 alluded to the social challenges and shifting context that contributed to this—the shifts in the political and religious landscape, immigration, Westward expansion, and industrialization. In the succeeding decades, these challenges and the sense of social disorder only continued to escalate, especially as rapid urbanization intensified the manifestations of distressing conditions. Mass consumerism also started to challenge social hierarchies as class lines once defined by what one could consume became blurred. The polemics of the era decried 'materialism' to be one of the 'dangers of the age'. The focus on controlling the material world was purported to have

come at the expense of society's moral and ethical codes. Augmented by the significant increase in literacy rates and the proliferation of daily newspapers, magazines, and books, this became a prevalent 'truth'. The personification of 'materialism' as a corrupting influence on society was once again reinforced.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, critics correspondingly used 'materialism' predominately in a defensive mode: their criticisms were aimed at debasing the behaviours and ideas that threatened or perpetuated disturbances to the social order. As the 1900s progressed, and America's economic power and consumer markets grew, social reformers took up 'materialism' as part of their assimilative discursive tactics aimed at containing middle-class consumerism.

Important to note, however, is that there was also a reaction against the accusations. This section will extend upon the concept of delegitimizing discourse by recognising how 'the other' responded to the accusations. Analysing these responses illustrates how a delegitimized group might restore or protect its own status or social identity. This dynamism has been alluded to throughout this thesis (e.g., in the way philosophers and scientists navigated allegations of materialism levelled at them). I have chosen to examine this dimension of delegitimizing discourse in depth in this segment because the discourse of this era succinctly captures the three dominant tactics. These tactics, sometimes used in conjunction with one another, included attempts to: *sanction* ideas or elements associated with 'materialism' by 'baptising' them or

modifying them so they aligned with established legitimized ideals; *deflect* the accusation of 'materialism' towards another social group; and *vindicate* ideas by redefining or clarifying concepts, often with the purpose of legitimizing new beliefs.

By looking at the perspectives of all those making moral judgements—the accuser and those accused of 'materialism'—the importance of the wider social context comes to the fore. At times, refutations of 'materialism' were successful, and at other times they were not successful. Influencing these outcomes were not only the power dynamics occurring within America, but also the global political and economic scene: Marxism, the World Wars, the Depression, and the Cold War. Although this chapter will continue to focus primarily on the use of 'materialism' within America, it is important to hold these external conditions in mind as they also influence the meanings associated with 'materialism' and the American response to 'materialism'.

Correspondingly, in this section I document the story of 'materialism' from the late nineteenth century to the twenty-first century, noting how it is a story shaped by a shifting American landscape, power contestations, and the global context. I highlight the tensions that surrounded 'materialism' in three debated topics: educational reform (Chapter 10), the labour movement (Chapter 11), and the pursuit of wealth and material goods (Chapters 12 and 13). 'Materialism', in each of these debates, was a controversial issue: 'materialism'

posed a growing concern that challenged the truths and values the intellectual elite, religious leaders, politicians, and writers wanted to uphold; yet, at other times, 'materialism' aligned with other beliefs, specifically American ideals of progress, economic dominance, and the freedom of the individual.

Importantly, within these debates and efforts to legitimize views about 'materialism', I note, in Chapter 13, key moments in which the intellectual and religious elite chose and defined the lines delineating: 'non-materialistic' versus 'materialistic' behaviours; appropriate and inappropriate uses of wealth; and justifiable and unjustifiable consumption. In Chapter 14, I document how 'materialism' wavered between being a private vice and a public virtue pending the sociocultural dynamics and the higher geo-political agendas. I make visible the moral subjectivity and historically constructed divisions that have informed our current day ideas of 'materialism'. I articulate what I propose is the social purpose that underlies these moral judgements: the safeguarding of social hierarchies and value and truth system. I conclude this section by situating the discourse so we can understand how these moral judgements fed into the current consumer behaviour literature.

Accordingly, to start Part IV, the remainder of this chapter will describe the American context against which the meanings and 'truths' of 'materialism' unfolded.

I. The Shifting Context and the Threats to the Social Order

America, during the latter half of the 1800s, faced the challenges associated with moving from an agricultural, rural, traditional society where the family, church, and an enlightened natural aristocracy ensured moral and social order, to an urbanizing, industrial powerhouse where governance fell into the hands of corrupt politicians and business men.

Urbanization, which increased substantially, brought with it fundamental changes to America's social, cultural, political, and economical landscapes. In 1820, the urban population of America stood at 5 percent, by 1840 that rose to 8.5 percent, 16.1 percent in 1860, 22.6 per cent in 1880, and by 1900, it reached 32.9 percent. By the 1920s, the urban population would surpass the rural population.[393]

As America's population more than doubled between 1880 and 1925, primarily through immigration, the image of a Christian America vested in Protestantism was called into question. Unlike their 18th century predecessors, the immigrants predominately from Ireland and Germany tended to be Catholic, rather than Protestant, causing the number of Catholics to outpace the number of

[393] Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, S.N.D. North, Director, *A Century of Population Growth From the First Census of the United States to the Twelfth 1790-1900* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), Table 4, Page 15; "Series A 52-72. Population in Urban and Rural Territory, by Size of Place: 1790-1970" in: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*, vol. Part 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1975), 11–12.

Protestants.[394] In Boston, a census of churchgoers in 1882, for example, revealed that more than 40 percent were Roman Catholics.[395]

The 'blight' of immigration was further seen to undermine city politics as political 'Bosses', such as William M. Tweed (1823-1878) of New York City's Tammany Hall, assumed and shored-up political power through a system of nepotism, cronyism, and a de facto welfare system. Under the bosses' political-machine system, political loyalty was exchanged for patronage in the form of extralegal interventions, including access to jobs, business opportunities, and lucrative project contracts, the latter including fraudulent kickbacks. The poorer immigrant community became reliant on these kickbacks as the bosses would reinvest part of the proceeds in the community by providing, for example, welfare support often in the form of food hampers at Christmas, fuel, jobs, or donations to charitable organizations. In a time when the idea of a welfare state did not exist and the poorer immigration population increased, the 'philanthropic' city boss became a powerful, entrenched force.[396]

This was the era of the Gilded Age. While politics controlled the city landscape, corporates controlled the nation's progress and held the government in its hands. As one political critic noted, 'the boss and privileged

[394] Keith J. Bell, "German Immigrants," *Immigration to the United States*, 2015, http://immigrationtounitedstates.org/519-german-immigrants.html; Jay P. Dolan, *The Irish Americans: A History*, 1 edition (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010), ix–xi.
[395] Hartley, *Evangelicals at a Crossroads*, 66–67.
[396] Tyler Anbinder, "Tweed, William Magear," *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, February 2000), http://www.anb.org/articles/04/04-01002.html.

interests…controlled the party'. The spoils system caused employees' to be committed to 'the person who appointed them rather than to the city'. 'Inefficiency and dishonesty' resulted. Voters' indifference set in. People became blindly led by 'material pursuits, in trade, commerce, and money-getting.' America was getting a government 'as good…as we deserve.'[397]

The 'material pursuits' and 'money getting'—commonly associated with 'materialism' during this era—were the disconcerting results of America's unprecedented economic growth. During the latter part of the 1800s, America developed a geographically dispersed system of transportation and communication, leading to significant expansions in trade, industrial development, employment, and wealth creation opportunities. Between 1860 and 1880, the number of miles of railroad track tripled, and would triple again by 1920.[398] Commercial farming and a national market for manufactured goods became feasible.

Yet the unsound federal monetary policies, over-speculation, the resulting downturns of depressions, such as the Panic of 1873 (1873-1879) and 1893 (1893-1897), and the challenges merchants faced with maintaining adequate prices for goods in over-flooded markets, led to a push by the emerging business elite for measures that would protect their economic investments.

[397] Frederic Clemenson Howe, *The Modern City and Its Problems* (New York ; Chicago ; Boston: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), 50.
[398] Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!: An American History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 513–514.

They sought new corporate structures that would allow them to smooth out volatilities and, as they advocated, ensure America's continued prosperity. They argued that the most efficient way to advance industrial America was to eliminate competition. As a consequence, the business elite formed monopolies, commonly called trusts, which integrated vertically and expanded horizontally. This led to a few firms and their 'captains of industry'—or as disparagingly named, the 'robber barons'—dominating major parts of the economy. The captains of industry—Cornelius Vanderbilt (1794-1877), Jim Fiske (1835-1872), Jay Gould (1836-1892), Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919), J.P. Morgan (1837-1913) and J. D. Rockefeller (1839-1937)—were commonly associated with the ideal of the self-made man. Their prosperity, supported by the popular arguments of Social Darwinism, encouraged the acceptance of the government's *lassiez-faire* policy: Big Business was merely an evolutionary achievement; government intervention would reduce society to a more suboptimal and primitive state.[399] If the government allowed the laws of supply and demand to operate freely, anyone, it was said, could succeed in the marketplace. It was a matter of survival of the fittest.[400]

The resulting lack of accountability of the robber barons, however, led to many critiques of their 'monied' power, especially when they competed to build mansions and held lavish balls during eras in which the rest of the nation was

[399] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 535–536.
[400] Frank Lambert, "The 'Gospel of Wealth' and the 'Social Gospel': Industrialization and the Rise of Corporate America," in *Religion in American Politics: A Short History* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 75; Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 515–516.

suffering through economic depressions.[401] Inequality and enormous income disparities became the norm. As Eric Foner documents, 'By 1890, the richest 1 percent of Americans received the same total income as the bottom half of the population and owned more property than the remaining 99 percent.'[402]

Indeed, as the growing gap between the rich and the poor made obvious, the government was not unbiased in its *lassiez-faire* approach: it might allow the corporate elite to do as they pleased but not the protesting labourers. For example, in 1877 when the railroad workers went on strike to protest a pay cut and paralyzed rail traffic across the nation for almost 45 days, President Rutherford B. Hayes used militia units to restore order. When the troops who were sent to Pittsburgh fired on strikers, killing twenty people, the workers responded by burning the city's railroad yards and destroying property worth millions of dollars. To quell the uprising and to prevent its spread to other areas, troops were sent from city to city until the workers were 'put down by force.'[403]

Although the unions and workers were continually supressed, their quest for rights continued, culminating in 1866 with an unprecedented year of labour unrest. In that year, there were 1,432 work stoppages caused by strikes,

[401] Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age : From the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York ; London: New York University Press, 1984), 34–85; Matthew Josephson, *The Robber Barons : The Great American Capitalists, 1861-1901* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934).
[402] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 520.
[403] Ibid., 538.

membership of the Knights of Labour union increased from 104,000 in 1885 to 702,000 in 1886, and in the week of May 1st, hundreds of thousands of workers across the nation went on strike to protest for an 8-hour work day. The latter resulted in the Haymarket Affair, an incident in which, out of retaliation for the police killing several protestors the previous day, an unknown culprit threw a bomb into a crowd at the Haymarket Square killing a policeman. The panicked police, opening fire, shot several of their own force and bystanders. In response, the courts found a number of foreign-born protestors 'guilty', and although the validity of this verdict was called into question by the unions and labourers, the protestors were hanged.[404] The business elite, furthermore, used the Haymarket Affair as proof that the labour movement was a radical and dangerous force. In popular discourse, the unions, the immigrant working class, and their labour protests were viewed as reflecting an unwanted infiltration of socialism and anarchism, fostering vices, and professing a godless Marxist materialism. These 'foreign elements' were reviled as oppositional to American ideals and thus had to be suppressed.[405]

Yet the trend of labour unrest and concern around workers' rights and lives continued to increase as America's economy shifted from the agricultural nation of the pre-Civil War era to an industrial powerhouse. America's number of exploited and disgruntled workers became a significant and sustained force of

[404] Ibid., 538, 543–545; Hartley, *Evangelicals at a Crossroads*, 83.
[405] Thekla Ellen Joiner, *Sin in the City : Chicago and Revivalism, 1880-1920* (Columbia ; London: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 30.

the American landscape. By 1880 the majority of the workforce worked in non-farming jobs, and by 1890 more than two-thirds of Americans worked for wages rather than being independent farmers, business, or craft shop owners.[406] The entrepreneurial middling class began to be transformed into a segmented 'white-collar' middle class of waged professionals. Between 1900 and 1930, white-collar employment rose from 17.6 percent of the workforce to 29.4 percent.[407] A lower-level middle-class of managers, office workers, and salespeople formed as new types of organizations gave rise to new modes of employment. Standing in contrast were the upper-middle class of graduate-degree professionals (architects, doctors, lawyers, economists, engineers, university professors, etc.). Yet these class lines were at times also blurred as a highly skilled blue-collar factory worker, although treated as part of a lower labour class, could often earn and spend as much as the lower white-collar worker.[408] Furthermore, the lower classes could tap into consumer credit and instalment plan schemes to purchase the goods associated with a higher-class lifestyle. Purchases of big-ticket, affluent items, such as cars, pianos, appliances, furniture, nearly doubled from 1898 to 1916. By 1924, more than 80 percent of appliances, 90 percent of pianos, 70 percent of furniture, 75 percent of radios,

[406] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 512–513.
[407] Gary S. Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (Columbia University Press, 2013), 18.
[408] C. Wright Mills, *White Collar; the American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 20–28; Cross, *An All-Consuming Century*, 18-10.

80 percent of phonographs, and almost 75 percent of cars were bought on instalment plans.[409]

Additionally, as sole-proprietor establishments declined in number, many of America's industries, especially its manufacturing industry, became dominated by large-scale bureaucratic structures. By the early 1900s, the majority of the factory workforce was concentrated in large businesses with more than 250 employees.[410] These economic shifts in turn spawned the growth of industrial cities, such as New York and Chicago. By 1913, America's production capacity superseded that of Great Britain, France, and Germany combined, producing one-third of the world's industrial output. The war economies further perpetuated the concentration of American industry and increased America's dominance as a world producer.[411]

And as America's production capacity grew, so did its consumer markets. Although America had a growing consumer market emerging by the 1800s, this market was fairly limited in comparison to Europe.[412] Additionally, there was an undercurrent of sentiment that preached against the corrupting influence of emulating European style and purchasing European goods. America had a nationalistic desire to develop its own consumer markets. Yet it was not until

[409] Cross, *An All-Consuming Century*, 29, 116.
[410] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 512.
[411] "America's Gilded Age 1870-1890," and "An Urban Age and a Consumer Society," in Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 510–545, 584–600; Robert Higgs, *The Transformation of the American Economy, 1865-1914 : An Essay in Interpretation* (New York: John Willey & Sons, Inc, 1971).
[412] Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

the latter half of the 1800s that America had the capacity to build stores and to produce goods capable of rivalling those of Europe.[413] In the late 1850s and 1860s, for instance, New York developed its shopping avenues. R. H. Macy founded a 'fancy' dry goods store, using advertising ploys and low prices to build a thriving business. Rival merchants, such as B. Altman and Company, started to transform their musty fabric shops into 'palaces of dreams', building large, multi-level stores with widows that exposed those passing by to the 'sensuous fabrics' that lay inside.[414] In 1877, John Wanamaker opened a 'new kind of store' in Philadelphia. Covering two acres, employing more than 1,000 workers, and attracting more than 70,000 visitors on its opening day, Wanamaker's 'department store' remained the world's largest department store until the 1920s.[415]

Catalogues also began to appear in the mid-1800s, extending the mass of consumer goods to rural and small-town customers. By the late 1890s, harnessing the power of visual representations, Sears and Roebuck shifted the focus of catalogues from written information, speed, and distance towards

[413] Peter N. Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire* (London: Routledge, 2001), 40–43.
[414] Sharon Zukin, *Point of Purchase: How Shopping Changed American Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 114–115.
[415] Gary Scott Smith, *The Search for Social Salvation: Social Christianity and America, 1880-1925* (Lexington Books, 2000), 245–247.

cultural appeals of style, status, and fashion. The company had tapped into the emulative desires of the growing consumer market.[416]

When Henry T. Ford introduced the assembly line in 1913, the possibility of more, lower-cost consumer goods became a reality. The 'Machine Age' became a dominating facet of American society: the machines led to productivity and technological innovations, which in turn gave ordinary citizens cars, telephones, electrical appliances, and ready-to-wear fashions. European consumers, in part because of the effects of the World Wars, would have to wait until the mid-1900s for this democratization of goods.[417] The roles between Europe and America became reversed: America became the defining economic power. By 1929, America produced more than 40 percent of the world's manufactured goods.[418]

As the consumer goods developed, so too did the selling and advertising modes. They expanded in the 1890s through the use of shop floor and window displays, outdoor posters, and billboards.[419] They extended into the home and personal lives of Americans through catalogues and vivid ads in print magazines, to radio infomercials in the early 1920s, and finally through

[416] Simon J. Bronner, "Reading Consumer Culture," in *Consuming Visions : Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (New York ; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 35–36.
[417] Cross, *An All-Consuming Century*, 17–27.
[418] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 663.
[419] William R. Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 39–71.

television commercials in the 1950s.[420] Ad agencies tapped into these vehicles, creating a backbone to support the growth of America's consumer market. America's first ad agency opened in 1870s; in comparison, the first French agency opened in 1922.[421] These agencies changed the purpose of ads from merely pricing announcements to vehicles that promoted new products and their benefits. They created identifiable brands. They gave meaning to consumption by visually demonstrating how goods could be used to create personal identities or to forge relationships.[422]

The development of consumer markets reinforced patterns of accumulation and display that were at times denounced as 'materialistic', while at other times endorsed as the 'foundations upon which the changing way of American life was built.'[423] In 1928, the French Economist, André Siegfried, commented that, '[i]n the last twenty-five or thirty years America has produced a new civilization' in which 'mass production and mass civilization' became the 'characteristic of the new American society.'[424]

As William Leach documents, America was the 'Land of Desire' in which the 'culture of consumer capitalism', despite opposition and dissent, took hold 'and

[420] Danny Goodwin, "Selling Stuff During the Golden Age of Radio," 2015, http://old-time.com/commercials/; Cross, *An All-Consuming Century*, 62–65, 100–103.
[421] Stearns, *Consumerism in World History*, 46.
[422] Cross, *An All-Consuming Century*, 33–38.
[423] Bronner, "Reading Consumer Culture," 30.
[424] André Siegfried, "The Gulf Between", *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1928) as quoted in: Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 665.

came to dominate and to reshape the American experience.'[425] By leveraging the readily growing market of extensive credit facilities, American consumers could create new identities. Democratic political participation was gradually replaced by consumer participation. The high voting rates of the 1890s, in which 80 percent of viable Americans voted, stagnated and declined: by 1920, fewer than 50 percent of the voting population cast a ballot.[426]

Rather than looking to governments to lead the progress of the country and to ensure social equality, Americans found the country's progress being led by business men and managers who found ways to increase productivity of workers, thereby enabling the production of more affordable goods for the masses. People in turn joined 'consumption communities' to create a feeling of belonging. As Gary Cross writes:

> Consumerism redefined democracy, creating social solidarities and opportunities for participation that transcended suffrage rights or political ideologies. A vision of a world of goods available to American citizens in large part replaced the old ideal of a republic of producers and challenged class, religion, and ethnicity as principles of political solitary.[427]

Democracy came to mean not merely 'equal rights under the law or common access to the political process but, more concretely, sharing with others in personal ownership and use of particular commodities.' Likewise, consumerism shifted liberty from being an 'abstract right to participate in public discourse or

[425] Leach, *Land of Desire*, 12.
[426] Ibid., 20.
[427] Ibid., 2.

free speech' to mean the right to realise personal pleasure and to express oneself through goods.[428]

Although this notion of a 'freedom of goods' was profoundly challenged by the Depression (1929-c.1941) and the wartime austerity measures imposed during America's participation in World War II (1941-1945), the involuntary asceticism of many Americans was a key contributed to the explosion of consumerism in the 1950s.

The Depression had resulted in years of hardship as unemployment spiked, rising from 3,2 percent in 1929 to almost 25 per cent in 1933. Throughout the 1930s, despite government reforms, unemployment rates did not drop below 14,3 percent.[429] There was an overall loss of confidence in the economy that spiralled into industrial downturns.[430] When the stock market crashed in October 1929, millions of families lost their life savings. By 1933, more than 11,000 of 24,000 banks failed. Gross investments precipitously declined: between 1929 to 1931, it decreased by approximately 35 percent year on year, so that by 1932 it totalled a mere $800 million in comparison to its 1929 level

[428] Ibid., 3.
[429] William Lerner, ed., *Historical Statistics of the United States¸ Colonial Times to 1970*, vol. Part 1 (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975), 126.
[430] Michael D. Bordo, Claudia Dale Goldin, and Eugene Nelson White, "The Defining Moment Hypothesis," in *The Defining Moment : The Great Depression and the American Economy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Michael D. Bordo, Claudia Dale Goldin, and Eugene Nelson White (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 6–10; Michael E. Parrish, *Anxious Decades : America in Prosperity and Depression¸ 1920-1941*, Norton Twentieth Century America Series (New York ; London: Norton, 1992).

of $16.2 billion. Between 1929 and 1933, consumer spending decreased by 18 percent and Gross National Production dropped by 29 percent.[431]

Yet these years of deprived consumerism and downward social status had merely nourished a deeper desire for consumer goods. The Depression had increased the government's role in society, yet once the economy recovered, American's sought a return to an economy governed by mass production and consumerism. The social welfare and relief programs implemented by the government's New Deal (1932-1940) under Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency (1933-1945), created a safety net, yet also bred a desire to return to a state of redeeming self-sufficiency and thus fostered an even greater 'individualistic' culture.[432] Americans adapted Roosevelt's wartime messages of 'freedom of want', which initially referred to an elimination of international trade barriers, to mean a freedom for the common man—that is, a protection from a recurrence of the conditions of the Depression.[433] A 'freedom of want' came to mean a protection of the 'standard of living of the American worker and farmer' and thus a freedom to consume.[434] Defending these freedoms played eventually into the rhetoric of the Cold War and was used to champion a quest for

[431] McElvaine, *The Great Depression*, 73–75; Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 690–693; "Unemployment Statistics during the Great Depression," *United States History*, 2015, http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1528.html.
[432] "Promises of More, 1930-1960" in Cross, *An All-Consuming Century*, 67–109.
[433] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 750–752.
[434] Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008), 124.

prosperity and individuals rights over the communistic ideal of economic equality.[435,]

Consequently, in the twentieth century, the Machine Age's mass production, mass distribution, and mass marketing increasingly defined and played the leading role in shaping American society.[436] America was viewed as the nation in which, from a 'moral point of view', their standard of living was a 'sacred acquisition, which they will defend at any price', and 'from a *political point of view*, it seems that the notion of efficiency of production is on the way to taking [precedence over] the very notion of liberty.'[437]

Yet this transition did not happen without opposition. Throughout its development, the consumer market and the interests that encouraged its progress were called into question for their moral influence on society.[438] These moral arguments pointed towards the ambiguities the unprecedented growth of consumer capitalism brought, but also to the threats new 'truths' and new definitions of liberty and democracy raised. They reflected the underlying

[435] Ibid., 124–129.
[436] Lizabeth Cohen, "Citizens and Consumers in the United States in the Century of Mass Consumption," in *The Politics of Consumption : Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America*, ed. M. J. Daunton and Matthew Hilton (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 203–22.
[437] André Siegfried, "The Gulf Between", *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1928) as quoted in: Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 665. (Formatting original.)
[438] Daniel Horowitz, *The Morality of Spending: Attitudes toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875-1940*, Elephant Paperbacks (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1992); Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979* (Amherst ; Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004); David E. Shi, *The Simple Life : Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

power shifts and social tensions that arose in the wake of consumerism's progress.

We can trace these dynamics by looking first at the latter half of the 1800s when, in reaction against the rise of Corporate America's power and intensified labour unrest, middle-class American reformers called for the national government to reform its croynistic and *laissez-faire* approach, and to assume a more regulatory function. Within their efforts to reform society, the reformers took up a battle against 'materialism'. As Samuel P. Hays summarised in his analysis, *The Response to Industrialism*:

> Materialism to such [social] leaders meant, not merely the excessive accumulation of wealth, the corruption in business and politics, the objection of businessmen college trustees to the views of college professors, or the measurement of success in terms of money, but more deeply the way in which the new industrial processes tended to impede the expression of individual responsibility and individual striving—the reduction of independent entrepreneurs to wage-earning cogs in bureaucratic industrial machines, the declining attention to religious and moral standards, the helplessness of those in poverty, and the threatening tendency of group struggle to diminish the influence of reason in public affairs. Materialism became the symbol of all the adverse consequences of industrialism.[439]

[439] Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914* (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 75–76.

II. Positioning 'Materialism' as A 'Danger of the Age' and Deceptive Degrader

As part of the reformer's attempts to instil order, 'materialism' and its derivatives were increasingly used in a defensive mode, applied to denounce those aspects of industrialisation and commercialisation gone awry. Starting in the late 1800s, the delegitimizing discourse hurled by reformers positioned 'materialism' as a 'danger of the age', popularly affiliating it with a 'false' life involving the worship of Mammon (i.e., wealth, profit, possessions) and Philistine behaviour (i.e., ignorant, unenlightened, and aesthetically unsophisticated).[440] Through social rhetoric, Parker's associations of 'materialism' with a corrupting merchant 'Yankee' class, the 'monied interests' of an industrialising and commercialising world, and the unethical behaviour of the Gilded Age politicians became further entrenched.

A lecture given by a Catholic bishop, Louis Heylen (1828-1863) at the St. Louis University in 1863, captured multiple themes that resonated in post Civil War writings.[441] He demarcated the 'predominant evil of the age' to be 'the materialistic spirit'. This 'practical [versus] theoretical' materialism 'places material interests and materialistic passions above the interests of the soul and

[440] "Mammon, N.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/113169; "Philistine, N. and Adj.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed April 18, 2015, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/142435.
[441] "Preface," in Louis Heylen, *The Progress of the Age, and The Danger of the Age: Two Lectures Delivered before the St. Xavier Conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Brotherhood in the Hall of St. Louis University* (Cincinnati: John P. Welsh, 1865).

claims of virtue.' 'Reason and religion' had become displaced in 'popular estimation' by 'material progress'.[442]

> The materialistic spirit has its temple in the counting-house, where it worships unceasingly at the shrine of the Almighty Dollar…. The *science* of materialism is the art of amassing wealth; its code of morals, physical enjoyment…. It creates despotism and cruelty in the higher ranks, dissatisfaction in the lower, restlessness everywhere. You may see its unwholesome workings in the recklessness which makes or squanders a fortune in a day; in rapacity, unchecked by any principle of charity or justice, in craft, cunning and deceit; in the faithless contract, and the gigantic fraud; in the revel which consumes in an hour what would suffice to feed and clothe the poor of a city. You may read it on the faded brow of youth, in the wasted morals of the factory, in the weakening of family ties…. Its heartlessness would make the poor, like the machines of its industry, mere producers to feed its luxury. Distress, murder, starvation follow in its wake.[443]
>
> Materialism, thus defined is the Danger of the Age.[444]

Although Heylen he did not '*condemn* material progress'—man should assert his God-given 'dominion over the elements' to fulfil the 'divine benediction'—he argued that priorities needed to change. 'Moral progress, religion, virtue should hold the first place in man's esteem: material progress and material interests should occupy a subordinate position.'[445] To continue with the current paradigm risked incurring materialism's 'destructive effects on civilization and national existence.' America was at risk of repeating the history of Rome,

[442] Ibid., 65-66.
[443] Ibid., 67–68. (Formatting original.)
[444] Ibid., 65.
[445] Ibid., 65–66. (Formatting original.)

Greece and Egypt, and falling prey to a 'seed of decadence'.[446,] Heylen, like others,[447] repeated Lord Byron's forewarnings:

> "There is a moral of all human tales,
> 'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past,
> First freedom, and then glory,—when that fails,
> Wealth, vice, corruption,—barbarism at last."[448, 449]

In subsequent years, speech acts repeated many of Heylen's ideas. Those who embodied a materialistic lifestyle would be described as being inferior to those who embodied a 'truer' life. They were 'philistines', and accused of contributing to 'barbarism' through their selfish pursuit of wealth, 'luxury, greatness and dominion'. They were contrasted against those who sought a life of 'dignified simplicity of character and manners'.[450]

We see these truths continue to resonate over half a century later in the work by Osias L. Schwarz, a lesser-known writer but a source of inspiration for the popular writer and activist Jack London (1876-1916).[451] In his essay, *General Types of Superior Men* (1916), Schwarz distinguished between the 'genuine superior man' who 'adopts the intellectual or moral sphere as his permanent

[446] Ibid., 71–73.
[447] William Barnet Phillips, *The Diamond Cross: A Tale of American Society* (New York: Hilton & Company Publishers ; Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co. ; St. Louis: J.F. Torrey & Co., 1866), 160–161; Luther T. Townsend, *Fate of Republics* (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1880), 215; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics : A Study of the Economic Relation between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1900), 24–25.
[448] Heylen, *The Progress of the Age*, 73.
[449] Poem quoted from Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), CVII: 964-967, 164).
[450] Phillips, *The Diamond Cross*, 160–161.
[451] Geoffrey Harpham, "Jack London and the Tradition of Superman Socialism," *American Studies* 16, no. 1 (March 1, 1975): 24–26.

place of abode' versus the 'pseudo-superior man' whose 'philistine pursuits' and 'sham intellectual pursuits' reflected his strivings for 'power, influence, popularity, political or economic leadership'. The 'pseudo-superior man', classified as a 'materialist', did not 'love knowledge, truth, art, religion…for their own sake,…but for the sake of the material benefit he can derive therefrom.' He was 'too materialistic to have time and patience for higher, non-lucrative pursuits.' His 'inability to strive for genuine love, knowledge, beauty, altruism, religiosity, self-perfection,' led him to embrace 'a manufactured, ready-made imitation thereof'. He gratified 'his personal vanity' and 'selfish pursuits'. His abode was shaped by a fleeting and superficial 'love of new sensations, of fads, of fashion, of distinction, of new appearances' and a desire 'to earn fame, money, and what not.'[452] His 'materialist' axiom was:

> Do what-ever leads to your success…. Try by all means to please those on whom the attainment of your success depends; over-estimate and glorify your own vocation and achievement.[453]

In contrast, the 'wise', 'idealist', 'genuine superior man' followed the axiom of: 'Do whatever leads to truth, beauty, general happiness or morality.'[454] They strove 'modestly and noiselessly towards self-perfection.' The pseudo-superior men, however, strove towards perfection 'out of envy, ambition…compelled by the need of competing with others and to surpass them by any means, either in

[452] Osias L. Schwarz, *General Types of Superior Men: A Philosophico-Psychological Study of Genius, Talent and Philistinism in Their Bearings upon Human Society and Its Struggle for a Better Social Order* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1916), 17–18, 62-64, 310-311.
[453] ibid., 313.
[454] ibid.

reality or in appearance.'[455] He was thus 'a philistine with the appearance…of a superior man.' He concealed his: 'hard-heartedness' under a false 'smile'; his 'prosaic, materialistic nature under memorized poetical expressions'; his 'egoism under the cloak of altruistic pursuits'.[456]

The quotes by Heylen and Schwarz demonstrate the perceptions that became solidified through discourse. The 'truths' framed 'materialism' as a pursuit of 'material interests' and 'material benefits' placed—wrongfully—above 'moral progress', 'virtue', 'truth', 'beauty', and 'self-perfection'. The Philistine's materialism resulted in 'empty imitations' for 'friendship, justice, general happiness, beauty, [and] deeper insight into the mysteries of the world and of life'.[457]

These broad-stroke truths were purposefully created and 'materialism' purposefully wield. These were diatribes aimed at debasing America's emerging business elite while elevating the intellectual and religious elite. Schwarz's writings make apparent this division in his description of the Philistine who merely sought 'external approbation, material possessions, superficial intellectual pleasures' versus the superior men who were 'engrossed with higher, intellectual, unselfish aims.'[458] This was a play for status. As the business elite pushed for industrial progress and consumerism to be valued over

[455] Ibid., 64.
[456] Ibid., 67.
[457] Ibid., 311.
[458] Ibid., 17, 290-291.

intellectual progress, the intellectual and religious elite became threatened by status deprivation: their cultural, social, and symbolic capital faced devaluation. As Schwarz described, the competitive system of an industrialised society had shifted authority from 'wise and altruistic…superior men' to 'the degenerate…men of single pursuits…the greedy, the unscrupulous…the morbidly vain, the bluffers or hunters of appearances'. These 'usurpers' controlled the 'means of existence, and hence impose their standards of living and acting upon the great masses.'[459]

These initial examples are but one demonstration of how delegitimizing terminology, such as 'materialism', was used in an attempt to preserve class-based stratifications in America. Social critics, often from the intellectual or religious elite, associated 'materialism' with dishonourable behaviour—greed, hypocrisy, vanity, and selfishness—while they decreed their intellectual aims to be morally superior. It was assumed that the intellectual and religious elite were engaged in 'unselfish', 'serious' and 'higher' aims of life; whether they actually were was rarely if ever called into question.

If we take a step back from our modern associations contained within the term 'materialism', we see similar themes reiterated. We continue, even in the twenty-first century, to perpetuate a view in which 'materialism' is debased while non-materialistic pursuits are elevated. We continue to narrowly define

[459] Ibid., 290–291.

the purpose of materialistic pursuits, readily equating them to the pursuit of mere 'empty imitations'. In doing so, we reinforce the social purpose that was originally behind these diatribes. The examples given in these following chapters provide a perspective on what the division of materialistic versus non-materialistic pursuits and lifestyles camouflages.

Chapter Ten

‘Materialism’ as a Threat to the Cultural and Symbolic Capital of an ‘Enlightened’ Mind (c. 1850s)

Some of the initial applications of the word outside of the Transcendentalist circles were by the intellectual and religious elite who, starting in the 1850s, hurled the accusations of ‘materialism’ as part of an attempt to defend the reproduction of their habitus. They were defending against threats to their indoctrinating system: higher education. A classical, liberal arts education was the means through which they envisioned passing on their values of an enlightened mind to future political leaders, clergy, and professors. The rise of industrialism and the increased demand for expertise in more practical versus philosophical education, however, created a pressure to reform the education system in a way that supported the growth of business efficiency over intellectual enlightenment. The reforms were viewed as leading the intellectual character of America away from one that resonated of civic professionalism—where knowledge was shared by men of letters and contributed to the common good—to one that brought about disciplinary professionalism—that is, pragmatic specialisation that supported the ‘commercial spirit of our nation.’[460] In essence, the new education forced the intellectuals to support the values of the emerging business class, specifically the version of industriousness that bred

[460] Henry Philip Tappan, *University Education* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1851), 64; “Introduction” by Jack London in: Schwarz, *General Types of Superior Men*, 5–6.

a 'spirit of enterprise', rather than their own values.[461] National debates ensued. In reaction to these threats, the elite used 'materialism' to debase the modes of education that America's business class—the 'middling class' men of merchants and mechanical-based professionals—sought to impose. In the continued debates of the early twentieth century, these accusations extended to the pragmatic education demanded by the emerging white-collar 'middle class' of managers and office workers.

Protecting a Liberal Education: The Fight Against a 'Materialistic, Dollar and Cent, Engineering System'

These debates arose as a consequence of a longstanding need for reform of the higher education system. The system had already been weakened by appeals that started to surface in the early 1800s. As the country shifted towards an economy based on industrialization and trade, the pressures to reform continued to escalate. The resulting situation created openings for contentious ideas to potentially gain a sense of legitimacy, which in turn caused the 'materialistic' focus of the pragmatic education to be perceived as a very viable threat.

[461] Thomas Bender, "The Cultures of Intellectual Life: The City and the Professions," in *Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States* (JHU Press, 1997), 3–15; George P. Schmidt, "Intellectual Crosscurrents in American Colleges, 1825-1855," *The American Historical Review* 42, no. 1 (October 1936): 46–67.

Higher education of the early 1800s had degraded to a system where mayhem, archaical and 'sluggard intellect', and disillusionment were the order of the day. Parents sent undisciplined youth in hopes that they would become civilized. Yet the colleges often failed: they struggled to enforce the necessary discipline and, because the curriculum was so archaic, the youth became disillusioned rather than engaged. Young scholars merely became unrulier, committing 'unmentionable indignities' and 'crimes…worthy of the penitentiary', as James McCosh, President of Princeton (1868-1888), and Andrew Peabody, the preacher at Harvard University (1860-1881), respectively lamented.[462] Reform was called for; however, most college presidents refused to move away from the rigid classical and philosophical curriculum under which they had been educated. As the influential Yale Report (1828) asserted: familiarity with the Greek and Roman writers was 'especially adapted to form the taste, and to discipline the mind, both in thought and diction, to the relish of what is elevated, chaste, and simple.'[463]

The report from Yale circulated widely and was often quoted—and misquoted—by college presidents, faculty, and governing boards who did not wish to change the indoctrinating system. Thus, although more practical courses, such as the modern languages of French, Spanish and Italian, or the

[462] As quoted in: Burton Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism : The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1976), 228, 229.
[463] "Original Papers in Relation to a Course of Liberal Education (Yale Report)," *American Journal of Science and Arts (1820-1879)* 15, no. 2 (January 2, 1829): 330.

study of science and engineering might be of benefit for the global economy, scholastic studies rarely gave these subjects much prominence: these 'interests' were judged to be inferior, merely an 'accomplishment' rather than a 'necessary acquisition' for students.[464] The protected tradition and rigid view meant that America's education system was failing to provide the intellectual content that young men needed. Burton Bledstein recounts: colleges left youth unprepared, disillusioned, 'critical of the intellectual philistinism of an American education', and 'envious of those…who had launched themselves into secular occupation without delay.' [465] By the mid-1800s, a college education represented little other than a title, which itself had its value being called into question.

Young men increasingly faced pressures to establish themselves in an expanding urban world dominated by the money-powered merchant class. Particularly in New England, young men moved away from their father's uneconomical farms to seek out jobs, becoming doctors, ministers, teachers, civil workers, clerks, operatives, managers, and skilled workers.[466] The American landscape was changing. The Jeffersonian ideal of America prospering under the independent yeoman guided by a natural aristocracy was shifting to a factory workforce, characterised by poor immigrants dependent on the emerging business class. As Gordon Wood surmises, instead of ordinary people rising to adopt levels of gentility and enlightenment, 'ordinary folk were

[464] Ibid., 334.
[465] Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism*, 226.
[466] Ibid., 204.

collapsing traditional social differences…bringing the aristocracy down to their level.' Colleges were proliferating but not enlightening society as expected: instead they produced 'multitudes of half-educated candidates for public confidence and honor,' which accounted for so many trying 'to *crowd themselves* into the learned professions.'[467]

Interests focused around industrialization became the order of the day. Young adult males perceived as lacking a proper education—one that could instil a sense of morals and cultures—dominated politics and professional trades. Andrew Jackson, who lacked culture, education, and could not spell, was representative of this new bred of American high-flyers and self-made men.[468] His ascension to the Presidency (1829-1837) symbolised the power shift, and increased the apparentness of the need for educational reform.[469]

Consequently there was a rising tension between the supporters of the established order, who wished to preserve core elements of their habitus, and advocates for reform, who saw the incongruities between America's higher education system and the realities on the ground as detrimental to the nation's progress and injurious to enacting a more appropriate value system. Similar to

[467] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 710; Quotation originally from: H. Biglow, ed., "Review: The Village, A Poem," in *The American Monthly Magazine and Critical Review*, June, vol. 1 (New York: Kirk & Mercein, 1817), 118. (Formatting original.)
[468] John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson Symbol For An Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 166–180.
[469] "Jacksonian Democracy and the Colleges," in: Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History*, ed. John T. Thelin (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 201–220.

religious fragmentations spurring the Transcendentalist movement, fragmentations and diverging opinions besieged the movement to reform education.[470] Such a situation gave rise to the use of delegitimizing discourse as one group sought to establish its view as more laudable and legitimate.

Chapter 7 demonstrated how the Transcendentalists used the accusation of 'materialism' to challenge the established tradition. In the discourse surrounding educational reform, this was reversed: the established yet waning order was elevated—deemed to be more superior and required to enforce a higher sense of morals; the emerging order, related to training merchant and mechanical-based professionals, was delegitimized and labelled as 'materialistic' or as supporting the 'materialistic tendencies' of the age. Noah Porter (1811-1892), President of Yale College (1871-1886) stated, 'to tear out of American life the civilizing and culturing influences…we should do much to vulgarize and degrade [education]', and thus contribute to 'the life depressed by materialistic tendencies and beset by grosser temptations.' Without being taught through classical studies 'to honor what is true, solid, and permanent', a young man might be directed to 'the ignoble, the selfish, the pretentious, and the trickish', and become swept up in the 'trickery of business, the jobbing of politicians, the slang of newspapers, the vulgarity of fashion, the sensationalism

[470] Schmidt, "Intellectual Crosscurrents in American Colleges, 1825-1855," 57–65.

of popular books, the shallowness and cant that dishonour the pulpit and defile worship.'[471]

Respected leaders, such as Emerson, further entrenched these views. Although Emerson empathised with the youth about their forced tolerance of an archaic system, and challenged the colleges to teach, 'not to drill, but to create',[472] he did not find it possible to renounce the classical studies he had learned. Rather, he revived and elevated the notion of an enlightened mind and called for the youth—more so than the education system—to change their educational experience. In his lectures delivered during the 1840s and 1850s across college campuses, he called for young men to recognise that they were the owners of their destiny. Their success in life depended on how they engaged education. They could choose to cultivate their minds and aim to perfect their souls.[473] Knowledge became the 'measure of the man.' 'By how much we know, so much we are.'[474] His perspective contributed to re-instilling the belief that education was essential for leadership, occupational opportunities, and advancement in society.[475]

[471] Noah Porter, *The American Colleges and the American Public* (New Haven: Charles C. Chatfield & Co., 1870), 182–183.
[472] Emerson, "The American Scholar. An Oration before the Phi Beta Kappa Society, at Cambridge, August 31, 1837," 90.
[473] Ibid., 94–95.
[474] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Natural History of Intellect and Other Papers*, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson, vol. 12, The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston; New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1903), 10.
[475] Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism*, 266.

These speech acts reflected Emerson's underlying interest: he wanted to convince young scholars to become the educators of tomorrow. His lectures accordingly reinforced the division between the 'man of letters' and the 'man of industry'. The man of letters belonged to 'a superior society', and although he was 'born one or two centuries too early for the rough and sensual population into which he is thrown', he was supposed to be 'a leader to lead' the 'men perplexed with evil times'. The life of a man of industry, on the other hand, with his 'industrial skills [and] arts ministering to convenience and luxury', resulted in making life expensive and men 'greedy, careful, anxious', turning their 'eyes downward to the earth, not upward to thought'.[476] Such a life was equated to 'materialism'.[477]

Emerson called for the youth to turn away from 'materialism'—to not throw the 'prosperity, the splendour...talent and perseverance' of manhood 'upon vulgar aims'. Economic success, he lamented, inspired 'civility of trifles, of money and expense, an erudition of sensation', and made it difficult to take up 'poverty and wisdom' and to seek 'the conquest of letters and arts'. Overcoming materialism, he urged, would earn men true glory: The 'bravest' among men were said to 'have the manliness to resist it successfully.'[478]

[476] "The Man of Letters," an address delivered before the Literary Societies of Dartmouth and Waterville Colleges, 1863. (Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson, vol. 10, The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson [Boston; New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1904], 242, 245).
[477] "General Index," in: Emerson, *Natural History of Intellect and Other Papers*, 12:553.
[478] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *English Traits* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Company, 1856), 172–173.

These words had power: His lectures influenced many of the future leaders of education and social reforms.[479] His musings had restored the notion that society needed the direction of such a benevolent elite. This concept of an elite, however, had shifted from the natural aristocracy governing political aspects of the country to the educators and reformers who could indoctrinate values into their students and into the wider community, and thus shape the future progress of the country. Politics had become too tainted and too unwieldy. It was no longer ruled by an enlightened elite but by the 'self-made men' of the Gilded Age who were easily corrupted.[480] The role of scholar was accordingly shifted from thinking for himself to providing moral guidance, a sense of culture, and inspiration for a society increasingly focused on material advancement.[481]

Emerson's speech acts were a means to protect the moral position of an elite in a shifting social context. By elevating the life of an educator he could convince young men to adopt his ideals, and inspire them to become virtuous leaders following a similar moral path. Jane Addams (1860-1935), for example, carried forward Emerson's views. As she argued in 1910, the last appeal against 'the most materialistic period of all history' resided in cultivating an 'instinct for justice.' Society could be 'hypnotized by the sudden new emphasis placed upon wealth and power' and allowed to become a 'sordid chronicle of petty vice', or

[479] Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism*, 259–268.
[480] "The Spoilsmen: An Age of Cynicism," in Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, 211–238.
[481] Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine*, 132–133.

society could 'listen to the young voices rising…and prudent councils of commerce' and 'turn them into a solemn school for civic righteousness.'[482]

Refuting 'Materialism': The Tactics of Educational Reformers

The speech acts of the established elite, which successfully elevated a classically-educated enlightened mind, obliged that reformers navigate or refute accusations that they were fostering 'materialism' in their proposed changes to the education system. In analysing these counter-responses, a number of scenarios and tactics emerged: some reformers *deflected* the accusations towards other, lower-order groups; others attempted to *sanction* the ideas associated with 'materialism' by injecting an immaterial element (such as abstract thought or imagination) into their educational reforms; others *vindicated* their ideas by substantiating the need for a more practical, materialistic education and by renouncing associations with 'the ignoble, the selfish, the pretentious, and the trickish'; and yet other educational reformers—often the earlier promoters—failed to adequately address the accusations and saw their ideas shunned and silenced.

Francis Wayland (1796-1865), the President of Brown University (1827-1855) exemplified the consequences of a failed refutation. When at Brown, Wayland structured an education system where the classics were on parity with other

[482] Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910), 160–161.

courses, including history, political economy, law, sciences, agriculture, modern languages, and the science of teaching.[483] His system was chastised in debates as the '*materialistic, dollar and cent, engineering* system of Dr. Wayland, and the rest of Yankeedom.'[484] His efforts to make a 'higher and more liberal grade of education' were seen as merely resulting in degrading 'their general system of instruction'.[485] In the end, he failed to engage persuasively enough with the public and with his fellow intellectuals. The teachers at Brown University refused to change their approach even for the new classes, resulting in students becoming further disillusioned and attendance for the college dropping off. After Wayland's early retirement (due in part to the disappointing outcomes), the reforms he had enacted were repealed.[486] Although he did not achieve the educational reforms he envisioned, his efforts did start to open doors that future educational reformers modified and took forward.

In 1857, for example, the University of Virginia benefited: it was able to use effective deflection tactics to combat accusations of 'materialism'. Similar to Wayland's system, the University had implemented a more modern approach with a mix of academic and professional schools. Although it maintained high

[483] Robert D. Cross, "Wayland, Francis," *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, February 2000), www.anb.org/articles/08/08-01625.html.
[484] "Progress of Education in Virginia: The University and the Colleges," in *The Southern Literary Messenger*, vol. 26, New Series 3 (Richmond: MacFarlane, Fergusson & Co. Proprietors, 1857), 165. (Formatting original).
[485] Ibid., 165.
[486] Bruce A. Kimball, ed., "Intellectual and Social Challenges to the College, 1790s-1850s," in *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Documentary History* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2010), 275; Schmidt, "Intellectual Crosscurrents in American Colleges, 1825-1855," 59–60, 65.

enrolment figures, (which likely resulted from Southern nationalism more so than its pedagogic approach),[487] it was deemed to have a 'doubtful character'. It represented the system opposed by 'eminent educators of youth in America'.[488] In order to stem off accusations of 'materialism', the University re-directed the accusation to describe other, 'inferior' institutions, such as the Virginia Military Institution, and reaffirmed its commitment to include and to promote classical studies.

In a series of debates in 1857 regarding the "Progress of Education in Virginia",[489] commentators from the University of Virginia claimed that the Military Institute was 'a school for making engineers and business men, but not *scholars*.'[490] The Military Institute's Superintendent, Francis Smith, retorted that its approach was more superior and progressive than other institutions in Virginia. In reaction, the University denounced and ridiculed the Institute's pedagogy as being '*materialistic*', '*ignoring classical studies* altogether'.[491] Such college reforms banished 'Greek classics and Greek literature…cloistering them in theological schools'. They cut Latin down to a 'mere Sophomore course'. They put the 'physical wealth of our State'—the constructed railroads and

[487] Schmidt, "Intellectual Crosscurrents in American Colleges, 1825-1855," 64–65.
[488] Alabama. University. [from old catalog, *Report on a Proposition to Modify the Plan of in Instruction in the University of Alabama* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1855), 17, 82.
[489] "Progress of Education in Virginia: The University and the Colleges"; "Progress of Education in Virginia," in *The Southern Literary Messenger*, vol. 26, New Series 3 (Richmond: MacFarlane, Fergusson & Co. Proprietors, 1857), 241–47; "Progress of Education in Virginia: The University—The Colleges—The Military Institute," in *The Southern Literary Messenger*, vol. 26, New Series 3 (Richmond: MacFarlane, Fergusson & Co. Proprietors, 1857), 401–9.
[490] "Progress of Education in Virginia: The University and the Colleges," 163. (Formatting original.)
[491] Ibid., 164. (Formatting original.)

canals—above 'the political, the mental, the moral elements of society'. Orators, statesmen, jurists, divines, professors, and professionals were being 'hewn down to the straight and narrow dimension of an *engineer* or *mere mathematician*'. There was no 'higher progress' in the '*college reform*' but only a 'one-sided, badly-balanced system'.[492]

The Institute fought back, noting civil engineers were in demand and they advanced the nation: academies such as West Point had 'done more towards the construction of railroads, than all our one hundred and twenty colleges united."[493] The Institute justified their substitution of Greek for 'French, Drawing, Engineering, Military Tactics [and] scientific studies': these courses meet the 'practical demands of our State', including the need to 'defend' and fight for Slavery—'a material element of Southern power and Southern polity'.[494] They challenged the 'stereotyped answer…"*Yankee-dom*"—"*materialistic, dollar and cent, engineering system*"': these were merely 'epithets' and 'a libel upon this large and most influential class of our people."[495]

The debate ended with the University recommending that the '*materialism*' be directed at '[*improving*] *our soils'*, and that the Military Institute 'keep…within its appropriate sphere': 'Let it be a purely "Scientific and Military School." Let it

[492] "Progress of Education in Virginia: The University and the Colleges," 163. (Formatting original.)
[493] "Progress of Education in Virginia," 246.
[494] Ibid., 247.
[495] Ibid., 246. (Formatting original.)

cultivate the field of theoretical and applied science to the highest degree…and be out-and-out the "Polytechnic" of the South.' Let it advance the States 'commercial and manufacturing interests…. [B]ut let not such a course be held up, as a *rival substitute* for the college curriculum."[496]

Although this deflection tactic helped the University of Virginia to save its reputation, it did little to help the overall educational reforms escape debasement. If anything, it merely perpetuated the association of a practical-based education being 'materialistic', 'ignoble', and of a lower order.

These views and the hierarchy of learning continued to prevail in academia and in arguments about educational reform into the 1900s. Colleges that offered education based on the liberal arts and classical studies that advanced enlightened and idealistic goals were continually upheld in the discourse to be more superior to the practical polytechnicons and institutions that offered education to advance materialistic goals. The elite who had access to influence educational reforms and to set the standards, such as those at Yale, had a vested interest in continuing this stratification. To allow it to change would cause their superior position and their cultural capital to be called into question.

[496] "Progress of Education in Virginia: The University—The Colleges—The Military Institute," 408–409. (Formatting original.)

It would only be in the late 1800s and early 1900s, under the influence of pragmatic educational reformists, such as John Dewey (1859-1952), and social reformists, such as Jane Addams, that this view was substantially refuted and challenged. This occurred in part because the cultured elite could no longer ignore the societal mayhem occurring around them nor could they ignore the growth of an 'uncultured' middling mass. In response, various initiatives were undertaken to democratize culture and to make an educational experience more widely available and useful. Cultural institutions, such as libraries and museums, were set up by state governments and funded by philanthropic donations; settlement houses such as Hull House were established; the Social Gospel movement, which sought to apply Christian ethics to resolve social problems, supported the growth of missionary work and planted churches within urban slums.[497] Reformers made it their mission to reach down to the middling masses and provide them with an education that could appeal and, in parallel, could indoctrinate middle-class values.

The acquisition of 'culture' was consequentially shifted from a privileged liberal arts education to social reformer's civilizing missions.[498] In essence, it was a re-creation of a natural aristocracy and an embodiment of Emerson's ideals: those with the means to be able to contribute their time and energy to benevolent activities—often the new generation of intellectual and religious elite—were to

[497] Frank Lambert, *Religion in American Politics: A Short History* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 94–103.
[498] "Self, Culture, and Self-Culture in America," in Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 1–33.

instruct and to provide moral direction for those of less means. In doing so, they effectively built up their cultural and social capital, and, as a consequence, undermined the older generation's cultural capital and legitimacy in defining a 'proper' education. These changes allowed reformers to more readily navigate or to refute accusations that they were abetting 'materialistic tendencies'. Jane Adams and John Dewey, who influenced each other, exemplify different approaches taken to challenge the entrenched beliefs about a materialistic-based education; Addams sought to sanctify her version of a pragmatic education; Dewey sought to vindicate a pragmatic education.

To temper the perceived materialism of educational reforms, Addams advocated for an immaterial force: the imagination. Addams was a prominent social worker and educational reformist whose inheritance allowed her to channel her thoughts on society and education into benevolent actions. She founded Hull House in 1889 as a means for grappling with the disillusionment many experienced in society—not only the urban poor but the young women and men who had graduated with a liberal education yet had limited means to apply their skills to real social problems. Addams experienced the classical liberal studies at her women's college, yet was more so influenced by her visits to Europe, its settlement houses, and the books she read. These experiences created an uneasiness in her. They prompted her to explore new avenues to

rectify the disconnection between the intellectual and cultured elite and its ability to enact social change.[499]

To appeal to the poor immigrant masses, Addams combined elements of the Social Gospel movement and its desire to reform society with advocacy for educational reforms.[500] For example, in *The Spirit of Youth and the City Street* (1909), she proposed that if educators sought to understand the experiences of the boys and girls who enter industry, they might recognise that these workers and the workplace might benefit from having the 'play instinct', at appropriate times, directed into inspiring variation in industry. For Addams, no force was to be 'sufficiently powerful and widespread to redeem industry from its mechanism and materialism save the freed power in every single individual.' In order to do this, educators had to train 'the child's imagination, as well as…his careful equipment with a technique.'[501] The child would need both to succeed in an industrial life. He would need technique to ensure he could perform manual duties accurately. He would need imagination to produce tailored products demanded by a 'cultivated nation'.[502]

Addams' speech acts accordingly still kept 'materialism' as a point on the continuum of education, yet it was a position that was to be avoided. By

[499] Chris Bilton, "Jane Addams, Pragmatism and Cultural Policy," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 12, no. 2 (2006): 135–50.
[500] Bilton, *Jane Addams, Pragmatism and Cultural Policy*.
[501] Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, 124.
[502] Ibid., 125–128.

contrasting her ideal education system against industry's materialism she could sanction her proposed pragmatic education.

John Dewey, on the other hand, who sought a more widespread legitimacy for a pragmatic education, needed to vindicate 'materialism'. Accordingly, he directly challenged the branding of a practical education as 'materialistic' so that these elements could be included into the school curriculum.

Dewey's background was one that combined the ideals of the established New England elite (products of his mother's heritage and his own university education) and the contemporary life of a merchant, working-class family. His mother, whose family had a history of high political positions and connections to Vermont's preachers and professors, took college education for her sons as a given and was actively involved in public service through church charities; his father, whose family were established New England farmers, owned a small cigar and meat store in a middle-size town. Dewey's family status reflected many of the ideas he would champion, merging the classical with the practical.

As chair of philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy at the University of Chicago (1894-1904) and as a professor of philosophy and psychology at Colombia University (1904-1930), Dewey sought to reform education so that it could meet the needs of the urban-industrial society. He advocated a shift of philosophy from its focus on the metaphysical and epistemological problems of

philosophers to the 'problems of men'—to use intelligence to 'liberate and liberalize action'.[503, 504] He sought to move education from one of learning by rote to one of learning by doing, and to expand education so that it could allow all members of society to participate as active citizens.[505] In his influential and widely published book, *The School and Society* (1899) he justified his approach to learning by doing, advocating that learning associated with occupations should not be 'mere practical devices or modes of routine employment' used to gain 'better technical skills as cooks, sempstresses, or carpenters'; rather, they should be 'active centers of scientific insight into natural materials and processes, points of departure when children shall be led out into a realization of the historical development of men.'[506]

However, in defending his position, Dewey also had to challenge the prevailing perceptions surrounding a practical-based education. As he wrote in *The School and Society*:

> I can only stand lost in wonder at the objections so often heard, that such occupations are out of place in the school because they are materialistic, utilitarian, or even menial in their tendency. It sometimes seems to me that those who make these objections must live in quite another world. The world in which most of us live is a world in which everyone has a calling and occupation, something to do.[507]

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[503] John Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," in *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude*, ed. John Dewey et al. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1917), 65, 63.
[504] Matthew Festenstein, "Dewey's Political Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2014, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/dewey-political/.
[505] Jonas F. Soltis, "John Dewey," *Encyclopedia of Education*, 2002, http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/John_Dewey.aspx.
[506] John Dewey, *The School and Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1899), 33.
[507] Dewey, *The School and Society*, 38.

Extending education to everyone, regardless of his occupation, was important: it enabled a person to see significance in his daily work.[508] Schools thus needed to stop 'neglect[ing] or positively distort[ing]' the industrial system. Until they recognised 'construction and production' as important elements to train in children and youth, they were in no position 'to locate the source of our economic evils, much less to deal with them effectively.'[509] By encouraging a more democratic and open-minded embrace of education, Dewey hoped that America's society could be elevated above a toiling working life, its politics might be saved from the cronyism that directed the votes of ignorant men, and its politicians might shift from a *lassiez-faire* approach to action that could secure not only political democracy but also industrial democracy.[510]

Through such arguments, Dewey managed to vindicate a pragmatic education from the stigma of 'materialism', which in turn made it possible for practical-based experiences to become recognised as important elements in education.

[508] ibid.
[509] Ibid., 39
[510] Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism* (New York ; London: Norton, 1995), 25–26, 41–48.

Summing Up the Educational Debate: The Purpose and Consequences of 'Materialism'

The use of 'materialism' in the educational reform debates reflected the external shifting context, and importantly, a fight for legitimacy of cultural capital. This case demonstrates the common theme of this thesis, recognising how power shifts are reflected in discourse: 'materialism', in this example, was used to repress change by the older generation, but it was also challenged by the emerging generation to bring about change.

Although Dewey and other reformers were successful in getting changes made to the education system and stifling the accusation of 'materialism', I would argue that the system was not completely overthrown. Rather, over the course of the twentieth century, an equilibrium was found between the old and new order: the new generations adapted to the changes and bought into the values brought about by America's economic progress, yet they still preserved many of the indoctrinated truths they had learned from the previous generations, especially those truths that preserved the status of their own acquired cultural capital. As a consequence, the hierarchy of education still remained.

And it remains today. The belief in the superiority of enlightened, university-based learning over the mechanical-based technicons prevails: it is reflected in the higher value attributed to a university degree. Furthermore, the 'truths'

created about 'materialism' in these debates continue to inform societal views: being studious and gaining enlightened knowledge is deemed to be far better than seeking materialistic desires or working in a career solely focused on material, rather than imaginative reproduction. The truths have been adapted, yet are still perpetuated. Although education is rarely denigrated as 'materialistic', the hierarchy that 'materialism' was used to preserve is still buried deep within customs and normative assumptions.

Chapter Eleven

‘Materialism’ as a Threat to America’s Economic and Political Systems and ‘Truths’ (c. 1880)

Themes of ‘materialism’ and its dangers to society increased significantly after the American Civil War (1861-1865). Beyond the education debate, the pejorative extended to denounce other elements of life or the members of society that challenged the American truth system and sense of social order. Multiple meanings of ‘materialism’ emerged. This caused confusion and became problematic, especially for the socialist and labour movements who attempted to challenge American beliefs about their God-given capitalist system by applying Marx’s ‘materialistic conception of history’—a historical recount that premised ‘all social and political relations, all religious and legal systems [could] only be understood’ by understanding the epoch’s ‘mode of production of material life’.[511] Marx’s materialism was often misconstrued and misapplied to socialism and communism. Their labour protests were alleged to be ‘saturated with the spirit of materialism and atheism’[512] that incited social anarchy. The working class was branded as being trapped by a ‘materialistic’

[511] Friedrich Engels, “Review of Karl Marx, ‘A Contribution to the Critical Political Economy,’” in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, by Karl Marx, trans. S.W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1859), 131, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Contribution_to_the_Critique_of_Political_Economy.pdf. (Originally published in *Das Volk*, 30 No. 14, August 6, 1859)
[512] Jefferson Lee, “The Basic Principles of Socialism,” in *The Common Cause*, ed. John R. Meader, vol. 1 (New York: The Social Reform Press, 1912), 5.

drudge of life that was void of spirituality, morality, and intellectualism. Socialists and Communists would have to repel these allegations in order to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the growing middle class.

'Materialism', Industrialism, and the Vices of the Labour Movement

Defenders of America's economic system began to hurl 'materialism' at the threatening labour and socialist movements and their affiliated working class in the 1880s. These were often phrased in a way that would incite the business elite and middle class to fear, rather than support, the working classes' movements. An article written by the prominent economist and Progressive reformer, Social Gospel supporter and founder of the Christian Social Union, Richard T. Ely (1854-1943), connected 'materialism' to numerous revolutionary phrases expressed by America's socialists. The International Workingman's Association ideals, he stated, promoted 'common property, socialistic production and distribution, the grossest materialism—for their god is their belly, free love, in all social arrangements, perfect individualism; or, in other words, anarchy.' This inspired the negative mantras of 'Away with private property! Away with all authority! Away with the state! Away with the family! Away with religion!' In popular magazines the 'laboring men', freed from

dogmas, were described as ready to demand, 'musket in hand…their share of the goods' from the 'wealthy robber'.[513]

Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), another Social Gospel reformer who was influenced by Ely, summarised in 1907 the prevailing assumptions: The scientific socialism, imported from older countries and 'saturated with materialistic philosophy', created an 'imminent danger that the working people will pass from indifference to hostility, from religious enthusiasm to anti-religious bitterness.'[514]

Concerns of 'materialism' came to the fore in reaction to the growing disruptiveness of the labour movements. The strikes and dispersion of socialist rhetoric made the threats to America's value and truth system seem so plausible that it broke the complacency of the Protestant Church.

Up until the 1880s, the *lassiez-faire* approach, which aligned with America's individualist mantra, had allowed the government and the Church to ignore the growing plight of the poor and the increasing social disparities. Most professed Christians believed that faith was personal and confined their application of Christian ethics to aspects within the sphere of their private lives—their family

[513] As quoted in: Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York: Baker & Taylor Co. for the American Home Missionary Society, 1885), 87; Quotes original from: Richard T. Ely, "Recent Phases in Socialism in the United States," in *The Christian Union*, ed. Lyman Abbott and Hamilton W. Maine, vol. 29, 17 (New York, 1884), 389–90.
[514] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York ; London: Macmillan, 1907), 330.

and friends, and choices of pastimes. Apart from the issue of slavery, most preachers focused on the personal 'sins' of 'drunkenness, sexual impurity, profanity…. Sabbath-breaking, dancing, card-playing and theatre-going.'[515] The public life of the workplace was treated as separate, and the ethics of industry and commerce were rarely condemned at the pulpit. Churches generally ignored the impoverishment and treatment of workers in factories. Most of the middle class distanced themselves from the lives of the poor and the expanding slum areas: they were either ignorant of, or chose to overlook, the appalling conditions of crowded tenements and cellars, infestations and diseases, and the conditions of the labourer in the factory setting.[516] The prevailing assumption was that the misery of the poor was inevitable; when addressed the poor were best dealt with through a 'program of guarded…philanthropy' and missionary work.[517]

In the 1880s, however, a number of elements converged that brought about a focus on 'saving' the poor and the working class. The absence of the urban working class from church became noted, labour unrest increased, and information about the plight of the poor came to prominence through the investigative journalism of muckrakers, the literary realism of novelists, and the publications of social reformers. These included: the works of the Social Gospel

[515] Walter Rauschenbusch, "The New Evangelism," in *Walter Rauschenbusch : Selected Writings*, ed. Winthrop S. Hudson (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 140; "The New Evangelism," *The Independent,* LVI (Jan.-June 1904), 1054-59.
[516] Henry Farnham May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York ; London: Harper & Row, 1967), 61-63, 91–111; 112–124; Gary Scott Smith, "To Reconstruct the World : Walter Rauschenbusch and Social Change," *Fides et Historia* 23, no. 2 (June 1, 1991): 48.
[517] May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America*, 63.

advocates, such as Strong, Washington Gladden (1836-1918), and especially Rauschenbusch; the writings of socialist and political economists, such as Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* (1879); and novels, such as *The Jungle* (1901), written by the reform-minded journalist, Upton Sinclair. These publications exposed the world of poverty and had a profound impact on changing societal views. *The Jungle*, depicted the grotesque working conditions in the meat packing industry, motivating health and safety legislation reforms.[518] *Progress and Poverty* provided an economic explanation for why poverty existed even with the advancements of technology and growth of wealth in cities. Combined with the other popular socioeconomic critique of the era, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards, 2000-1887* (1888),[519] the government's prevailing *lassiez-faire* approach and its underlying reductionist ideas of social evolutionary theory, were called into question.[520] These writings also made obvious what most middle class and elite attempted to ignore: they challenged the assumption that 'Christian America' could be guided by an 'Unseen Hand' and prosper.[521]

These writers and the Social Gospel advocates were mostly from the middle class. Unlike the Protestant Church's missionary endeavours that called for

[518] Robert L. Gale, "Sinclair, Upton," *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, February 2000), http://www.anb.org/articles/16/16-01510.html.
[519] Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1888).
[520] Hays, *The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914*, 89–93; Donald E. Frey, *America's Economic Moralists : A History of Rival Ethics and Economics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 101–105; Donald R. Stabile, "Thorstein Veblen and His Socialist Contemporaries: A Critical Comparison," *Journal of Economic Issues* 16, no. 1 (March 1982): 3–4.
[521] May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America*, 63.

personal salvation and indoctrination of Protestant virtues, these reformers called for societal-level changes. They argued that the social ills of the labourer could be solved by changing social conditions. They wanted the government to reform itself and to change from being ruled by group-machine politics to being a more active and representative body of the people. The enterprising capitalist was impelled to be more considerate and benevolent to workers to stem radical socialism. The Social Gospel advocates preached that America could be saved by increasing the 'consciousness in the members of the industrial community [to see] their work is a social function.'[522]

Many Social Gospel activists viewed the church's missionary efforts as too limiting. The outreaches of churches appealed to those with a 'mature spiritual life', yet this was not the common man. The Church failed to address the consequences of 'the materialistic spirit created by our commercialism.' 'The poor who are reduced to barbarism by poverty, and the rich whose higher life is drowned out by excess, alike stare at the Church with dull and apathetic eyes…. [T]he spiritual life of the nation [had] atrophied.'[523] Yet while reformers recognised that the Church's approach was not adequate, they themselves did not have a coherent solution. Reformers debated what should be done to address the labouring class.

[522] Washington Gladden, *Tools and the Man: Property and Industry Under the Christian Law* (Boston ; New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1893), 255.
[523] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 142.

It was within this debate that accusations of 'materialism' appeared to denounce contentious solutions, especially those proposed by socialists. Many socialists called for a redistribution of wealth, yet this was too extreme for most of the middle and upper class. It ran contra to the 'truths' Americans believed: the right to private property and the ideal of the self-made man. In an attempt to channel the solutions away from communist and socialist ideas, social reformers effectively employed 'materialism' to position these threatening ideas as wicked, especially in the eyes of the middle class.

I. 'Materialism' of the Working Class

In 1878, Joseph Cook (1838-1901) published *Labor¸ with Preludes on Current Events*—a lecture that employed 'materialism' as a defensive tactic to denounce socialism and the working class. Cook was a conservative social reformer, popular Boston lecturer, and Protestant clergyman. Under the sponsorship of the Young Men's Christian Association, he held weekly Boston Monday Lectures. These lectures, which drew thousands of attendees and which were printed and widely disseminated, meant his ideas and rhetoric spread across America.[524]

[524] Allen C. Guelzo, "Joseph Cook," *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, February 2000), http://www.anb.org/articles/20/20-00211.html; "Introduction" in: Joseph Cook, *Labor¸ with Preludes on Current Events*, Boston Monday Lectures (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1880), iii–iv.

His speech acts encouraged negative views of communism *and* socialism amongst the middle and upper classes by denoting how they both adopted Marx's 'coarse materialism', and consequently led to lawlessness and a denial of American 'truths'. Marx's materialism held 'the soul [as being] only the result of matter in motion', denied 'immorality', positioned 'religion [as] opium for the people', and threatened social order with its 'conscience [that] points out no authoritative code of morality.'[525] This 'materialistic philosophy' was the instigator behind the 'railway-riots…supressed in 1877' and wider international labour strikes: its belief in 'no future existence, and no judge' led men to 'do as [they] pleas[e], except in so far as enlightened selfishness forbids.'[526] It caused labourers to be a 'lawless class' who committed crimes such as murder, drank to excess, sang 'ribald' songs, and gave speeches in which 'all things sacred [were] blasphemed'.[527] Furthermore, the 'materialistic philosophy' that communism and socialism supported encouraged 'false doctrines concerning the family' and private property.[528] Cook roused up support, calling for Americans to defend against these doctrines and against the labourers and the trade unions (who secretly accepted aid from 'socialistic agitators').[529] As Cook promulgated to an affirmative crowd, the uprisings caused by the socialists deserved to be met with as much severity required for 'preserving the public peace': 'We shall keep order roughly, here, if necessary; for all Americans are capitalists, or expect to

[525] Joseph Cook, "Secret Socialistic Societies," in *Labor, with Preludes on Current Events*, Boston Monday Lectures (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1880), 41-42.
[526] Ibid., 40, 42, 44.
[527] Ibid., 47, 49-50.
[528] Ibid., 42–43.
[529] Ibid., 55.

be [Applause]… In America the people feel they have a right to be kings, and they will exercise their right. [Applause.]'[530]

Although Cook's work was, by some historian accounts, ahead of the tide of apprehension that seized America after the Chicago Haymarket Square Riot (1886),[531] his work played an important role in establishing 'truths' that became popularized in subsequent decades. The American economist and sociologist, Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929), was a case in point, endorsing Cook's associations of 'materialism' with the working class.

II. Thorstein Veblen's Materialism

Thorstein Veblen, in contemporary consumer literature, is often thought of as a key theorist of materialistic consumption, or what he called, conspicuous consumption—the material displays of wealth used to denote status.[532, 533] However, when Veblen used the word 'materialism', it was not in his essay on conspicuous consumption, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (c.1899); rather, he used the word to describe the working class in his subsequent publication, *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (c.1904).

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[530] Ibid., 47–48. (Notes of '[Applause]' original.)
[531] Howard H. Quint, "Marxism Comes to America," in *The Forging of American Socialism : Origins of the Modern Movement* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1953)," 4.
[532] Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 64, 71.
[533] Susan Fournier and Marsha L. Richins, "Some Theoretical and Popular Notions Concerning Materialism," *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality* 6, no. 6 (1991): 410; Roger S. Mason, *Conspicuous Consumption: A Study of Exceptional Consumer Behaviour* (Farnborough: Gower, 1981), 41, 149; Jeffrey S. Podoshen and Susan A. Andrzejewski, "An Examination of the Relationships Between Materialism, Conspicuous Consumption, Impulse Buying, and Brand Loyalty," *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* 20, no. 3 (July 1, 2012): 319–334.

In *The Theory of Business Enterprise*, Veblen explained how America's prevailing economic system resulted in an inherent friction between business and industry: the business elite wanted to keep profits—and thus prices—high by curtailing production; the industrial elite, however, wanted to pursue technological advancements to increase production. Veblen's description of the capitalistic system was, however, not vested solely in highlighting this inherent tension: in all of his writings Veblen sought to advance economic theory by bringing to the fore the way economic activities and interests shaped the 'scheme of life'.[534] In this publication, he assessed the growing domination of business over the economy and society at large.[535] As part of this analysis, Veblen theorised that America's capitalistic system—focused solely on managing production—resulted in a working class dehumanized by 'the machine' and beset with 'materialistic…habits of thoughts'. As he stated:

> The machine is a leveller, a vulgarizer, whose ends seem to be the extirpation of all that is respectable, noble, and dignified in human intercourse and ideals…. Men trained by the mechanical occupations to materialistic, industrial habits of thought are beset with a growing inability to appreciate, or even to apprehend, the meaning of religious appeals that proceed on the old-fashioned grounds of metaphysical validity.[536]

[534] Thorstein Veblen, "The Place of Science in Modern Civilization," *American Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 5 (1906): 598.
[535] P. M. Sweezy, "Veblen's Critique of the American Economy," in *Thorstein Veblen: Critical Assessments*, ed. John Cunningham Wood, vol. 2: Veblen's Political Economy, 3 vols. (London: Routledge, 1993), 118–125.
[536] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), 358–359.

This dehumanization meant that the lower classes struggled to break free from the habits that kept them repressed. If they gained income their emulative habits of higher-class lifestyles would inadvertently perpetuate capitalism and contribute to making the system difficult to overcome.

Although Veblen supported socialism, this line of thought clearly distinguished him as being on a different trajectory from Marxism. For Veblen, socialism did not ultimately lead to a deterministic, revolutionary outcome; rather, Veblen cast socialism as part of an evolutionary process in which the skilled workforce of engineers and innovators—not the masses of unskilled proletarians—would advance society beyond a destructive business enterprise system.[537]

Veblen's socialistic views were influenced by a bias towards upholding Puritan work ethics, especially notions of thrift and meritocratic industriousness. The elevated position he bestowed upon the engineers and innovators reflected his belief that they pursued a less wasteful and more industrious way of life than either the leisure class or the working class.[538] The technological innovators were 'those who are functionally indispensible to the community [and who] are the men who count.'[539] However, in propping up the industrial class of engineers and innovators, he unfortunately (and ironically) dehumanized the

[537] Stabile, "Thorstein Veblen and His Socialist Contemporaries"; D. A. Walker, "Thorstein Veblen's Economic System," in *Thorstein Veblen: Critical Assessments*, ed. John Cunningham Wood, vol. 2: Veblen's Political Economy, 3 vols. (London: Routledge, 1993), 167–191.
[538] Theodor Adorno in: "Veblen's Attack on Culture," in *Prisms* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983), 73–94; Daniel Horowitz's summary in: *The Morality of Spending*, 38–41.
[539] "Introduction" by C. Wright Mills in: Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, xvii.

working population and the business elite through his reductionist portrayal of them.[540] The business elite were framed as 'parasites' who were 'doomed', while the working class were denounced as being prone to 'materialistic thoughts'.[541]

Veblen's actual use of 'materialism' exemplifies another reoccurring trend: authors that today are often considered to have discussed materialism as it relates to consumerism—did not, in their day, use the term, or, as in the case of Veblen, they used the term in a different manner. Given that 'materialism' was already popularly associated with the corrupting pursuit of material goods and wealth, a question does become raised: why did Veblen connect 'materialism' to the working class rather than to the conspicuous consumption of the leisure class? Perhaps this can best be explained by considering Veblen's motives and audience. His ideas, appealing towards socialist intellectuals, attempted to shift the group vested with the power to change from the proletariat to his chosen 'technological innovators' (i.e., the intellectual elites of industrialism). He denounced the working class as 'materialistic' to push them from the exalted status it held amongst socialists.

Like much of what Veblen did, his approach was unorthodox. Most Socialist and labour movement advocates had a different approach entirely. Rather than accepting the negative association of 'materialism' with the dehumanization of

[540]Walker, "Thorstein Veblen's Economic System," 186.
[541] "Introduction" by C. Wright Mills in: Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, xvii.

the labourer, advocates often attempted to distance themselves from this accusation. This response came to the fore in the late 1800s and early 1900s as the labour movement sought to build legitimacy for their protests.

III.Refuting 'Materialism': The Tactics of the Labour Movement

The labour movement's engagement with the accusations of 'materialism' reflected an attempt to push back against their social castigation. As noted earlier, these refutation tactics took three prominent modes. Supporters of the labour movement: *sanctioned* socialistic ideas or elements associated with 'materialism' through 'baptising' or 'Christianizing' them; *deflected* the accusation of 'materialism' towards another social group—in this case, the capitalists; or *vindicated* their ideas by redefining or clarifying their concepts—in this case, by distinguishing between the different meanings of 'materialism', they sought to purify their ideas, to legitimize their beliefs, and to refute the derogatory nature of the allegations.

i) Sanctioning Elements of 'Materialism'

Sanctioning ideas associated with 'materialism' was prominently exemplified in the writings of Washington Gladden. Gladden was a Social Gospel advocate for worker's rights and the first notable American clergy to support the ideas of unions. He attempted to protect the working class from the offensive association with 'materialism' by encouraging the labour movement and

capitalists to adopt 'Christian ideas and sentiments'.[542] He argued that the application of a 'Christian law', as found in the gospels and exemplified by Jesus, was needed to thwart 'the [socialist] theories of materialistic political economy'.[543] Without it, socialism was in danger of: 'becoming shallow and heartless;' 'confining the attention to physical forces, and putting all the stress on physical remedies'; 'dealing with its subjects from a stand-point purely materialistic and mechanical'; and thus 'utterly failing to serve mankind.'[544] His approach accordingly still kept 'materialism' as a point on the continuum of socialistic ideas, yet it was a position that was to be avoided. By contrasting his ideas against 'materialism', he could sanction his socialistic views, creating a space that allowed other reformists the opportunity to advocate for Christian socialism.

Gladden's use of 'materialism' reflected his interests in gaining support for unionization, collective bargaining, and recognition of the worker and worker's rights. His battle was not one in which he wanted to denounce capitalism and the capitalist businessman; his goal was to woo capitalists to get them to accede. He reasoned that it was better if the 'captains of industry' kept the 'leadership of industry', with the expectation that they would be 'leaders', not

[542] Washington Gladden, *Applied Christianity : Moral Aspects of Social Questions* (London ; New York: Ward, Lock & Co., 1886), 242.
[543] Ibid., 169.
[544] Ibid., 242–243.

'autocrats'.[545] He believed that applying a 'Christian law' would resolve the labour disputes: employers, aware of 'that their wills do affect the condition of their work people', would 'love [their workers] as themselves' and use 'the power which capital and intelligence give them' to seek prosperity not only for themselves but for 'the people in [their] employ'. Wealth and business capacity were to be viewed as 'trusts', 'to be used with a solemn sense of responsibility to God'.[546]

His work helped to solidify the belief that capitalism could result in positive prosperity for all—so long as it was tempered by an ethical approach. It reflected the precedent set by Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) as early as 1899 in his popular "Gospel of Wealth". Carnegie encouraged 'capital and labor' to support each other, seeking fair compensation for workers and a shared 'prosperity' between 'the employer and the employed'.[547] Communism, however, was to be rejected. Capitalism was still to remain the founding system: 'Every man must be allowed "to sit under his own vine and fig-tree, with none to make afraid," if human society is to advance, or even to remain so far advanced as it is.[548]

[545] Washington Gladden, *The Labor Question* (Boston ; New York ; Chicago: The Pilgrim Press, 1911), 98.
[546] Gladden, *Applied Christianity*, 169–170.
[547] Andrew Carnegie, "An Employer's View of the Labor Question," in *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (New York: The Century Co., 1901), 122.
[548] Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth," in *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (New York: The Century Co., 1901), 5-6. (This essay was original printed in the North American Review, June-December 1889.)

Although Carnegie did not use the word 'materialism' in his publications (which may have been a purposeful omission in order to avoid contaminating his ideas with common criticisms of the era), and although he renounced socialism, his ideas resonated with those eventually sanctioned by Gladden. This line of rhetoric accordingly gave both businessmen and socialists a way to 'baptise' their otherwise 'materialistic' actions and ideas: businessmen could claim philanthrocaptialism to justify their wealth pursuits, and socialists could claim Christian benevolence in requesting better wages and working conditions without being accosted of promoting a 'materialistic' political economy.

ii) Deflecting 'Materialism'

Other advocates, especially those within the socialist and communist societies, engaged with the accusation of 'materialism' by redirecting it towards the rich capitalist and/or business community. For example, Laurence Gronlund, an American socialist who published one of the first comprehensive yet simplified analyses of Marxism, *The Co-operative Commonwealth* (1884), indicted the rich class as being the criminals of society, guilty of embracing 'materialism'. His scathing renunciation captured charges that were increasingly levied at the entrepreneurial rich elite and their materialism—a selfish, indulgent life. '[T]heir balls and midnight suppers' were branded as 'rioting on stolen goods' from a 'vast toiling population'. The 'boy or girl in squalor and misery…imbedded in criminality' were the result of the rich people—'*the real thieves and murders*'. They used their workers 'as means to its

ends…destroy[ing] all truly human relations between them.' This was 'conventional morality: materialism triumphant, an overpowering lust of mammon, virtue reduced to the *caput mortuum* of self-interest, a low theory of life, a lost ideal of heroism.'[549]

These sentiments were echoed by other socialists, including the Social Gospel advocate, Walter Rauschenbusch. Rauschenbusch's experience as a pastor to the German immigrants and working class in New York City's Hell Kitchen area profoundly affected his view on capitalism.[550] It led him to be a staunch supporter of socialistic reforms. His approach, however, differed from his fellow socialist, Gronlund, and his fellow Social Gospel advocate, Gladden.

Gronlund sought to redeem Marxism by debasing the proponents of capitalism; Rauschenbusch rejected Marx's materialism, atheism, and revolutionary dogma of 'scientific socialism'. Instead, Rauschenbusch sought to promote a pragmatic Christian socialism vested in New Testament ideals. His socialistic approach called for people to adopt Jesus' mannerisms in recognising the dignity and humanity of all humans. Like Gronlund, he levelled his accusations of 'materialism' at the business elite to renounce their capitalistic individualism. Yet rather than stemming from a desire to legitimize Marxist thoughts, they stemmed from a desire to encourage the adoption of a Christian attitude of

[549] Laurence Gronlund, *Our Destiny, the Influence of Socialism on Morals and Religion, an Essay in Ethics* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1891), 76–77. (Formatting original.)
[550] Charles H. Lippy, "Rauschenbusch, Walter," *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, February 2000), http://www.anb.org/articles/08/08-01243.html.)

brotherly 'love and mercy', and to encourage businessmen to live 'justly' and 'humbly'.[551]

Secondly, unlike Gladden who wanted to keep elements of the capitalistic system in place, Rauschenbusch outrightly denounced capitalism and the dehumanizing effects of industrialisation.[552] He advocated that socialism, not capitalism, aligned with Christianity.[553] As he stated: Socialism's 'fundamental aims are righteous… They were part of the mission of Christianity before the name of Socialism had been spoken.'[554] Capitalism, on the other hand, had caused a 'smoke bank of materialism [to] ascend…shut[ing] the blue dome of heaven from the sight of men.'[555] Placing a Christian spin on the socialistic agenda, Rauschenbusch claimed:

> The spiritual forces of Christianity should be turned against the materialism and mammonism of our industrial and social order. If a man sacrifices his human dignity and self-respect to increase his income, or stunts his intellectual growth and his human affects to swell his bank account, he is to the extent serving mammon and denying God. Likewise if he uses up and injures the life of his fellow-men to make money for himself, he serves mammon and denies God. But our industrial order does both. It makes property the end, and man the means to product it.[556]

[551] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, x, 372.
[552] Jacob H. Dorn, "The Social Gospel and Socialism: A Comparison of the Thought of Francis Greenwood Peabody, Washington Gladden, and Walter Rauschenbusch," *Church History* 62, no. 01 (March 1993): 82.
[553] Smith, "To Reconstruct the World," 51.
[554] Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order*, 405.
[555] Ibid., 315–316.
[556] Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 369.

Rauschenbusch's criticism extended beyond the capitalist class and economic order; he also recognised that the Church had failed society. The Church supported a *lassiez-faire* approach to industrialization and maintained 'an attitude of neutrality' in the labour movement. It had been 'cowed by the prevailing materialism and arrogant selfishness of our business world'.[557]

In order to save the Church and society from the 'materialistic spirit', Rauschenbusch advocated for a new social order to be established—an order in which:

> [T]he worth and freedom of every least human being will be honored and protected; in which the brotherhood of man will be expressed in the common possession of the economic resources of society; and in which the spiritual good of humanity will be set high above the private profit interest of all materialistic groups.[558]

For Rauschenbusch, the ideal world was one in which practical socialism—'justice, property, democracy, equality, cooperation'[559]—prevailed. It was a world in which the common good was secured through the expansion of public ownership of resources, transportation and communication companies, the establishment of protective labour laws, strong unions, and inheritance taxes.

In championing such causes, he aligned himself with the Progressive movement, calling for the government to reform itself and to intervene in

[557] Ibid., 371-372.
[558] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for The Social Gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 224.
[559] Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order*, 376.

changing the economic system. He advocated for the 'economic order' to be 'work[ed] away from one-man power toward the democratizing of industry', to have 'the taxing powers of monopoly' taken away 'from an irresponsible aristocracy [to] put the people in full control of their livelihoods', to 'do away with the present unethical inequalities of wealth' and to 'approximate a human equality.'[560]

The examples of the use of 'materialism' laid out above were part of this push for change. These shaming and defamatory tactics were often used to overcome the corrupting collaborative partnerships between capitalists and government officials. Advocates for change made the public aware of the misdemeanours and increasingly brought into repute the morality of the business elite. By calling into question levels of morality, the assumed position of power of the business elite and the assumed rights of private enterprises became undermined. This opened up the space for socialistic ideas to gain a foothold in America and, to a certain extent, to be separated from a tainted association with 'materialism'.

In the years following, as the Socialist Party of America grew in political influence and as the Progressive government, led by Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909) and Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921), initiated reforms, many of Rauschenbusch's practical socialist ideas were advanced, and the power the

[560] Ibid., 372–373.

business elite held over America through monopolies, trusts, and big businesses became dismantled.[561] Additionally, in going forward, this tactic of deflection resulted in business having to redeem itself from allegations of 'materialism' by adopting a more ethical—or socialistic—mode of capitalism.

iii) Vindicating 'Materialism'

The third tactic employed by socialists was one that directly addressed the derogatory accusations by explaining why these negative views held no substance. This approach attempted to purify the concept, to replace truths, and to neutralize (or at times avert) the accusatory power.

Isador Ladoff, the secretary of the National Executive Board of the Social Democratic Party, typified this approach in his book, *The Passing of Capitalism* (1901), (although other examples abound).[562] Responding to the query, 'Is Socialism Materialistic?', Ladoff challenged the 'alleged ultimatum of Socialism' being 'grossly materialistic'—for eliminating 'from human nature everything human', for preaching 'the brutal gospel of the stomach'; and for reducing '[r]eligion, the fine arts, aesthetics, ethics and idealism…[to] nothing else but

[561] Dorn, "The Social Gospel and Socialism," 93–100; "Progressivism as Christian Strategy" in: Ronald C. White, *The Social Gospel : Religion and Reform in Changing America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), 179–189.
[562] Robert Rives La Monte, "Science and Socialism," in *International Socialist Review*, ed. Algie Martin Simons, vol. 3, September 1900, 1 (Chicago: Charles H. Keer & Company, 1900), 164; William J. (William James) Ghent, *Mass and Class; a Survey of Social Divisions* (New York ; London: The Macmillan Company, 1904), 9; Anton Pannekoek, "Socialism and Religion," in *International Socialist Review*, ed. Algie Martin Simons, trans. Ernest Untermann, vol. 7, March 1907, 1 (Chicago: Charles H. Keer & Company, 1906), 555; and Louis B. Boudin, *The Theoretical System of Karl Marx in the Light of Recent Criticism* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr & Company, 1907), 69–70.)

the sickly outgrowth of a transitory stage of society'.[563] Yet as he contested, it was 'hard to tell how many of these accusations…originate from the ignorance and prejudice of the opponents of our doctrine' and how much of it was 'conscious slander, deliberate calumny, of a hated, feared, new and growing power.[564]

Recognising that it was their 'duty to disprove…the imputation that Socialism is materialistic', he launched into explaining the various types of materialistic philosophies. He questioned: 'which…materialism is Socialism guilty?'[565] It was not the 'materialistic philosophy of the universe' since that had 'little, if any, bearing…on social problems.' Nor was it the materialistic conception of human life, often unjustly associated with 'unethical conduct'. One might 'be convinced that nothing exists but our conception of things in our consciousness…and still be the most unscrupulous exploiter of the weak and poor.' Inversely, one may believe 'that nothing exists but matter and be the personification of altruism, the best member of society.' What Socialism was guilty of was 'expounding a materialistic philosophy of history'.[566]

[563] Isador Ladoff, *The Passing of Capitalism, and the Mission of Socialism* (Terre Haute, Ind: Debs publishing company, 1901), 60.
[564] Ibid., 60.
[565] Ibid., 60.
[566] Ibid., 60.

He implored readers to consider 'whom deserves more the imputations of gross materialism':[567]

> [T]he individualists, who preach…the war of all against all, and non-interference of society…who consider selfishness as the best guide of social conduct and sole basis of economic activity, who put a premium on low cunning, restless speculation and unscrupulous exploitation of men by men, who wash their hands in human blood and indirectly feed on human flesh and marrow.
>
> [O]r Socialists, who consider the interests (all the interests—the spiritual as well as the material)—of humanity as a whole…who advocate harmony and brotherhood between those units of society,…who substitute co-operation for competition, who preach altruism as the wisest and safest basis of social conduct,…who by a rational reconstruction of society want to do away with every incentive of selfishness,…who consider speculation with the products of human labor as criminal, who are always to be found in the tents of those perishing for the great cause of human love and reason.[568]

Contrary to popular opinion, he argued, it was the individualists who were 'more likely to devote his activity and energy to materialistic pursuits'—'the gain of wealth, for its own sake and by any means, the egoistic enjoyment to this ill-gained wealth in gluttony, drunkenness and other dissipations'. It was the Socialists who were 'more likely to devote his life to the disinterested service in the cause of the human race, to acquirement of knowledge, to lead a life of high thinking and pure aesthetic enjoyment'. Ladoff exonerated socialism from a corruptible materialism, affirming it to be 'an ethical movement… aflame with humanitarian passion.'[569]

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[567] Ibid., 65.
[568] Ibid., 65–66.
[569] Ibid., 66.

Likewise, the Social Gospel supporter and Episcopal Priest, Algernon Sidney Crapsey (1847-1927), noted that the working class philosophy—described by 'both its friends and its enemies…by the word materialistic', was 'simply a scientific interpretation of history…suffering from the condemnation of the world, just as the other great philosophies and sciences did in their day'.[570] As he described, 'materialism…. was in bad odor':

> The man in the street has been taught to think that a materialist is a low fellow, indulging freely in his grosser appetites, whose mind is set on earthly things, whose god is his belly, whose energies are expended in the acquisition of gold and silver and houses and lands and cattle and sheep and women.[571]

The philosophy of the working-class movement—equated to 'the philosophy of the stomach'—was derided by 'all those who…think in terms of the intellect and of the heart'.[572] Yet as Crapsey argued, the working-class were in fact 'seeking to overturn…the most intensely materialistic [society] known [in] history…. The soul of a girl is not reckoned when it comes to a matter of profits. Beauty is sacrificed every day to the most crass utility.'[573] Society suffered from misperception. The overly-satiated business man will accuse the starving working-class agitator: '"You are a materialist," and the agitator…will say proudly "You are right, I am a materialist."[574] Yet while 'the

[570] Algernon Sidney Crapsey, *The Rise of the Working-Class* (New York: The Century Co., 1914), 281, 287.
[571] Ibid., 281.
[572] Ibid., 281–282.
[573] Ibid., 282.
[574] Ibid., 282–283.

working-class philosopher [used] the word materialist in its purely philosophic sense…his opponent [employed] the word in its more popular and moral meaning…. That such a movement as this should be condemned as materialistic is one of the ironies of fate.' For in reality, 'the working-class movement is one of the most idealistic.' They fought for the 'betterment of mankind'.[575]

Writings such as these clarified what 'materialism' meant to socialism in hopes that the truth would eradicate the negative associations implicitly held by the 'man in the street'. In applying this tactic, socialists elevated their 'materialism' and wove in other truths that in turn debased the 'materialism' of the industrial order. It was, in essence, a counter attack that sought to turn ignorant fears into social support for their cause.

IV. The Failure of Refuting 'Materialism': The Protection of American 'Truths' and 'Freedoms'

Although advocates, such as Ladoff and Crapsey, pushed back against the association of socialism with an immoral materialism, their counter-perspective did not bring about the societal-wide shift for which they had hoped. Their perspective ran into walls of resistance: it ran contrary to the prevailing truth and value systems upheld by the upper and middle classes—who dominated

[575] Ibid., 283–284.

the economic system—and the intellectual, religious and political elite—who dominated the cultural and social systems.

Americans were indoctrinated to believe that capitalism, not communism, was the best way to achieve its 'manifest destiny'. Socialism threatened America's primary mode of distinction between its classes, and importantly, the distinction that set it apart from other nations: its economic capital. It undermined the value of individual industriousness and the belief in the right to private property. Even though the lives of the majority of its populace questioned the accuracy of some of these claims, the American elite still believed they led a Christian democracy. For them, these truths were not to be compromised.[576] As Herbert Hoover (1874-1964), President of the United State from 1929-1933, described: for American to adopt Socialism or Bolshevism would take away 'fairness' and the incentive that impelled people to run the 'race' to succeed, it would 'mean the destruction of the driving force of equal opportunity,…the destruction of our Constitution…. [and] the abandonment of the Nation's spiritual heritage.'[577]

Socialism, although it had started to gain in popularity, was quashed in America in the early part of the 1900s after the leader of the Socialist Party, Eugene Debs (1855-1926), gave speeches that threatened these 'truths'. In

[576] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, 390–391.
[577] Herbert Hoover, "Address on the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Kings Mountain," The American Presidential Project (Kings Mountain, South Carolina, October 7, 1930), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=22379.

1912, in his party's acceptance speech he claimed the 'Socialist party's missions' was 'to destroy capitalist despotism': 'To this end the workers are steadily organizing and fitting themselves for the day when they shall take control of the people's industries'.[578]

During the presidential elections of 1912, Debs' Socialist Party anticipated securing two million votes (13.3 percent).[579] In the end, the Socialist Party secured only 6 percent of the votes (900,000 votes). It did not recover its political support.[580] Socialism became known as 'a false philosophy of life—a materialism of the rankest kind' that denied 'patriotism and lofty ideals…the safe-guards of the Republic.'[581] The polemics of the day had effectively positioned socialism as contra-American, which frightened off the middle class.[582]

Epithets of 'materialism', hurled to delegitimize socialistic ideals, continued to prevail well into the twentieth century. In the polemics of the Cold War era (c. 1947-1991), however, it was communism that replaced socialism as the new

[578] Eugene Debs, "Speech of Acceptance," *International Socialist Review*, October 1912, http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5725/.
[579] Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement 1897-1912* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2005), 367.
[580] "Socialism in America," *United States History*, 2015, http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1669.html.
[581] Thomas Lonergan, "Socialism Spells Revolution," in *The Common Cause*, ed. John R. Meader, vol. 4 (New York: The Social Reform Press, 1912), 36.
[582] Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement 1897-1912*, 368–369.

enemy to the American way of life.[583] Thomas Aiello records that during the 'Red Scares', a 'godless communism…rooted itself as a functional epithet': Its 'godless materialism' pushed Americans to latch on to a self-image increasingly tied to Christianity, leaving 'the choice between Americanism and Communism…without room for compromise.'[584] Presidential speeches from Harry S. Truman (1884-1972), president from 1945-1953, and Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969), president from 1953-1961, entrenched this view.

Truman, in 1949, positioned America as being 'up against' those who are 'strictly materialistic'. The nation needed to defend, 'abroad' and 'at home', against the 'new barbarism' that 'systematically persecuted' men and women 'for their religious beliefs', incited 'campaigns...to turn religion into a tool of the state', and led men to conceive others 'as slaves, and not as brethren'.[585] By 1951, he couched the 'struggle' between 'people who believe in spiritual values, and people who believe in nothing but materialism', as a fight for 'freedom'. This was a fight 'for the right to worship as we please…the right to read what

[583] Fred Schwarz, *You Can Trust the Communists (to Be Communists)* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Christian Anti-Communists Crusade, Prentice-Hall, 1960), http://www.schwarzreport.org/resources/you-can-trust-the-communists-to-be-communists/chapter-1-trust-the-communists; Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 7; Joseph Banks Rhine, *New World of the Mind* (New York: William Sloane, 1953), 267; Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964), 94; Patrick Allitt, "Religion and Materialism: 1950-1970," in *Religion in America Since 1945: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 21–42.
[584] Thomas Aiello, "Constructing 'Godless Communism': Religion, Politics, and Popular Culture, 1954-1960," *The Journal of American Popular Culture* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2005), http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/spring_2005/aiello.htm.
[585] Harry S. Truman, "Address at a Luncheon of the National Conference of Christians and Jews," The American Presidential Project (Mayflower Hotel, Washington, DC, November 11, 1949), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13354.

we please…the right to speak what we please, and the right to elect public officials of our own choosing.' It was a fight to secure benefits for individuals over 'enslavement of [individuals] for the benefit of the state'. [586]

Eisenhower continued this rhetoric unabated: the 'doctrine of materialism' was the 'greatest potential enemy in the world' as it rejected the values and 'things of the spirit and the intellect' that Americans claimed to 'hold dear'. It denied people 'true' freedom.[587] This idea of 'freedom', under Truman and Eisenhower, expanded to include the freedom that came with America's material prosperity. Indeed, since America's belief in a manifest destiny made religion and economic progress so intertwined, 'materialism' was a double threat: because materialism denied God, it denied America's manifest destiny, and thus threatened the country's claim that economic progress was an essential element to securing 'peace', 'brotherhood', 'freedom' and 'dignity'.[588] It threatened to undermine the assertions America used to justify its economic superpower. Communism and its materialism had to be repelled.

Through an interesting twist of words, the emphasis of materialism's corrupting nature was shifted from one associated with America's material prosperity towards one associated with the communist's philosophy, its denial of

[586] Harry S. Truman, "Remarks at a Dinner of the Society of Business Magazine Editors," The American Presidential Project (Washington, DC, January 19, 1951), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13865.
[587] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Remarks at Luncheon Meeting of the Association of American Colleges," The American Presidential Project (Statler Hotel, Washington D.C., January 13, 1955), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10243.
[588] Truman, "Address at a Luncheon of the National Conference of Christians and Jews".

freedoms, and its defilement of life. It was a counter-refutation. America's 'materialism' became deflected and also sanctioned by claims to a higher set of ideals, freedoms, and life. Exemplifying this rhetorical ploy was Eisenhower, who attacked the age-old fears: America's 'opulence' would not lead to its 'depravity and ultimate destruction' as it had for other nations, because America was 'not motivated by materialism'. Americans held 'dear the things of the spirit and the intellect'. They were led by 'spiritual values' and 'ideals of freedom, democracy, human dignity and social justice'.[589] The 'materialistic dialectic', on the other hand, denied these values; it promoted only things that you could 'see or express in the material'. It denied human dignity by depriving men and women of equality 'before the law' and equality in opportunities. It made citizens equal through government-controlled economies, rather than through their own industriousness. [590]

These polemics branded communism as dangerously 'materialistic' not only to protect the American way of life, but also to justify America's military and economic dominance in the world. It helped gain monetary and political support for the Cold War initiatives.

Truman, for example, had initially used the ideals of 'freedom' and 'dignity' to justify America's intervention in Europe and the containment of communism.

[589] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Address in Detroit at the National Automobile Show Industry Dinner," The American Presidential Project (Michigan, United States, October 17, 1960), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=11982.
[590] Ibid.

This occurred in 1947 when America stepped in to prevent communism from infiltrating two strategically located countries—Greece, a gateway to Eastern Europe, and Turkey, a portal to oil-rich Middle East countries. Britain's post-war economy meant that it could no longer provide military and financial aid to Greece and Turkey. It sought help from America to prevent the Soviet power from taking hold. Yet Truman, who took over the presidency upon the unexpected death of F.D. Roosevelt, had little previous involvement in dealing with foreign policy. Truman was advised that the only way he could gain support from Congress and a reluctant public was 'to "scare hell" out of the American people.'[591] The result was a speech delivered to Congress on March 12th, 1947, which became known as the 'Truman Doctrine'. It positioned communism as a threat to the freedoms Americans valued: 'It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.' As the 'leader of the 'free world', America had to intervene to support 'freedom-loving peoples of the world', to 'make possible lasting freedom and independence for all [the United Nation's] members, and to support 'world peace'.[592]

In many of his speeches Eisenhower likewise described how America needed to 'remain strong in all the economic and the scientific affairs of the world'; they

[591] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 780.
[592] Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," The American Presidential Project (Joint Session of Congress, Washington D.C., March 12, 1947), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12846.

had to 'remain strong militarily for the protection of…our rights',[593] and to prevent a 'collapse into materialism and utter dependence on the omnipotent State.'[594] This was a 'race', to see:

> [W]hether the material and spiritual needs of the world will be better met through dictatorial control, communized enterprise, immorality and inhumanity, or through freedom, private enterprise, and cooperative action, inspired by the concepts of morality and respect for human dignity.[595]

As part of this race to secure freedom for individuals, America's consumer markets became one of the pillars of America's freedom and, ironically, its anti-materialistic stance. As the *New York Times* journalist, James Reston (1909-1995) wrote: Washington 'engaged in an ideological war' that 'condemns the materialism of an atheistic enemy, but glorifies its own materialism.'[596]

[593] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Remarks at the World Christian Endeavor Convention," The American Presidential Project (Mayflower Hotel, Washington, DC, July 15, 1954), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9953.
[594] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Address at the Golden Jubilee Dinner of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, New York City," The American Presidential Project (Michigan, United States, September 26, 1960), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=11958.
[595] Eisenhower, "Address in Detroit at the National Automobile Show Industry Dinner."
[596] As quoted in: C. Wright Mills, *Power Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 344. Reston's quote original comes The New York Times, 10 April 1955, 10E.

Chapter Twelve

‘Materialism’ as a Threat to Social Order and to The Hierarchy (c. 1880)

The third theme associated with ‘materialism’, as alluded to in prior excerpts, was an excessive focus on the material aspects of life, particularly consumers and those who pursued wealth. This meaning arose and intensified as American society grappled with the changes brought by its economic growth. Many of the entries that promoted this theme came from those who sought to curb the socially dislocating changes and to reform society to American ideals. Three prominent examples of early works that established this meaning of ‘materialism’ included those written by Emerson, Strong, and the journalist George Frederic Parsons (1840-1893).

‘Materialism’ as Mammonism and the Idolization of Wealth and Material Pursuits

Emerson, over the course of his life, gradually shifted the meaning he applied to ‘materialism’ from a neutral stance, associated with celebrating art and objects, to a negative interpretation. This shift was a product of the disconcerting changes he had witnessed. Emerson had observed the American dream of an independent, hard-working, and economizing yeoman, and the

benevolent natural aristocracy being usurped by a new reality: an economic system that encouraged industrialisation, a commercialization of life, and a selfish pursuit of 'unneeded' goods. As Emerson lamented: 'We buy much of Europe that does not make us better men'. The imports of 'trifles, dancers, singers, laces, books of patterns, modes, gloves, and cologne, manuals of Gothic architecture, steam-made ornaments' reflected an 'aping of foreign and English life' that was corrupting the nation, and encouraging a 'lying vanity' and 'scornful materialism'. [597]

Less than a decade later, Josiah Strong, a leader of the Social Gospel movement, disseminated 'materialism' and its negative connotations to the masses. Strong's works were popular and powerful. His book, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (1885), exceeded half a million copies, and had reprints of chapters in journals and multiple translations.[598] He appealed to the middle and upper classes by using vivid, qualitative descriptions of 'perils' that he believed effected the progress of the country. These 'perils' included: immigration; Romanism (Catholicism); the secularization of the school system; the polygamy and ecclesiastical despotism of Mormonism; intemperance; socialism and the atheistic, materialistic beliefs of the labour classes; Mammonism and luxuriousness brought about by materialistic pursuits for

[597] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Fortune of the Republic : Lecture Delivered at the Old South Church, March 30, 1878* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1878), 26–27, 30.
[598]Gary Scott Smith, "Strong, Josiah," *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, February 2000), http://www.anb.org/articles/05/05-00754.html; Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, American Century Series Y (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 44.)

wealth; and urbanization and the resulting weakening of morals, religion, and government.[599] Strong made his writings seem full of 'truths' by quantifying the perils: he substantiated his claims with statistics on demographic changes, urbanization, industrial development, the growth of the socialistic movement, religious affiliations and church attendance, the number of saloons, the growth of wealth, and the profits earned by the 'Wall Street Kings'.[600]

The 'truth' he told of 'materialism' took on two forms. The first was associated with socialism and its anti-religious rhetoric. The second resonated with earlier themes of life being defined by 'sensuous' elements 'appraised in dollars and cents'; a 'worship' of 'money' that led to a 'perversion and degradation' of life; the 'moneyed influence' of 'great corporations' on political parties; an 'increasing tendency towards self-indulgence' and luxurious living brought about by mechanical inventions; and a material prosperity that hid 'a decaying core'. He connected 'materialism' with pejorative concepts that were popular in the polemics of the era: 'luxuriousness' and 'Mammonism'. The latter he described as the devotion to pursue riches through means such as speculation, gambling, fraud, government kleptocracy, and exploitation of others by the 'commercial peoples'.[601]

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[599] Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York: Baker & Taylor Co. for the American Home Missionary Society, 1885); Josiah Strong, *Our Country, Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*, Revised edition (New York: Baker & Taylor Co. for the American Home Missionary Society, 1891).
[600] Strong, *Our Country*, 103, 112–113, 125–126; *Our Country, (Revised Ed.),* 154, 162–163, 175.
[601] Strong, *Our Country*, 119-123.

Strong promulgated the belief that it was the foreign population who were the key contributors to '[t]he nineteenth century city [being] materialistic; that is, in its growth, the intellectual and moral have not kept pace with the physical.' Unacquainted with the roots of American democratic ideals, they lacked an understanding of 'duty', which in turn led to a narrow focus on putting money in their individual 'purse', whether that was through employing 'tricks of the trade' in politics or business, or through demanding socialistic 'redistribution of general possessions'.[602] Their 'ignorance and sin' had created cities that were increasingly ungovernable.[603] The 'unprecedented increase of wealth' in cities afforded 'unprecedented opportunities for self-gratification;…without a corresponding increase of self-control,' Americans were at risk of becoming 'enervated and demoralized in the lap of luxury'. Such a situation encouraged 'the corrupt use of money' and the use of political posts for 'private gain' versus 'public good'. Strong feared that if the foreign population remained 'uninstructed…the boss will certainly rule the city when the city rules the nation'; in turn, the 'materialism of the city' would spread, becoming the 'greatest peril to modern civilization…a menace to itself to the state, and to the nation.'[604]

Behind his polemics and use of 'materialism' were specific goals: Strong wrote many of his books to give credence to the Home Missionary movement and its

[602] Strong, *Our Country*, 160–161.
[603] Ibid., 76, 82.
[604] Ibid., 101, 103.

social reform efforts geared towards 'evangelization of the land'.[605] Strong and other Social Gospel supporters advocated that social activism—promoting a 'quickening [of Protestant] morals and intellectual life'—would save society from the 'ignorance and sin of a materialistic civilization'.[606] He wanted to justify efforts to reform the American West and the cities where many of these 'perils', due to growing foreign populations, were believed to be the greatest.[607] This call for reform was motivated by Strong's belief in the popular social evolution theory of the era, which held the Anglo-Saxon race to be naturally superior to other races. He consequently connected the West's abundance in natural resources and the assimilation of foreigners to be essential for America and its Anglo-Saxon race to secure their dominant role in the economic and social progress of the world.[608]

A fellow writer of the era, the journalist George Frederic Parsons,[609] gave explicit examples of the deceitful tactics Westerners employed to secure wealth. In his article, "The Growth of Materialism" (1887), he depicted a Western city ruined by speculation. He described how a falsified rumour of the discovery of rich ore in a mine had led to 'a burst of uncontrollable greed…upon the market.' It swept up all community members, causing 'reckless and desperate traffickings' with women becoming 'wilder than the men': wives pledged title-

[605] Ibid., Prefatory Note.
[606] Strong, *The Twentieth Century City*, 76–77.
[607] Ibid., 126-127, 192–193.
[608] Ibid., Title Page.
[609] George Frederic Parsons," *Sacramento Daily Union* 85, no. 128 (July 20, 1893): 2.

deeds, women pledged jewels, and households took chattel mortgages on their furniture. The 'excitement' brought out 'the basest traits of human nature'. In a society known, in normal times, for cheating, robbing widows and orphans, and kidnapping or murdering those who threatened means to wealth, it meant complete disintegration. 'Moral laxity' turned into no moral code at all. 'It was a scramble in which no pity, no mercy, no consideration whatever, was shown by any one to any one.' When the rumour was proved false, 'the wrecks were many, and the salvages rare'. Yet materialism continued to grow: After 'the small minority of prosperous robbers' and those 'gorged with iniquitous gains' emerged, they 'made their peace with their victims by spending money lavishly; by exhibiting a barbarous ostentation;' and by renewing hope for the 'unlucky' that they might 'some day emulating these extravagances'.[610]

We see in these initial examples similar truths and differences told about 'materialism': Emerson, Strong, and Parsons all promoted the view that 'materialism' corrupted society, yet they differed in the directionality of the accusations: *who* or *what* was 'materialistic' shifted pending the perceived threat. This change in directionality makes apparent the biased nature of 'materialism': it is a moral judgement hurled with a vested interest. In these writings it was used to defend against perceived threats. Yet as the social context changed, the perceived threats changed, and the allegations of 'materialism' likewise shifted. Emerson's accusations of 'materialism', for

[610] George Frederic Parsons, "The Growth of Materialism," *The Atlantic Monthly* 60, no. 358 (August 1887): 158–160.

example, were used to defend against the threats of a European influence and the manufactured goods that Americans sought to import. They were a product of the social dislocations caused by an increase in trade and industrialisation, and a desire by Americans to establish their independence. Strong's accusations of 'materialism', however, were used to defend against the threats of the foreign invaders. They were a product of the social dislocations caused by immigration and motives that sought to give credence to the civilizing mission of reformers.

In the twentieth century, under subsequent writers and speakers, this pattern would be repeated. The professed 'truth' that 'materialism' led to a corrupting pursuit of material means of life, a decaying core, and a vain, false and inferior mode of life became a prevailing view repeated in discourse; however, who it was applied to, and what it encompassed, shifted.

I. 'Materialism' of the Wealth Pursuers and Status Seekers

In the early 1900s, 'materialism' was used to denounce inappropriate pursuits of wealth as members of society reacted against a disturbing sense of uncontrolled avarice. For example, in 1901, Rush C. Hawkins (1831-1920), a political reform activist and art patron,[611] wrote an essay elaborating on "Some

[611] "Rush Hawkins," *The New York Times*, October 26, 1920, sec. Obituary, http://localhistory.morrisville.edu/sites/unitinfo/hawkins.html.

Results of Criminal Materialism". In his critique, he blamed 'materialism' for creating a society in which 'the pursuit of material objectives' and 'the possession of wealth' were esteemed, 'while morality, honesty, and yearning for the decencies and honest government, which ought to be the foundation of all civilization, sit upon the fallen ramparts of our once noble national structure'.[612] 'Materialistic' pursuits were likewise responsible for the 'corrupt politics' and the 'nefarious schemes' of the 'Boss' and the 'Business Man' who had 'fashioned politics into business [and made] political office and honors matters of commercial barter'. The morally superior politicians, described as the 'notable prototypes, who… erected the structure of all that is truly great in our nationality', had disappeared. They had been replaced by the morally inferior politicians, described as those 'often sent from the slums of the cities and the meagrely furnished back room offices'—the 'disreputable huckstering, quick-turning, spoils-seeking, bribe-taking machine corruptionist, who knows nothing of the moral side of political occupations, and regards office as a mine [of]…substantial profits.'[613]

Josiah Strong added that the 'materialism of the city' that was reflected in 'municipal misrule', was not only because men 'manipulate[d] politics for their private interests' but also because some men chose to 'wash their hands of

[612] Rush Christopher Hawkins, "Some Results of Criminal Materialism," in *Our Political Degradation; Being Several Short Essays Setting Forth Certain Facts Which Every Thoughtful Citizen of the United States Should Know* (New York: The Grafton Press, 1904), 278, 280. The Essay "Some Results of Criminal Materialism" was written in January 1901.
[613] Ibid., 278, 283.

public concerns'. These men were accused of neglecting 'politics for their private interests.'[614] The remedy for this 'materialism' that Strong proposed was a 'new patriotism': 'one which is civil rather than military;…one which purified politics and substitutes statesmen for demagogues'.[615] Strong called for men to 'face the hatred of pothouse politicians', to protest against the corrupt political bosses, to smash the political 'machines', and to overturn the 'moneyed influence'.[616]

Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) did just this. In the early part of the 1900s, as he assumed the presidency (1901-1909), he charged forward with the Progressive Era's political and economical reforms. The 'new patriotism' he embodied gradually cleaned up politics. With this change the associations of politicians with 'materialism' steadily decreased. Politicians, in essence, were redeemed. As Roosevelt noted in his autobiography:

> For thirty years after the Civil War the creed of mere materialism was rampant in both American politics and American business, and many, many strong men, in accordance with the prevailing commercial and political morality, did things for which they deserve blame and condemnation; but if they now sincerely change, and strive for better things, it is unwise and unjust to bar them from fellowship.[617]

[614] Ibid., 103-104.
[615] Ibid., 109.
[616] Ibid., 109–110.
[617] Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt : An Autobiography* (New York, Boston, Chicago: The Macmillan Company, 1913), 168.

Yet as politicians became redeemed, the business elite became the heirs of immoral and corrupt behaviours. In essence, this manoeuvre was one in which the Progressive Era's politicians sought to elevate their status in society by claiming a higher moral ground. They deflected the accusation of 'materialism'. It was the 'business world' whose 'reckless speculation and disregard of legitimate business methods' could compromise America's 'unprecedented prosperity'.[618] This elevated status gave politicians a power through symbolic capital that they leveraged to challenge the power of the business world and its economic capital.

Under Roosevelt, anti-trust legislation brought an end to the *laissez-faire* economics and regulated big business. Roosevelt, however, needed to still encourage business to flourish given that 'corporations and [industrial] combinations had become indispensable':[619] they were the enablers of America's 'leadership of the international industrial world', providers of employment, and creators of markets for farmers' goods.[620] Thus, similar to Parker, Roosevelt had to separate out a morally justified prosperity vis-à-vis an immoral accumulation of wealth to ensure America's corporates thrived and America retained its industrial global leadership. Roosevelt envisioned the regulation of corporates

[618] Theodore Roosevelt, "State of the Union Speech," December 3, 1906, http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/theodore-roosevelt/state-of-the-union-1906.php.
[619] Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt : An Autobiography*, 463.
[620] Theodore Roosevelt, "State of the Union Speech," December 2, 1902, http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/theodore-roosevelt/state-of-the-union-1902.php.

not as an 'effort to destroy them', rather, it was to be an effort to 'do away with any evil in them.'[621] As he delineated in his State of the Union speech in 1902:

> We draw the line against misconduct, not against wealth. The capitalist who, alone or in conjunction with his fellows, performs some great industrial feat by which he wins money is a welldoer, not a wrongdoer, provided only he works in proper and legitimate lines.[622]

Roosevelt's re-direction of the roots of 'evil' and threats to social order helped to popularize a trend in which 'materialism' was increasingly used to delegitimize those self-made millionaires and aspiring businessmen who disregarded a 'legitimate' means of prosperity.[623] This rhetoric played upon the connections previously established by writers, such as Strong and Parsons, which equated the get-rich-quick schemes with 'a hardness, an unscrupulousness, a moral laxity'.[624] As Parsons previously characterised, the materialistic-driven businessman and his wealth represented 'selfishness in its most open and undisguised form'. It was:

> [S]elfishness ministering to its own rapacity by a hundred base and shameful tricks and chicaneries; selfishness assisting itself with deceit and fraud, with overreaching and misrepresentation; selfishness pluming itself upon superior intelligence when it effects a roguery by playing upon the trustfulness of another; selfishness hardily sneering at integrity and scoffing at honor as an outworn imbecility…. The haste to be rich, indeed, debases everything and demoralizes every one.[625]

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[621] Theodore Roosevelt, "State of the Union Speech," December 2, 1902, http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/theodore-roosevelt/state-of-the-union-1902.php.
[622] Ibid.
[623] See for example: John Carter, "The American Malaise: As Seen Through Recent Books," *The Outlook*, November 27, 1929, 511–512; James Truslow Adams, *Our Business Civilization: Some Aspects of American Culture* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1929), 190–191.
[624] Parsons, "The Growth of Materialism," 159.
[625] Ibid., 163–164.

By association, self-made millionaires were often accused of lacking morals and embracing a 'materialistic' lifestyle that left them as an empty, decaying core. Hawkins deplored the 'materialism' of the 'watering-pot millionaire': it bred a false 'tailor-made' aristocracy with an 'ostentatious standard of ill-breeding and bad manners.'[626] The American author Harold Bell Wright (1872-1944), in his novel *The Eyes of the World* (1914), likewise captured this view in his description of an elderly, dying millionaire. Nicknaming the millionaire 'Materialism', he described Materialism at a party:

> The creature's wasted, skeleton-like limbs were clothed grotesquely in conventional evening dress. His haggard, bestial face—repulsive with every mark of his wicked, licentious years—grinned with an insane determination to take the place that was his by right of his money bags…[627]

These were the rich 'pseudo-superior men' described in the excerpts from Schwarz's works (Chapter 9). They were the 'materialists' whose axiom was to 'do what-ever leads to your success', 'to repress all…legitimate aspirations towards fame, material well-being, etc.' and achieve 'gratification' even at the 'expense of the nobler aims of life.' [628,]

By the 1920s, America's economic development gave rise to a decade of prosperity as the government encouraged business, and business flourished. New industries, efficient factories, mass production, high wages, and

[626] Hawkins, "Some Results of Criminal Materialism," 278–279.
[627] Wright, *The Eyes of the World*, 224.
[628] Schwarz, *General Types of Superior Men*, 313.

opportunities to make money, such as in the stock market, came to define America.[629] The growth of consumer goods stimulated other industries: the automobile, for example, fostered expansions in steel, rubber, oil, construction, and tourism.[630] Labour- and time-saving devices, such as the vacuum cleaner, washing machine, and refrigerator, led to an increase in leisure time, which in turn spawned the growth of new modes of leisure. The resulting popularization of cinema attendance, radios, and phonographs in turn brought about a new celebrity culture of movie and sport stars.[631] Economic and social barriers became torn down. A larger class of aspiring nouveau riche, commonly called 'parvenu', emerged. And with the growth of this class came the use of delegitimizing discourse to demean their 'emulative', 'conspicuous' consumption. The nouveau riche and parvenu became the common perpetrators of a 'materialistic' lifestyle: they were accused of consuming goods not for a true appreciation of culture and refinement, but merely for the status the goods denoted or as part of their hedonistic lifestyle; their consumption was denounced to be inferior, shallow, and ungenuine; their pursuit of wealth and material goods was believed to lead to disenchantment and discontentment.

[629] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 666–667.
[630] Leo Wolman, "Consumption and the Standard of Living," in *Recent Economic Changes in the United States*, ed. Committee on Recent Economic Changes of the President's Conference on Unemployment, vol. 1, National Bureau of Economic Research (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1929), 59.
[631] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 663–664.

For example, in an "Essay on Money" (1920), published in multiple magazines, the nouveau riche were deplored for allowing 'materialistic' pursuits to govern their lives:

> The discovery that money does not really make men happy is the most tragic thing in the life of the *nouveau riche*. All the preachers and moralists had been warning him about it for thousands of years, but he never believed them. He had a firm conviction that a sunny little patch could be bought for him somewhere in the universe, if only he could pay the price in cash.... The dream of living wherever one pleases…to buy a ship or a motor-car, to see everything—it is a dream that intoxicates any of us. It is the materialist's fairy tale.[632]

This 'fairy tale' was a product of the latent 'greed' that drove man to long 'for all experiences, all spectacles.'[633] Yet it was 'open to doubt if millionaires [were] happier' than those who lived a simplifier life, such as 'agricultural laborers': 'They can purchase more enjoyable things, but they cannot purchase the gift of enjoying them'. It was argued that '[a] poor child may get more pleasure from a collection of birds' eggs than a millionaire gets from his private gallery of old masters.' The nouveau riche's consumerism was meaningless acquisitiveness that led to emptiness: '[A]s the moralists have told us, there is little happiness to be got out of these conquests of glittering things!'[634]

Similarly, *Harper's* magazine featured critiques of the 'new rich' written by the prominent essayist and intellectual elite, Katharine Elizabeth Fullerton Gerould

[632] "As Essay on Money," in *The Living Age*, (Reprinted from The New Statesman), vol. 944, Eighth Series 19 (Boston: E. Littell & Company, 1920), 46. (Formatting original).
[633] Ibid.
[634] Ibid.

(1879-1944).[635] In her 1929 essay, "The Hard-Boiled Era", she described the 'majority of the [new] rich' as 'people unequipped for the proper evaluation of wealth':[636]

> If you suddenly bestow [wealth] on the crowd that has been demanding "bread and circuses," that crowd will simply buy better bread and bigger circuses.[637]

The people who knew 'what money is good for [were] those who have had it long enough to learn.' These 'aristocrats' were esteemed as being able to 'make a spiritual use of wealth'; the 'new rich', on the other hand, were estimated to be capable of only a 'materialistic dream'. It was the 'parvenu' who contributed to the 'American civilization [being] increasingly materialistic' as they bred a society that spent wealth on material comforts that drugged, rather than purified, the nation.[638] As Gerould deplored:

> We are smothered in material comfort…. Inevitably we seek the thrills that can most easily be felt and assessed. These have always been physical and nervous thrills…. Thanks to our herding in towns, to the multiplied contacts *via* news-sheets, radio, telephone, motor car…we have a superficial sophistication that we did not have, as a nation, twenty-five years ago.[639]

These depictions of the extravagances and their questionable effects resonated in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Written during this Jazz Age

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[635] Althea E. Rhodes, "Gerould, Katharine Fullerton," *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, February 2000), http://www.anb.org/articles/16/16-02027.html.
[636] Katharine Fullerton Gerould, "This Hard-Boiled Era," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, February 1, 1929, 271.
[637] Ibid.
[638] Ibid.
[639] Ibid. (Formatting original).

era, it is commonly associated in today's literature with capturing themes of the nouveau riche's pseudo, materialistic lifestyle.[640] It is interesting to note, however, that Fitzgerald (1896-1940) did not use the word 'materialism' in the novel nor was the novel popular during his lifetime.[641] (When he used the word it was in the philosophical sense in his novel, *This Side of Paradise*)[642] Fitzgerald remained elusive and ambivalent in his judgement of the self-made man, Jay Gatsby, which may have been because he himself desired the life of Gatsby.[643] Nevertheless, the lives and descriptions of his characters in *The Great Gatsby* and in his other publications resonated with the era's popular discourse and its associations with 'materialism'. It was alluded to in Fitzgerald's description of Gatsby's belief in 'the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eludes then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will

[640] "Within and Without: F. Scott Fitzgerald and American Consumer Culture," in *Critical Insights: F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2010), 34–54; Kirk Curnutt, "Fitzgerald's Consumer World," in *A Historical Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 85–128; "Introduction" written by Ruth Prigozy in F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, ed. Ruth Prigozy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), vii–xxxvi; Johannes Malkmes, *American Consumer Culture and Its Society: From F. Scott Fitzgerald`s 1920s Modernism to Bret Easton Ellis`1980s Blank Fiction* (Hamburg,: Diplomica Verlag, 2011), 49–79; Jürg P. Keller, *The American Dream Gone Astray: Critical Realism in American Fiction, 1920-1940* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995), 79–84; Mary McAleer Balkun, *The American Counterfeit: Authenticity and Identity in American Literature and Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 127; Wilfred M. McClay, "Where Have We Come Since the 1950s? Thoughts on Materialism and American Social Character," in *Rethinking Materialism : Perspectives on the Spiritual Dimension of Economic Behavior*, ed. Robert Wuthnow (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 69; Laura Hensley, *The Story Behind F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby* (Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2007), 36.
[641] Bill Lucey, "Why It Took So Long For "The Great Gatsby" to Be Considered A Literary Classic?," *NewspaperAlum*, May 3, 2013, http://www.newspaperalum.com/2013/05/why-it-took-so-long-for-the-great-gatsby-to-be-considered-a-literary-classic.html.
[642] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1921), 164, 171, 245–248, 256.
[643] Curnutt, "Fitzgerald's Consumer World," 89–90; McClay, "Where Have We Come Since the 1950s? Thoughts on Materialism and American Social Character," 69.

run faster, stretch out our arms further'.[644] It was captured in his description of the twenties in "Echoes of the Jazz Age" (1931) when he described American society as 'a whole race going hedonistic, deciding on pleasure.'[645]

These excepts demonstrate a trend in the polemics of the era: social critics recognised the economic capital of the parvenu yet denied them cultural capital.[646] The new economically empowered elite had the capacity to purchase an outward appearance associated with the refined life of the gentility, yet they were deemed to lack the inward virtue and discernment associated with genuine cultivation. They became the new ambassadors of 'philistine' behaviour.[647] They could consume, but only superficially. They would achieve disillusionment rather than a true level of refinement.

This rhetoric reflected the solidification of a shift in how social hierarchies were to be maintained in an era of mass consumerism: rather than class differences being denoted through the acquisition of status goods, which could now readily be misappropriated, the legitimate refined life was to be denoted through the acquisition of intangible aspects of culture. To distinguish between—and reinforce the ideas of—legitimate and illegitimate lifestyles, critics used

[644] Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 144.
[645] F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Echoes of the Jazz Age," *Scribners*, November 1931, 460.
[646] "The Ends versus the Means" in Roger Ward Babson, *Enduring Investments* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921), 19–22; Fred J. Ringel, "Forward," in *America as Americans See It*, ed. Fred J. Ringel (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932), vi; Walter E. Weyl, "The New Wealth," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, December 1, 1915, 612'.
[647] Frederick J. Hoffman, "Philistine and Puritan in the 1920s," *American Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1949): 247–63.

delegitimizing discourse. 'Materialism', in this vein, became equated to the misappropriating consumption habits of the parvenu. It became a signifier to denote those who had acquired the tangible goods but not the intangible aspects of true cultivation.

The second status-orientated group to be denounced as 'materialistic' by social critics were the middle-class 'Babbitts'. The concept of the Babbitt stemmed from the best selling novel of the same name, written by the prominent author Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951).[648] *Babbitt* (1922), a satire on the middle class, followed the life of a middle-aged, suburban businessman, George Babbitt, as he unsuccessfully attempted to break free from the pressures of conformity. Although Lewis, like Fitzgerald, did not use the word 'materialism' in this novel, the descriptions of the Babbitt middle-class lifestyle captured elements commonly associated with materialism: it described behaviours associated with an acquisitive, social-status seeking class. The descriptions of a Babbitt lifestyle also extended 'materialism' so that it captured not only a preoccupation with the material aspects of life, but also the idea that consumers engaged in uncritical consumption patterns, often craftily shaped by advertisers. As Lewis wrote about George Babbitt, just as his community, religious, and political groups 'controlled…what he should think', so too 'did the large national

[648] Robert E. Fleming, "Lewis, Sinclair," *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, February 2000), http://www.anb.org/articles/16/16-00992.html;

advertisers fix the surface of his life'. They fixed 'what he believed to be his individuality':[649]

> These standard advertised wares—toothpastes, socks, tyres, cameras, instantaneous hot-water heaters—were his symbols and proofs of excellence; at first the signs, then the substitutes, for joy and passion and wisdom.[650]

The Babbitt came to symbolise 'a materialistic, complacent businessman who conforms unthinkingly to the views and standards of his social set.'[651] In the book, *The Babbitt Warren* (1926), the British philosopher, C. E. Joad (1891-1953) equated 'American materialism' to 'the power of money', the 'superfluity of expensive things', and the rich American's life comprised of 'stale platitudes and threadbare clichés for conversations, purse-proud complacency and paunchy self-satisfaction for dignity'.[652] American authors, in denouncing the book, inadvertently affirmed the association of 'materialism' with Babbittry.[653] As one reviewer noted:

> The smug, complacent generation of Babbitts, so completely materialistic as to be unaware of other values, cry for the lash, and are thick-skinned enough to take innumerable beatings.[654]

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[649] Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1922), 99.
[650] Ibid.
[651] "Babbitt, n.2," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, June 2015), http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/14196; Refer also to: Rodney P. Carlisle, *The Roaring Twenties: 1920 to 1929* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 32.
[652] Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 23; Quotes are taken from Cyril E. M. Joad, *The Babbitt Warren* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1926), 63–64.
[653] Robert Littell, "Raspberries from England," *The New Republic*, March 9, 1927; Henry Seidle Canby, ed., "Babbitt Baiting," in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, vol. 32, 3 (New York, 1927), 621, 627; H. L. Mencken, "Thwacks from the Motherland," *The Nation* 124, no. 3224 (April 20, 1927): 434–434; "Miscellaneous: The Babbitt Warren," *The Outlook*, April 20, 1927; Charles Lee Snider, "Indicting a Whole People," *The Forum*, July 1927; H. C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations (1783-1952)* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1955), 22–24.
[654] Canby, "Babbitt Baiting," 621.

Likewise, Gerould, in her critique of America's 'vulgarity' (1926), slung the epithet 'vulgar' at what she disproved: Babbitt behaviour. Ironically, she recognised that such an accusation was often used to 'make class distinctions', and to elevate one's 'personal distinction'.[655] She continued, however, to judge America's 'vulgar' charter, blaming it on American's 'materialism': Their preoccupation 'with making money' meant they had let their 'manners [and]…mental processes go bad'. Their 'keenness in business' resulted in 'obtuseness in other matters'.[656] They worshiped money without 'knowing very well what money is good for'.[657] The 'Babbitt' was the 'personification' of this 'vulgarity.'[658]

During the 1930s and 1940s, these two social groups—the parvenu and the middle-class Babbitts—were often collapsed into the classification of America's bourgeois. Critics continued to level accusations of 'materialism' at them. The Depression was positioned as punishment for the 1920's excessive and irresponsible display of wealth and glorification of greed.[659] For the bourgeois, the Depression made their lifestyles seem more opulent as it stood in stark contrast to the growing masses of impoverished Americans. Critics shamed them. The journalist Thomas Hornsby Ferril (1896-1988), a corporate public

[655] Katharine Fullerton Gerould, "This Vulgarity of Ours," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, July 1926, 133.
[656] Ibid., 142.
[657] Ibid., 137.
[658] Ibid., 134.
[659]Heywood Broun, "It Seems to Heywood Broun," *The Nation* 129, no. 3364 (December 25, 1929): 769; Dixon Wecter, *The Age of the Great Depression, 1929-1941*, vol. 13, A History of American Life (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 212; Garland O. Ethel, "Soup Line in Seattle," *The Nation* 132, no. 3425 (February 25, 1931): 208.

relations specialist, contended that the 'so-called materialistic period we've been through, exemplified by Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*' was one in which material things were not respected: 'We wasted them. We used them as symbols of prestige…. Your successful American could buy a radio but couldn't repair a doorbell; he could flaunt a smug twelve-cylinder Cadillac but couldn't start a one-cylinder cement-mixer.'[660]

Many writers lamented an unfulfilled hoped: they expected the Depression would lead to a 'renewal' of cultural values, away from the excessive pursuits of status goods and mindless consumerism towards a more 'balanced' life, yet consumer trends indicated the opposite. Families that could access credit and instalment plans attempted to maintain their spending routines, especially with regards to luxuries (furniture, autos, appliances).[661] In reaction to this moral *faux pas*, critics extended 'materialism' to describe those who clung to an untenable higher standard of living. For example, James Truslow Adams (1878-1949), a writer and intellect who returned to America after living aboard, had hoped that Americans would 'develop a saner philosophy of life while our spending power is curtailed and we have time to think.'[662] He anticipated that they could overcome 'the dross of materialistic aims' that had 'destroyed in some measure both [America's] private ideals and our sense of social

[660] Thomas Hornsby Ferril, "Not Materialistic Enough," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, June 1, 1943, 55.)
[661] Cross, *An All-Consuming Century*, 73.
[662] James Truslow Adams, "What of 'The American Dream'?," *New York Times*, May 14, 1933, sec. 6, SM2.

obligation.'[663] Yet upon his return he perceived that very little had changed. Although the crash had led to 'a diminished scale of living and expense', it had failed to shift underlying ideals:

> [The] reduced expenditure…has not been based on any fresh philosophy of what is worth while but has rather been haphazard. There seems to be the same desire as of old for ostentatious luxury based on what I may call the standard of the professional interior decorator.[664]

Adams noted, the focus was sadly on 'absolute machinelike perfection in all the material basis of living, whether in the latest gadgets in a car…[or] details of a house'. Americans were still embracing 'a false idea of…life', living 'merely on the surface'. In making 'the chief end of life…the accumulation of money at maximum speed and the purchase of as many things as possible', individuals left 'no time or energy for genuine self-expression'. It merely led to a 'constant restlessness' which 'does not bring content but only wasted lives.'[665]

Similarly, Lewis Mumford (1895-1990), the popular American sociologist and historian, described the Depression as reflecting a new 'barbarism'. As he wrote in 1944, the 'veritable clinical picture of the cultural disease' was a product of the modern world the minority bourgeois crafted: it was a world of 'over-charges of empty stimuli...materialistic repletion…costly ritual of conspicuous waste, [and a] highly organized purposelessness'.[666]

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[663] Ibid., SM1.
[664] Ibid., SM2.
[665] Ibid.
[666] Lewis Mumford, *The Condition of Man* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1944), 380.

As America began to recover from the Depression, concerns about the intensification of materialistic consumer trends resounded in popular discourse. Academics expressed dismay over the 'selfish, materialistic interests…prevailing over concern for public good': 'the lure of the material benefits of wealth and power [had] in too many cases blinded individuals and groups'. Warnings were sounded over the 'danger' that 'ignorance and greed will plunge the nation into a mad spiral of inflation when the war is over.'[667] As one writer noted, 'as the Great Depression [was] being left more behind', America's middle class was seeing 'visions of prosperity, even thought [its] working class are as badly off as ever'. 'Roosevelt and his liberal social-reform administration [were] losing their hold on the American people.'[668] The Babbitts and their 'Babbitt money-psychology' were to blame. They had elected Roosevelt 'not because they like him, but because they needed him'. His elections consequently 'represented no break in the materialistic psychology of the average American'. As business improved, they were 'quite naturally turning away from Roosevelt and hearkening again to the siren songs of their beloved Babbitts.'[669]

This delegitimizing discourse, as I will elaborate upon in Chapter 13, was in part a defensive ploy by the political, religious, and intellectual elite who

[667] Clarence D. Thrope, "Challenge to Leadership," in *The University of Michigan School of Education Bulletin*, vol. 16, 6 (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Press, 1945), 85.
[668] Philip. Rubin, *Toward a Saner America: An Outline of Fundamental Social Reform* (Willow Grove, PA: Willow Grove Printing Co., 1937), 89–90.
[669] Ibid., 90.

wanted to instil a social order in which education, spirituality, and ideals of brotherhood were esteemed, and their perceptions of 'appropriate' consumerism were legitimized. This rhetoric, correspondingly, was also used as part of an attempt to assimilate the middle class to refrain from emulating the opulent lifestyles of the nouveau riche and the wealthy 'Babbitts'.

II. 'Materialism' and the Middle Class

As mass production and mass consumerism spread across America, the middle class gained access to a plethora of goods. Through leveraging their rising incomes, modifying their household budgets, and taking advantage of consumer credit options, the middle class could now afford to purchase goods and experience cultured activities once reserved for the upper classes. The popular 1910s comic strip, "Keeping up with the Joneses", captured the resulting social pressure: the middle class needed to keep up with their fellow crowd in order to obtain social status.[670]

Although some social commentators saw middle-class consumerism and this pressure as a benefit to securing America's progress and prosperity, others saw it as a danger. Many social critics issued warnings directed towards the middle class about the consequences of materialism. These diatribes came from religious leaders who feared a loss of spirituality and loosening of morals, and

[670] *Pop Mom and, Keeping Up with the Joneses* (New York: Cupples & Leon co., 1920); Susan J. Matt, *Keeping Up with the Joneses: Envy in American Consumer Society, 1890-1930* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 4.

social critics including academics, journalists, government experts, and advisors who feared uncontrollable and harmful economic and social changes.

Similar to the tactics used by Theodore Parker and the Transcendentalists who employed the debasing epithet 'materialism' to try to channel the rising merchant class towards more 'noble' ends, the social critics of mass consumerism used 'materialism' to try to channel the middle class towards a more 'sensible' living. Social critics warned the middle class to not become caught up in the 'excessive business activity', to not fall pray to the shallow trend of measuring life in terms of wealth and things, to avoid excessive acquisition, and to not live beyond their means. These 'truths' were used to discipline the mind of the growing middle class and their consumer habits. The middle class was taught to fear 'materialism' and its undesirable consequences.

Ross L. Finney (1875-1934), a Professor of Sociology, exemplified this in a critique he wrote in 1913 on America society. As he surmised, the philosophy that 'dominates our age, permeates its atmosphere, and obsesses the thought of nearly all of our people, is materialism'. Americans were 'convinced that a man's life consists in abundance of the things which he possesseth. We worship success, and spell the name of our god with dollar signs.'[671] They appraised the age 'in terms of mammon', personified through the 'excessive business activity of the age and the luxuries that are displayed everywhere'. 'Materialism'

[671] Ross L. Finney, "The Social Harvest of Materialism," in *Personal Religion and the Social Awakening* (Cincinnati : Jennings and Graham ; New York : Eatons and Mains, 1913), 67.

infiltrated thoughts, shifting American's heroes from statesmen, philosophers, generals, and poets to 'the captain of industry.' 'Rivalries and emulation' further betrayed a 'materialistic view of life':[672]

> A large proportion of our people are living habitually beyond their means in the frantic endeavor to keep up appearances so as to maintain a social standing equivalent to that of their associates, or so as to secure admittance to the social circle of their superiors.[673]

This behaviour was not 'confined to the rich'; it was 'even more influential among [the] middle class', and its 'tragedies of failure more numerous and distressing.'[674]

During the Depression era, the pressure on the middle class to consume less and live within their means intensified. It was in this era that numerous academic studies were undertaken to substantiate the claims that 'proved' materialism's delinquent and corrupting results. For example, Robert Cooley Angell (1899-1984), a sociologist based at the University of Michigan, conducted a case study of family reactions to the Depression. His data was based on a select group of sociology students who were asked to 'set down in great detail the activities, relations and attitudes characteristic of their families, both before and after the decrease.'[675] Although his evidence was biased by the 'one participant observer' (i.e., the student, whose account was not verified),

[672] Ibid., 68–69.
[673] Ibid., 69.
[674] Ibid., 69.
[675] Robert Cooley Angell, *The Family Encounters the Depression* (New York, Chicago, Boston, Atlanta, San Francisco, Dallas: C. Scribner's sons, 1936), 8.

the results were still widely accepted and quoted in key reports on the era and in subsequent studies.[676] His findings indicated that those families guided by a 'materialistic philosophy of life' fell pray to a detrimental 'rigidity'. These types of families attached too 'great' of a significance to their 'standard of living', equating 'their material possessions and their sorts of recreation...[to] the family's social status'. They equated a 'sharp decrease in expenditure…[to] a loss of social role.' 'Materialism', thus caused these families to cling to their 'old level as long as possible and…to hide their fall from it by keeping up a good "front."' The reported results framed materialism as being responsible for 'a failure to adopt a rational budget, internal friction [within the family], and great unhappiness.'[677]

In addition to 'proving' the negative effects of materialism, other assimilative tactics included labelling the life of 'luxury' as 'materialistic' whilst positioning an alterative lifestyle to be more reputable. Roosevelt, for example, reflected this type of rhetoric in in his 1934 "Annual Message to Congress", stating:

> [T]he overwhelming majority of our people seek a greater opportunity for humanity to prosper and find happiness. They recognize that human welfare has not increased and does not increase through mere

[676] Samuel A. Stouffer and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, "Research Memorandum on the Family in the Depression," Bulletin 29, *Studies in Social Aspects of the Depression* 3 (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1937), 80–87; Ernest W. Burgess, "The Family in a Changing Society," *American Journal of Sociology* 53, no. 6 (March 1948): 420–421; Ruth Shonle Cavan, "Unemployment. Crisis of the Common Man," *Marriage and Family Living* 21, no. 2 (May 1959): 142–143.
[677] Angell, *The Family Encounters the Depression*, 16–17, 26-29, 193-205, 223-231.

> materialism and luxury, but that it does progress through integrity, unselfishness, responsibility and justice.[678]

Other social commentators sought to encourage the middle class to assimilate to their notions of a 'balanced life' by prophesying it to be a trend. For example, the American sociologists Robert S. Lynd (1892-1970) and Helen Lynd (1896-1982), in their popular ethnographic study on the community of Middletown (a fictitiously named small American city), claimed: 'it is conceivable that Middletown families are emerging from the pit of depression into a scene in which the cultural demands upon the individual family for pretentious living have lessened.'[679] And although they articulated what they desired to see, they also had to recognise that their vision held no evidence. As they quoted one 'discerning Middletown woman': 'Most of the families I know are after the same things today that they were after before the depression, and they'll get them in the same way—on credit.'[680]

Under the 1940s post-war recovery and the 1950s prosperity rhetoric, the gears of middle-class consumption needed to be changed from discouragement to encouragement. It was key to America's economic growth and global hieratical status. Consequently, there was a tension created between what some social commentators deemed to be the essence of America's freedom—freedom of

[678] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Annual Message to Congress," The American Presidential Project (Washington, DC, January 3, 1934), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14683.
[679] Robert Staughton Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937), 203.
[680] Ibid.

want and choice—which was used to advance America's economic global dominance, and what other social critics saw as a loss of humanity, brotherhood, individual identity, spiritualism, and intellectual quests for higher learning.

The political and economic elite, for example, supported rhetoric that propagated America's prosperity. Prosperity was positioned as the key to progressing the world, and, for post-War Europe, to helping their economies recover. The Marshall Plan proclaimed in its slogans that 'You Too Can Be Like Us', and that 'Prosperity Makes You Free'. In essence, it made the middle class their poster-child.[681] As Eisenhower stated in his acceptance speech for the Republican presidential nomination in 1952, American was to 'use our power wisely for the good of all our people' to secure a future life with 'far greater abundance of material, cultural, and spiritual rewards than our forefathers or we ever dreamed of.'[682]

However, during the 1950s, especially towards the latter part of the decade, social critics started to push against the prosperity rhetoric, calling into question America's value system, and depicting the consequences that materialistic consumption had inflicted upon the American middle-class

[681] David W. Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe: Western Europe, America and Postwar Reconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 227–228.
[682] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Chicago," The American Presidential Project (Chicago, July 11, 1952), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=75626.

consumer.[683] These concerns grew in their sense of legitimacy through literature such as: David Potter's (1910-1971) historical recount of how America became a *People of Plenty* (1954); Ayn Rand's (1905-1982) novel *Atlas Shrugged* (1957); economist perspectives such as John Kenneth Galbraith's (1908-2006) *The Affluent Society* (1958) and Robert Helibroner's (1919-2005) *The Quest for Wealth: A Study of Acquisitive Man* (1958); sociological assessments of America, such as David Riseman's (1909-2002) *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), William H. Whyte's (1917-1999) *The Organization Man* (1956), Joseph Krutch's (1893-1970) *Human Nature and the Human Condition* (1959), and Vance Packard's (1914-1996) *The Waste Makers* (1960). They challenged the validity of America's middle-class lifestyle.[684] As Krutch exclaimed, under the rhetoric of prosperity for all, America's 'materialism' was no longer a vice but a 'private [and] public virtue'.[685] He claimed:

> When men's first duty comes to be consumption, he suffers a strange loss of dignity, and not only he but the coming generation comes to be valued chiefly in terms of its potentiality as a voracious consumer.[686]

The belief articulated by many of these critics was that 'American materialism' was caused by a 'lost faith in other goals.'[687] As two professors summarised in

[683] Harry C. Bredemeier and Jackson Toby, *Social Problems in America; Costs and Casualties in an Acquisitive Society*, (New York ; London: John Willey & Sons, Inc, 1963 [c. 1960]).
[684] Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, 84-108, 113-120.
[685] Joseph Wood Krutch, *Human Nature and the Human Condition* (New York: Random House, 1959), 37.
[686] Ibid., 38.
[687] Bredemeier and Toby, *Social Problems in America; Costs and Casualties in an Acquisitive Society*, 484.

their review of the literature, it was 'materialism *by default*, the filling of a value vacuum.'[688]

These ideas of lost morals and lost faith were reiterates from speech acts that had occurred over the century. By the 1950s and 1960s, however, the histories that had led to these beliefs about 'materialism', and the shaming purposes behind them, were lost, leaving the beliefs to seem like natural—versus constructed—consequences of 'materialism'.

[688] Ibid. (Formatting original).

Chapter Thirteen

‘Materialism’ as an Affliction of Consumerism: The Debates and the Envisioned Consequences

In response to the societal dislocations occurring as a result of the proliferation of goods, social critics and reformers in the late 1800s and early 1900s created the categories of ‘materialistic’ versus ‘non-materialistic’ behaviours and expenditures. These categorisations led to a narrow and negative view of consumerism that continues to be perpetuated in today’s consumer behaviour literature. The objectivity of these categories and the espoused consequences of ‘materialism’, however, are questionable. As this chapter will demonstrate, what constituted ‘materialistic’ behaviour, the envisioned consequences, and the proposed remedies shifted throughout the decades pending social and political pressures. At the center of many speech acts were the intellectual and religious elites. By being—and continue to be—the prominent accusers of ‘materialism’, they have been able to define what *is* and *is not* ‘materialism’. In this chapter, I foreshadow how the resulting debates and speech acts shaped the ‘truths’ believed about ‘materialism’ and were reflected in the assumptions underlying the scales developed to measure materialism in consumers.

Creating the Dividing Lines: 'Materialism' versus 'Non-Materialism'

The context in which 'materialism' became equated to consumerism was one shrouded in uncertainties. The proliferation of material goods to the extent experienced under America's mass production was a new phenomenon. Its effects on society were unknown. Consequently, this opened up space for social commentary to debate the potential effects and to create new 'truths'. Questions abounded: Would America's material prosperity contribute to or detract from society's virtuousness? As Josiah Strong posed, would the 'materialism of the nineteenth century [develop] into something higher in the twentieth [century]' or would 'our marvellous material development…prove to be at the expense of intellectual and spiritual growth'?[689]

Strong was one of the first popular writers to articulate possible consequences of 'modern materialism' as it related to: i) wealth; and ii) the consumption of goods. In his books, *The Twentieth Century City* (1898) and *The Challenge of the City* (1907), Strong articulated two potential outcomes for materialism as it related to the *accumulation of wealth*: the 'inheritance of great riches' could lead to 'self-indulgence and enervation—a life of wallowing in wealth; of avarice and hardness—a life of mere money-getting and keeping'; or it could lead to 'a self-mastery which saves from both of these pitfalls—a life which recognizes the power in wealth as a sacred trust, to be used for the benefit of mankind'.[690]

[689] Strong, *The Twentieth Century City*, 14; Strong, *The Challenge of the City*, 5.
[690] Strong, *The Twentieth Century City*, 26–27; Strong, *The Challenge of the City*, 14.

Strong also articulated two other, similar outcomes for materialism as it related to the *consumption of goods*: material goods could be consumed with an 'end in ourselves, affording new sensations to appetite, gratifying tastes only to re-refine them beyond gratification, economizing time only to invite idleness, and multiplying wants without enlarging life', thereby sensualizing and corrupting mankind; or material goods could 'minister' to people 'simply' or 'enable us to minister more largely and effectively to others'. As he envisioned of the latter: 'the numberless appliances of civilization' could be used to 'help us to minister…to the world's needs; if facilities of travel and communication, improved tools and perfected processes, enable us to do two years' work in one, or to influence for good a thousand instead of a hundred' then life would be 'enlarged, enriched, and ennobled'.[691]

The arguments around whether America's materialism would merit positive or negative consequences reflected a debate that had reverberated through the centuries: it was the age old question about whether progress would lead to positive or negative implications for a country's civilization. It was Lord Byron's poem—'Wealth, vice, corruption - barbarism at last'—coming to life. Strong, however, believed that progress would not lead to barbarism; rather, progress

[691] Strong, *The Twentieth Century City*, 25–26; Strong, *The Challenge of the City*, 13.

was 'God's will [being] done on earth': 'progress help[ed] to prepare the way for the full coming of the Kingdom'.[692]

Accordingly, Strong sought to cast a positive light on progress.[693] One way he did this was to sanction 'materialism' by dedicating the pursuit of wealth and goods to God. As he noted: '*possessions, every dollar, every cent*' could be good so long as they were '*employed in the way that will best honor God*'.[694] In sanctioning goods and wealth, however, he likewise had to delineate what was 'justifiable' versus 'unjustifiable' expenditures. Justifiable expenditures became defined as 'worthy' expenditures that 'serve to broaden and beautify and upbuild character'. These expenditures were 'necessary to [man's] highest growth and greatest usefulness', and thus they were 'not only permissible, but obligatory.'[695] Unworthy and 'unjustifiable' expenditures, on the other hand, were 'extravagances' and 'luxuries' purchased to 'flatter [one's] pride'.[696]

Over the course of the twentieth century, the potential outcomes and divisions of 'materialism' delineated by Strong were taken up in the polemics of the day. The initial debates, however, rather than assessing the potential positives, only discussed the potential negatives of materialism. Consequently, they anchored

[692] Josiah Strong, *The New Era: Or, The Coming Kingdom* (New York: The Baker and Taylor Co., 1893), 12, 250–251.
[693] Dorothea R. Muller, "The Social Philosophy of Josiah Strong: Social Christianity and American Progressivism," *Church History* 28, no. 2 (June 1959): 186–189.
[694] Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York: Baker & Taylor Co. for the American Home Missionary Society, 1885), 185–186. (Formatting original.)
[695] Ibid. (Formatting original.)
[696] Ibid., 189.

'materialism' as an adverse outcome of wealth creation and consumerism. Moreover, these polemics were further bifurcated. One group, the critics of progress and consumerism, often ignored the redeeming qualities of goods altogether, pontificating about the corruptible nature and harmful consequences of material pursuits. In an attempt to defend their elitist life they championed a return to an idealized past of the genteel culture or the embracement of a romanticised simple life. The second group attempted to follow Strong's recourse and delineate a level of *appropriate* consumerism that could allow America to embrace its ideal of progress—economic prosperity—while preventing levels of materialism that might degenerate civilization. Wealth could be pursued and goods consumed so long as the end result was either philanthropic giving or consumption that allowed for personal development and enrichment of society (often couched in terms of cultural development).

These debates shaped and informed each other. As the critics of progress and consumerism listed more and more adverse effects of materialism, the advocates of progress and prosperity sanctioned consumerism by reaffirming a dividing line between the type of consumption and pursuit of wealth that was good, and the type of consumption and pursuit of wealth that resulted in the foretold consequences of materialism. Likewise, as the supporters of progress affirmed a 'truth'—endorsing economic progress, including consumerism, as part of America's God-blessed destiny, identity, and expression of freedom—

advocates of a simple life had to temper their solution so that it was palatable to the emerging American middle class. As a result of these debates, 'materialism' increasingly became an epithet used to enact assimilative measures of reform.

Critics of Progress: Positioning 'Materialism' as 'Moral Dry-Rot'

The belief that material pursuits would degenerate civilization appeared initially as part of the writings offered by a score of social critics who deplored the effects of progress. Authors, seeking to reinvigorate a more traditional mode of American life, often contrasted a world ruled by 'materialism' with the America of yesteryears, ruled by a natural aristocracy and dominated by a genteel culture. At first, many of the criticisms of 'materialism' were aimed at the *production of things*—'the mechanical inventions'—and the 'money-getting' businessmen;[697] yet by the early 1900s as the proliferation of goods grew and started to threaten traditional modes of life, the torrent of criticisms of 'materialism' were aimed increasingly at the *consumption of things*. Social critics of progress directed their appeals for reform at consumers, encouraging people to adopt either a traditional or simple mode of life.[698] These authors created 'truths' that debased consumerism and that positioned 'materialism' as leading

[697] John L. Stoddard, *Rebuilding A Lost Faith* (New York: P.J. Keneday & Sons, 1922), 17.
[698] "Progressive Simplicity," in: David E. Shi, *The Simple Life : Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 175–214: Daniel Horowitz, *The Morality of Spending: Attitudes toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875-1940*, Elephant Paperbacks (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1992), 50–108; "Wanamaker's Simple Life and the Moral Failure of Established Religion" in: William R. Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 191–224.

to numerous negative consequences. This rhetoric grew in its sense of validity over the century as consumerism continued to disrupted traditional modes of living and thus the sense of social order.

By assessing the excerpts I lay out below with a critical lens, one can see how this constructed perspective of 'materialism' was not a natural extension—as is often implicitly assumed today; rather, similar to other transitions in the meaning of 'materialism', this perspective was a constructed extension used to shore up support. In these polemics, 'materialism' was often used as a defensive tactic that sought to debase certain lifestyles, behaviours and pursuits. The deplorable negative consequences were spun to induce fear. Furthermore, one can see how the elements these tactics legitimized versus delegitimized aligned with elements of life the intellectual and religious elite valued versus abhorred. These tactics were attempts by the intellectual and religious elite to safeguard their habitus.

George F. Parsons, for instance, exemplified this in his 1887 diatribe on "The Growth of Materialism". Parsons, typified as a 'refined gentleman' and intellect who 'sought few pleasures and little recreation',[699] depicted how 'materialism' had perverted America's core institutions and sociocultural structures. He endorsed the belief that America's civilization was at risk of being corrupted by the 'materialism of the time': it had undermined the value system, set repulsive

[699] "George Frederic Parsons," *Sacramento Daily Union* 85, no. 128 (July 20, 1893): 2.

standards for literature and art, and infected politics, churches, and corporate operations.[700] It was the 'dominant tendency…responsible for':

> [T]he moral dry-rot which is so marked a modern characteristic. It is this which develops and systematizes the myriad hypocrisies, deceits, and shams which honeycomb conventional existence. It is this which condemns millions to careers of false pretense, brummagem gentility, sordid cares, trivial yet poignant rivalries, absurd parade, vulgar ostentation, and real discomfort. It is this which first deadens then destroys the intellectual and spiritual life; which condemns the rich to frivolous, fantastic, and useless lives, and perverts the poor by filling them with a foolish envy of conditions no sane man or woman should desire to enter. It is this which creates that fury of competition whence spring the brood of petty dishonesties termed "tricks of trade." It makes politics corrupt. It fills public life with demagogue and impostors. It hardens men's hearts, weakens their natural affections, saps their consciences, makes them strangers to truth and honor and integrity.[701]

Parsons, deplored the generation for embracing the 'motto of the day'—'having a good time', contending that they had used the motto 'as an excuse for some gross evasion of duty, some ignoble yielding to a shameful egotism, some contemptible concession to a self-indulged, pithless inclination.' He described them as 'pseudo-epicureans': 'Destitute of moral stamina; frothy, frivolous, unstable, and infirm in all their purposes and deeds; so wrapped in self that they are incapable of perceiving the hideous ugliness of their own characters'. Their 'greed' and 'low moral standard', in turn, perpetuated the decline of civilization, as they gave rise to 'agencies… [that]cater to them.'[702]

[700] George Frederic Parsons, "The Growth of Materialism," *The Atlantic Monthly* 60, no. 358 (August 1887): 160.
[701] Ibid.
[702] Ibid., 166–167.

For Parsons, unlike Strong, progress had led to the creation of things that destroyed civilization. Progress had resulted in 'a luxury characterized by evasion of thought and intellectual discipline of any kind'. This 'growth of materialism' could be seen in amusements where the 'most garish and glittering spectacular pieces hold the stage longest', where 'Barnum's circus…easily eclipses Shakespeare', and where 'melodrama extinguishes drama'.[703] It could be seen in architecture and fashion where 'freedom and grasp of imagination' had been stifled by a 'hideous, soulless…realism'. This had resulted in: a 'century with no style of its own'; cities composed of architectural 'tangles of imitations'; clothing 'as ugly as our house'; and decorations 'confused [and] confounded…jumbled together'.[704]

The consequences of materialism resulted not only in moral dry-rot and the degradation of the arts, but also dissatisfaction with life. As Parsons alleged: 'Contentment at any given point is impossible to the man who devotes himself to money-making.' For long after he had 'amassed enough to satisfy every reasonable want or fancy, the lust of possession constrain[ed] him to continue', until he was 'a slave to his wealth'.[705]

Parsons blamed the growth of materialism on multiple instigators. The wealthiest supported this downward spiral of progress as they lacked a true

[703] Ibid., 167.
[704] Ibid.
[705] Ibid., 160.

understanding of what contributed to civilization. They used their wealth and imagination not for 'worthy aspirations' but to create 'new fancies, then [by making] wants of those fancies', they surrounded themselves 'with the superfluities which we call luxuries'.[706] The politics of the Gilded Age reinforced the 'ruling passion' to be one of 'lust of riches'.[707] The Church was likewise 'infected with the general taint' of the times. Its materialistic tendencies were noted in its 'costly Church edifices, costly preachers, luxurious surroundings'. It had allowed the 'intellect [of] the pulpit' to be dictated by what would be 'paid handsomely', resulting in a sanctioning 'of the ignoble frivolities it should condemn unsparingly'. 'Wealth' had seduced and neutralized the Church.[708] The leading culprit, however, was 'business'. In a critique that draws parallels to modern criticisms of business, he deplored its negative influence on society, laying the debasement of 'everything' and demoralization of 'every one' at its feet.[709] Driven by 'the principle of…selfishness', business 'had no conscience: witness the dispatch of ship-loads of rum to poison uncivilized race'; and it knew 'no patriotism: witness the eagerness with which in all wars traders have supplied their country's enemies with arms and munitions.'[710]

Parsons positioned the persistence of 'old evils and social blunders and crudities in the…conduct of life' as evidence that America's civilization, 'tending so

[706] Ibid., 171, 163.
[707] Ibid., 160.
[708] Ibid., 161.
[709] Ibid., 164.
[710] Ibid., 163–164.

strongly toward unmixed materialism, may encounter the fate of the extinct civilizations which followed the same path.'[711] He reinforced the idea that America was destitute for the fate of 'barbarism at last'.

These negative associations with 'materialism' continued to gain validity as other social critics reiterated them throughout the era. In 1901, for example, Rush C. Hawkins in his essay "Some Results of Criminal Materialism", blamed 'materialism' for lowering 'public and social morals'. It had led to the idolatries of churches as clergy knelt to the whims of millionaires rather than to God. It had given rise to a debasing 'commercialism' that 'degraded the arts, abolished genteel manners and good breeding', and to an inability 'to discern where the truly moral leaves off and debauchery begins'. It had 'perverted habits of thought and vitiated tastes', 'transformed our sources of literature into manufactories of abnormal literary hashes, which do not instruct'.[712] It had 'banished the statesman' who embodied the 'fitness, capacity and integrity' of the 'historic patriots'—'those who honoured the high positions bestowed upon them, and gave the Americans their rightful position among the civilized peoples of the earth.'[713] Hawkins, a former general of the civil war and patron of the arts,[714] desired a return to the past in which the life he esteemed to live was valued. The contrast he continually drew debased the cultural and social

[711] Ibid., 165.
[712] Rush Christopher Hawkins, "Some Results of Criminal Materialism," in *Our Political Degradation; Being Several Short Essays Setting Forth Certain Facts Which Every Thoughtful Citizen of the United States Should Know* (New York: The Grafton Press, 1904), 282.
[713] Ibid., 283.
[714] "Rush Hawkins," *The New York Times*, October 26, 1920, sec. Obituary, http://localhistory.morrisville.edu/sites/unitinfo/hawkins.html.

capital of the new politicians and businessmen—labelling them as 'materialistic'—while elevating and romanticising ideals of a genteel life and a society rule by a natural aristocracy.

Writings by other members of the intellectual and religious elite resonated similar themes. In 1906, Cornell University's President Jacob Gould Schurman (1854-1942), in his commencement speech, exhorted the 'blight and malady of our time' to be 'a vitally active if generally unexpressed belief that the life of human beings…consists in the enjoyment of the material things which perish in the using'.[715] 'To get and to have' was the motto of the market, the altar, and the hearth. The excessive focus on producing and consuming objects lowered man to 'brute creature' level, and reduced the esteem of men from one that measured 'his heart and mind and soul' to one that measured man 'in terms of mere acquisition and possessions.' This 'practical materialism' was responsible for the 'decline of dogmatic theology' and the 'eclipse of religion and morality'.[716] To rectify this 'malady', Schurman called for 'a new baptism of the old virtue of honesty.'[717] The nation needed to 'come back to the highest things in life':

> [T]o culture and knowledge, to industry, honesty, fidelity, and justice, to the noble qualities of head and heart which make individuals worthy of admiration and reverence and through them mould and elevate society after the pattern of the commonwealth of God.[718]

[715] "1906 Commencement: President Schurman's Address," *Cornell Alumni News*, June 27, 1906, 459.
[716] Ibid.
[717] Ibid., 460.
[718] Ibid., 462.

In a similar fashion, Washington Gladden in 1908 denounced 'the complexity, the artificiality, the profusion of our belongings [that] absorbs the larger part of our interests'. Inventions fed 'new wants'; rather then freeing mankind they caused 'an accumulating burden of care and conventions and superfluities'. 'Stories of extravagances of the people of the whirlpool' incited emulation, with many 'jobbing after them, wishing that we could get into the swim ourselves.' The result was 'houses [being] cluttered with adornments,…[and] social functions [becoming] spending matches'. Rather than humankind possessing 'this abundance; it possesses us'.[719] Quoting from one of Emerson's poems, he remarked:

> "Things are in the saddle.
> And ride mankind."[720]

One of the most extensive diatribes that surmised categorizations and consequences of 'materialism' was by the Catholic priest, socialist supporter, reformer and popular writer, John A. Ryan (1869-1945). In 1907, he pushed back against the 'ethical materialism of our days', claiming that its premise—that 'a man is all the happier the more wants he has, if he has at the same time sufficient means for their satisfaction'—was 'evidently false'. It was 'not the number but the kind of wants that a man satisfies' that were 'the important thing'. It was the *non-measurable, intangible* elements of life—the 'non-

[719] Washington Gladden, *The Church and Modern Life* (Boston ; New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1908), 190-191.
[720] Ibid., 190–191.

materialistic'—that were important. As Ryan defined, a 'reasonable human life' was 'primarily *qualitative*':[721]

> It consists in thinking, knowing, communing, loving, serving, and giving, rather than in having or enjoying. When the demands of health and moderate *comfort* have been supplied, additional sense-satisfactions contribute little or nothing to the development of body, heart, or mind. They necessitate an expenditure of time, energy, and resources that might be employed in building up the higher and rational side of man.[722]

Ryan's list of materialism's 'harmful effects' was extensive. Its 'sense-satisfactions' led merely to 'a damaging influence upon morals, minds, health, and happiness,' that did not make 'for true culture or for intellectual improvement', but rather 'unlovely and unchristian qualities'.[723] It shifted a 'laudable and useful' quality—'the desire to excel'—to 'an ambition to outdo one's neighbor in the splendor of gowns, the elaborateness of feasting,' and the ostentatiousness of entertainment; it bred 'vices of envy, hypocrisy, vanity, and snobbishness.'[724] It was 'injurious to health' as the 'line between sufficiency and gluttony' could be 'easily passed'. It was 'disastrous to the nervous system' by causing the 'feverish endeavour to increase income, the mad race for social distinction,…the unceasing quest of new enjoyments, new ways of satisfying…jaded appetites'.[725] Its over-emphasis on 'cares and riches and pleasures of life' weakened 'feelings of disinterestedness and generosity' causing

[721] John A. Ryan, "The Fallacy of 'Bettering One's Position,'" in *The Catholic World*, vol. 86, 512 (New York: The Mission Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York, 1907), 148. (Formatting original.)
[722] Ibid. (Formatting original).
[723] Ibid., 148.
[724] Ibid., 148–149.
[725] Ibid., 149, 152.

people to 'give a smaller proportion of their income to charitable and religious causes'.[726] It incited 'self-indulgences' that, while not immoral, 'render us less capable of…self-denial and of endurance which is indispensable to the highest achievement'. Indulgences, such as 'parlor cars, electric bells, and street cars [used] in season and out of season', resulted in a dependency on them, and contributed to 'a certain softness of mind, will, and body'.[727]

As a Catholic, Ryan added a 'reduced birth rate' to his list. A 'materialistic conception of life' caused 'middle and upper classes' to place the desire for 'a larger number of material wants' for themselves above 'the satisfaction of a…larger number [of] children'. This 'enervating self-indulgence…perverted moral notions in parents' and threatened to create a 'morally physically enfeebled generation of children, a diminishing population, and a decadent race.'[728]

As a religious scholar, Ryan also deplored the 'damaging results' of choosing a 'practical' over a 'liberal' education: its graduates devoted 'their energies…to the business of money-getting', resulting in the 'exercise of the lower powers of the brain and intellect'. They focused on 'material things and mechanical

[726] Ibid., 149–150.
[727] Ibid., 150.
[728] Ibid., 150–151.

progress, rather than the thoughts and ideas and knowledge that make for the intellectual, moral, or spiritual improvement of the race.'[729]

Finally, the last—yet most longstanding—consequences Ryan attributed to 'materialism' were 'disillusionment and disappointment'. The rich and the middle class had bought into 'the "higher-standard-of-living" fallacy' that set them up for a 'pessimists…view of life': 'Having cherished for such a long time a false conception of what constitutes true worth and rational living, they do not readily return to saner views.' They were victims of an enslaving habit—'a clamor for satisfaction'—that results in continual 'disappointment': 'The more frequent and…varied the satisfaction accorded to any want, the more must the stimulus or satisfying object be increased in order to produce the former measure of enjoyment.'[730]

Examining the Perpetuation of 'Truths' about 'Materialism' and its 'Moral Dry Rot'

The speech acts by these critics of progress—Parsons, Hawkins, Schurman, Gladden, and Ryan—demonstrate three tendencies that are important to stress at this point, as we will see them reiterated throughout the decades of rhetoric and studies on materialism.

[729] Ibid., 151.
[730] Ibid., 152–153.

The first is the common theme of interests and the subjectivity. These intellectual and religious elite classified elements they valued and sought to protect as 'non-materialistic', appropriate and 'higher' pursuits of life.[731] Framed as the pursuit of 'true culture', this rhetorical ploy elevated their modes of capital and protected their habitus. Those elements grouped or described as 'materialistic', on the other hand, were debased and equated to undesirable 'vices' that degenerated men, 'perverted habits of thought and vitiated tastes',[732] corrupted the mind, soul and body, and did 'not make men better and happier'.[733]

Ryan's writings clearly demonstrate the level of arbitrariness these moral judgements combined with an interested stance induced. For example, his opining about the reduced birth rate reflected the Roman Catholic Church's desire to uphold a natural law, that is, a law in which sex is primarily for procreation purposes and reflects God's natural design for the human race.[734] If churches allowed the shifts in society to overrule their beliefs, it could undermine their authority, and thus lower their symbolic and cultural capital. Likewise, his comments on the diminishment of mental powers and lowering of intellect, as explored in Chapter 10, were an attempt to elevate a liberal

[731] Schurman, "President Schurman's Address," 460.
[732] Hawkins, "Some Results of Criminal Materialism," 282.
[733] Ryan, "The Fallacy of 'Bettering One's Position," 153-155.
[734] Robert H. Brom, "Tract: Birth Control" (Catholic Answers, 2015), http://www.catholic.com/catholic-login-status.

education over a practical education. These comments were geared towards protecting the cultural capital and social status of the intellectual elite.

The second is the narrow view of humanity and of people's motives for life choices that results when people are alleged to be 'materialistic'. This was exemplified time and time again as critics attempted to malign the pursuit of wealth and consumption. For example, people consume goods not merely for an 'ambition to outdo one's neighbor':[735] they consume for a multiplicity of reasons, as simple as an affinity towards something (such as a collector), to more personal and social-complex purposes, such as self-expression, or creating and projecting new identities to create a sense of belonging with others.[736] Likewise, people might decide to use a car 'in season and out of season' because of necessity, dictated by a job that demands travel, versus solely as a 'self-indulgence'.[737] They might chose to have fewer children because they can then raise better, healthier, more educated families and thus prevent the 'morally and physically enfeebled generation' that Ryan conversely predicted.[738] People could pursue a career in the field of business and *still* pursue 'intellectual, moral, or spiritual improvement'.[739] Moreover, they could be pessimistic not because of a disillusionment with goods, but because of difficult relational dynamics or failures to achieve academic or spiritual pursuits.

[735] Ryan, "The Fallacy of 'Bettering One's Position," 148–149.
[736] Mary Douglas, *The World of Goods : Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978); Russell W. Belk, "Possessions and the Extended Self," *Journal of Consumer Research* 15, no. 2 (September 1988): 139–68.
[737] Ryan, "The Fallacy of 'Bettering One's Position," 150.
[738] Ibid., 150–151.
[739] Ibid., 151.

The third point is the multiple 'truths' that critics iterated about 'materialism'. The consequences, most of them hypothesised and reflecting moral claims, laid the foundations from which many of our more modern-day *assumed* consequences emerged. Many were echoed in the consumer behaviour studies on materialism as academics uncritically adopted them (as Chapter 15 will elaborate). Between the 'truths' of these past social critics and Belk's and Richins' scales (see Appendix C and E), the following direct lines can be drawn:

Materialism reflected 'unlovely and unchristian' qualities that led to the development of 'envy, hypocrisy, vanity, and snobbishness'.[740]

Belk's scales drew directly from this idea as he pulled much of his scale content from his conceptual paper on Judeo-Christian criticisms of possessions, including envy, vanity, and greed.[741] Belk held the 'destructive trait' of 'envy' as a critical measurement of materialism, developing an 'envy' subscale that asked questions as to whether people: had 'a desire for others' possessions'; 'resent[ed] those who own the desired possessions'; and '[felt] personally demeaned by this fact of ownership'.[742]

[740] Ryan, "The Fallacy of 'Bettering One's Position,'" 149.
[741] Belk Russell W. Belk, "Worldly Possessions: Issues and Criticisms," in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research*, ed. Richard P. Bagozzi and Alice M. Tybout, vol. 10 (Ann Abor, MI: Association for Consumer Research, 1983), 514–19, http://www.acrwebsite.org/search/view-conference-proceedings.aspx?Id=6172.
[742] Russell W. Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," *Journal of Consumer Research* 12, no. 3 (1985): 268.

Materialism resulted in consumerism (narrowly) defined along competitive and display purposes, 'an ambition to outdo one's neighbors' in ostentatious displays of wealth.

> Richins' scale echoed this theme in the 'success' subscale, which asked questions to measure how '[m]aterialists…judge their own and others' success by the number and quality of possessions accumulated.'[743] Belk's research likewise captured the idea that materialists personified a competitive personality and used 'the acquisition of material goods to buoy self-image'.[744]

Materialism was 'selfishness' personified;[745] materialists had lower levels of generosity, were disinterested in helping others, and gave less to charity and religious causes.

> Belk's scale probed this with questions centred around 'nongenerosity': 'an unwillingness to share…a reluctance to lend or donate possessions to others, and negative attitudes toward charity.'[746] 'Materialistic people are self-centered' was a core proposition framing Richins' studies. As she noted '[a]n overriding concern with possessions and acquisitions for oneself is inherently incompatible with sharing and giving to others.'[747]

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[743] Marsha L. Richins and Scott Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement: Scale Development and Validation," *Journal of Consumer Research* 19, no. 3 (1992): 304.
[744] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 272.
[745] Ryan, "The Fallacy of 'Bettering One's Position,'" 149.
[746] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 268.
[747] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 308.

Materialists devoted their lives to the 'pursuit of material things' rather than 'intellectual, moral, or spiritual improvement', which led to 'a certain softness of mind, will, and body'.[748] *It resulted in a life 'dependent upon' material comforts and conveniences, rending 'us less capable of…self-denial' and the 'power to do without'.*[749] *It resulted in a relentless pursuit of the next 'stimulus or satisfying object…in order to produce the former measure of enjoyment.' It caused materialists to become 'slaves' to their 'indulged wants'.*[750]

Belks' and Richins' studies were saturated with these beliefs. Belk personified this in his subscale on possessiveness, which measured people's desire to 'own' and 'retain possessions.'[751] Moreover, it formed the basis of Belk's definition of materialism. As Belk described, materialism was:

> The importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions. At the highest levels of materialism, such possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.[752]

Likewise, Richins concept of 'acquisitive centrality' measured how 'materialists place possessions and their acquisition at the center of their lives'. They 'worship things, and the pursuit of possessions takes the place

[748] Ryan, "The Fallacy of 'Bettering One's Position,'" 151.
[749] Ibid., 150.
[750] Ibid., 153.
[751] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 267.
[752] Ibid., 265.

of religion in structuring their lives and orienting their behaviours'.[753] '[C]onsumption for the sake of consumption becomes a fever that consumes all the potential energy it can get access to.'[754]

This belief was also personified in the narrow framing of the materialism scales—a framing that omitted questions that allow consumers to note *why* they consume goods. It was assumed that materialists acquired goods to enhance or maintain 'a positive self-identity'[755] and achieve 'an imagined perfect life', that was void of more appropriate means of self-actualization, such as intellectually challenging employment, spiritual experiences, relationships, or leisure activities.[756] Belk concluded that those who scored high on materialism did so out of an apparent lack of self-actualization. He framed it as compensatory consumption.[757] This led materialists to place too much 'emphasis on having versus doing'.[758] Richins assumed that materialists would 'value possessions and their acquisition more than other life goals and more than their relationships with other people.'[759] It would likewise 'influence the allocation of a variety of resources, including time.'

[753] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 304.
[754] Ibid.
[755] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 266.
[756] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 304.
[757] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 270.
[758] Ibid., 276.
[759] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 208.

Thus, a materialist would sacrifice 'time for leisure activities' to 'work longer hours and earn more money' so they could purchase more goods.[760]

This mutually exclusive separation between physical pursuits and spiritual, intellectual, or relational pursuits became a lynchpin that defined 'materialism'. As Richins stated: 'it is the pursuit of happiness through acquisition rather than through other means (such as personal relationships, experiences, or achievements) that distinguishes materialism'.[761] This separation, however, failed to note how goods are used to realise these intellectual achievements, spiritual experiences, or personal relationships.

Materialism was positioned as resulting in 'harmful effects' upon the sanctity of family life, life-values, and personal health and satisfaction with life. It led to an 'enervating self-indulgence and perverted moral notions'.[762] *It was 'injurious to health'; the 'unceasing quest of new enjoyments' was 'disastrous to the nervous system'.*[763] *It ultimately resulted in 'disillusion and disappointment', and creeds of 'pessimism'.*[764]

Both Belk's and Richins' studies expressed the belief that materialism led to unhappiness. Richins' scales directly measured this with the subscale

[760] Ibid., 307.
[761] Ibid., 304.
[762] Ryan, "The Fallacy of 'Bettering One's Position,'" 150–151.
[763] Ibid., 152.
[764] Ibid., 153, 154.

centred around 'acquisition as the pursuit of happiness',[765] asking whether people had 'all the things I really need to enjoy life', and whether they would 'be any happier if I owned nicer things' or 'could afford to buy more things'.[766] Belk's scales probed at what worried or upset people, and whether they were dissatisfied with 'what is coming to me'.[767] It is not surprising then to find that both proved that 'more materialistic people tend to be less happy in life.'[768]

Richins proposed this was because the cycle brought on by the 'insatiable' lust for goods, in which 'pleasure of a new acquisition are quickly forgotten and replaced with a desire for more', led 'inevitably to dissatisfaction and discontent.'[769] Belk tempered this, noting that:

> [I]t is plausible that materialistic people pursue false sources of happiness, and…therefore such people must be disappointed, [but] it is also possible that those who have for various reasons experienced dissatisfaction in life turn to materialism in their effort to find happiness.[770]

Additionally, Belk noted how materialism caused people to use goods as a 'substitute for more direct interpersonal expressions of love';[771] Richins proposed that materialists denied 'a life-style of moral responsibility,

[765] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 304.
[766] Ibid., 310.
[767] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 270.
[768] Ibid., 271.
[769] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 308.
[770] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 274.
[771] Ibid., 266.

spiritual growth, and self-actualization', and would choose to work 'longer hours so one can acquire more' over 'spending more time with the family', or would have a 'preference for status-conferring products vs. those that consolidate the family'.[772]

Other scholars would carry forward the belief that materialism 'undermines the personal well-being and need satisfaction of those who accept it…[and] also leads people to engage in behaviors and hold attitudes damaging to our communities'.[773] They would *prove* that those strongly focused on materialism had: lower self-actualization and vitality,…more depression and anxiety', lower levels of 'social productivity and general functioning', higher 'conduct disorders', a 'lower self-esteem and greater narcissism', 'love relationships and friendships [that] are relatively short and are characterized more by emotional extremes and conflict than by trust and happiness', and 'increased [levels of] greed'.[774]

Thus we see how the truths that were initially spun around 'materialism' created a concept that was far from neutral. 'Materialism' epitomized, and continues to epitomize, the negative aspects of consumerism that critics of

[772] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 308; Susan Fournier and Marsha L. Richins, "Some Theoretical and Popular Notions Concerning Materialism," *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality* 6, no. 6 (1991): 412.
[773] Tim Kasser et al., "Materialistic Values: Their Causes and Consequences," in *Psychology and Consumer Culture : The Struggle for a Good Life in a Materialistic World*, ed. Tim Kasser and Allen D. Kanner, 1st ed.. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004), 21.
[774] Ibid., 19, 20, 22.

progress envisioned. They spun this delegitimizing discourse in order to elevate the elements of society they valued and feared would diminish in its social and cultural esteem. Academics today continue to perpetuate this same mantra for very similar purposes.

Advocates of Progress: Positioning 'Materialism' as Remedial

The other branch in which concepts of 'materialism' were developed occurred through the writings of those who wanted to legitimize and advance America's economic progress. Their solution was to develop various remedies for materialism that would not completely renounced goods, but rather, similar to the Transcendentalists, call for a balance between the immaterial and material aspects of life. As articulated by Strong, the antidote to 'materialism' was a: 'preservation of a balance between our material power and our moral and intellectual power', so that 'the means of self-gratification [did] not outgrow the power of self-control'.[775] As he argued:

> Increasing wealth will only prove the means of destruction, unless it is accompanied by an increasing power of control, a stronger sense of justice, and a more intelligent comprehension of its obligations. [776]

Strong reframed the societal value of 'economising', labelling it as what we commonly know today as 'self-discipline'. As he urged: It was through the spirit of 'self-discipline' that the 'perils of wealth'—'Mammonism and materialism, as

[775] Strong, *Our Country*, 120.
[776] Ibid.

well as luxuriousness, lose their power.'[777] Yet in defining this attribute, he also elaborated upon what one needed to be disciplined about. In doing so, he reinforced a contrast between 'needs' versus materialistic 'wants', designating the latter as 'living 'sumptuously every day', gratifying 'every whim' and living' with the most lavish expenditure'.[778]

As other social critics attempted to promote Strong's balanced solution, they also cemented a number of mutually exclusive dichotomies. They reinforced a contrast between a 'materialistic' life versus a 'non-materialistic' life—that is, a life governed by material pursuits versus a life elevated by intelligence and, importantly, adherence to codes of *civic* morality. They elaborated upon Strong's distinction between *appropriate* versus i*nappropriate*, materialistic expenditures of wealth, classifying elements that reflected their cultural and social capital—sources of high culture art and literature such as libraries and museums, education, sources of leisure such as parks, and for the religious elite, missionary work—to be appropriate expenditures.

Andrew Carnegie legitimized this approach. In his article, "The Gospel of Wealth" (1889), he sanctioned the pursuit of wealth of the self-made man so long as he used it for uplifting society. Carnegie's gospel was aimed at solving 'the problem of rich and poor' while preserving America's 'individualism'. He wanted to find a pathway for America's wealth that was distinct from Europe's

[777] Ibid., 251.
[778] Ibid., 196.

injurious inheritance system and communism's ineffectual wealth redistribution—to ensure the 'laws of accumulation [and] the laws of distribution [were left] free.'[779] His "Gospel" would allow the wealthy to gain social status and respectability amongst men whilst still controlling the way in which their wealth was spent. As he described, 'the duty of the man of wealth' was:

> To set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and, after doing so, to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer in the manner which, in his judgment, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community—the man of wealth thus becoming the mere trustee and agent for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer [wealth].[780]

The question that arose with such delineations, however, was determining: 'what are moderate sums to leave to members of the family; what is modest, unostentatious living; what is the test of extravagance'; and what were the 'best uses to which surplus wealth can be put'?[781] In answer to the 'test of extravagance', Carnegie implored that the 'enlightened public sentiment' be the deciding factor.[782] He deemed it 'impossible to name exact amounts or actions' as 'different standards for different conditions' existed, rather, the community would be the adjudicator: just as 'whatever makes one conspicuous offends the

[779] Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth," in *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (New York: The Century Co., 1901), 9, 13, 18.
[780] Ibid., 15.
[781] Ibid., 15, 16.
[782] Ibid., 15.

canon' so too would the 'abuse of…surplus wealth' offend the community and be deplored through 'judgements'.[783]

As for 'worthy' uses of wealth, Carnegie was quite clear about what he thought fell under this category: the listed expenditures read like a checklist of all the elite's sources of cultural capital. He couched this, however, in terms that aligned with the American ideal of the self-made man. As he deemed, 'the main consideration should be to help those who will help themselves; to provide part of the means by which those who desire to improve may do so; to give those who desire to rise the aids by which they may rise'.[784] The list included: 'free libraries, parks, and means of recreation,' to help men 'in body and mind'; 'works of art' to 'give pleasure and improve the public taste'; and 'public institutions…[that] will improve the general condition of the people'.[785]

Importantly, in his sanctioning of 'the material progress of the Republic' he defined what he envisioned as unworthy versus worthy pursuits: He renounced 'ostentation in dress or living' to be 'in "bad form"'; 'art' and 'music', on the other hand, would prevent 'the tendency of Democracy to materialize a people and give it over to sordid thoughts' by extending America's 'personal liberty' beyond 'the accumulation of dollars' to a more 'refined' life. He claimed, the Democracy's 'love of art and music…even to-day is not behind the Monarchy';

[783] Ibid., 15–16.
[784] Ibid., 17.
[785] Ibid., 18.

indeed, art and music was 'elevating, year after year, not only the few, but the great masses'.[786]

Strong reiterated a similar 'Gospel of Wealth' with his 'justifiable' versus 'unjustifiable' means of amassing and using wealth. Strong developed these ideas over the years, until eventually he echoed Carnegie's message. Thus, although Carnegie did not use the derogatory classifications of 'materialism' or 'materialistic' in his publications (the closest he came was 'materialize' when he renounced British criticisms of America's material progress),[787] his ideas, through Strong's publications, came to represent a more balanced antidote to progress' materialism.

Starting off in 1885, Strong directly attacked the core of many 'materialism' allegations by validating the 'duty of some men to make a great deal of money'. As he described, 'God has given [some men] the money-making talent; and it is as wrong to bury that talent as to bury a talent for preaching.'[788] He likewise denounced the Puritan idea of the simple life, noting that he had 'no sympathy with asceticism':

> There is no virtue in deformity: good taste is not unchristian; beauty often costs no more than ugliness. Away with the idea of penance. It belies God, and caricatures the Christian religion.[789]

[786] Andrew Carnegie, *Triumphant Democracy; Or¸ Fifty Years' March of The Republic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887 [c. 1886]), 339–341.
[787] Ibid., 235.
[788] Strong, *Our Country*, 198.
[789] Ibid., 190.

He alternatively proposed that it was the 'self-sacrifice which Christ taught', which was 'not self-denial for the sake of self-denial, but for the sake of others'.[790] He positioned this action as being God's bestowed benevolence:

> So greatly does he desire our joy that he is not content to see us satisfied with the low delights of self-gratification, but would fain have us know the blessedness of self-sacrifice for others.[791]

Great wealth was thus justified so long as it was 'used in the way that will best honor God'. For Strong, this was the 'home missionary work' for which he was trying to amass support.[792] Thus, to prevent the 'power of money' from making one a victim of 'saint-seducing gold', people were to embrace 'Christian giving' in time, effort, and money for missionary work.[793] As Strong stressed: 'nothing but constant and generous giving can save [a man] from growing small in his soul.'[794]

This 'Christian giving', however, was not merely a reassertion of the old gentry ideals of benevolence for the sake of the community; there was a strong individualistic motive put behind these acts. People were to give in order to store up 'riches' in the 'Kingdom of Heaven'.[795] This was, as Strong recognised, a '*radically different conception* of our relations to our possessions'.[796] People were expected to be industrious not only to bring about the millennium beliefs (in

[790] Ibid.
[791] Ibid.
[792] Ibid., 197.
[793] Ibid., 198, 206.
[794] Ibid., 199.
[795] Ibid., 208–209.
[796] Ibid., 182. (Formatting original.)

which God's second coming was predicated on progressing society to create His Kingdom on earth); but they were also to be focused on embracing post-millennium goals. Protestants were to *give on earth* by Christianizing the unsaved 'immigrant'—give the Catholics a 'pure gospel', educate the Mormons, reform the intemperate and radical laborer—so that they might live a better, richer life in heaven.[797] They were *not* supposed to amass wealth, 'live in luxury, and then leave a legacy for missions'. They were to make money but then engage in 'daily self-denial' so they could give constantly to missions.[798] 'Daily self-denial', however, was not to be to the point of asceticism; rather, it was to be an exercised 'self-restraint' that shunned living 'sumptuously every day' and gratifying 'every whim'.[799] It was a reaffirmation of the delineation between justifiable (needs-based) versus unjustifiable (wants-based), materialistic expenditures.

Strong accordingly reframed 'materialism' so that it was no longer just about the pursuit of wealth, but about the inappropriate expenditure or hoarding of that wealth. Moreover, he also framed it as a problem that not only the Protestant Church (with its antidotes of spirituality and indoctrination of industriousness and economization), and education (with its antidotes of culture and knowledge) could rectify: it became a vice that every individual

[797] Ibid., 210.
[798] Ibid., 192–193.
[799] Ibid., 196.

could challenge by engaging in what he termed 'twentieth century Christianity'.[800]

Strong initially defined acts of 'twentieth century Christianity' to include 'service, sacrifice and love' that supported missionary work.[801] By 1901, Strong came to see the merits of Carnegie's message, as his Institute for Social Services benefited from Carnegie's patronage.[802] He expanded his idea of 'twentieth century Christianity' to include giving 'for the benefits of millions'.[803] As noted in his review of Carnegie's complied book, *Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays*, Carnegie's 'general observations on the subject [of philanthropic giving] are eminently wise': They would 'help to create a wholesome public opinion as to the responsibilities of wealth, and…strengthen the growing conviction that wealth is to be used, not as a personal possession for private ends, but as a public trust for the benefit of humanity.'[804]

The rhetoric around the balanced solution proposed and popularized by Carnegie and Strong demonstrates how the division of 'materialistic' versus 'non-materialistic, elements supported the two interests of the elite: it allowed social reformers to support America's continued industrial, technological, and economic progress, which elevated its esteem within the global world at large,

[800] Strong, *The Twentieth Century City*, 116.
[801] Ibid., 129.
[802] Bruce E. Kaufman, *Managing the Human Factor: The Early Years of Human Resource Management in American Industry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 78–79.
[803] Josiah Strong, *The Times and Young Men* (New York: Baker and Taylor Co., 1901), 226.
[804] Josiah Strong, "The Gospel of Wealth," ed. Josiah Strong and William Howe Tolman, *Social Service* 4, no. 2 (August 1901): 60.

whilst setting boundaries that might preserve the country's internal social order. As the social reformist and philanthropist Charles Loring Brace concluded, drawing 'the 'Dangerous Classes' of large cities…under the influence of the moral and fortunate classes' would ensure 'they…grow up as useful producers and members of society, able and included to aid it in its progress.'[805]

Through out the decades these concepts of benevolence and productive citizenship became solidified as definitive American expectations, often used to sanction America's materialism. Theodore Roosevelt, for example, resounded these ideas in his 1910 speech "Citizenship in a Republic", denoting that America had overcome the 'hard materialism of…industrialism'; it had moved on to a more respectable pursuit of material progress by recognizing that:

> [T]he life of material gain, whether for a nation or an individual, is of value only as a foundation, only as there is added to it the uplift that comes from devotion to loftier ideals.[806]

He espoused, a man's character was built upon his ability to first provide for himself and his family by 'earning money' and 'providing what is essential to material well-being', and afterwards using his 'surplus strength' to contribute to the 'general well-being' of the public at large. Such a man earned the status of being 'an asset of real worth'. But a man who 'pile[d[up a great fortune, for the acquisition or retention of which he returns no

[805] Charles Loring Brace, *The Dangerous Classes of New York, and Twenty Years' Work among Them* (New York: Wynkoop & Hallenbeck, 1872), ii.
[806] Theodore Roosevelt, "Citizenship in a Republic," Almanac of Theodore Roosevelt (Sorbonne, Paris, France, April 23, 1910), http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/speeches/maninthearena.pdf.

corresponding benefit to the nation as a whole' was 'an unworthy citizen of the community' that was not to be 'admired nor envied'.[807] Roosevelt, amongst others, solidified a normative expectation that strove to prevent America's materialistic pursuit of wealth from degrading into a materialistic acquisitiveness of goods. It was, however, vested in their interests at creating a country in which men were self-sufficient, encouraged to achieve their potential as productive citizens, so that they could contribute to the state rather than relying on or taking from the state.

Examining the Perpetuation of Materialism's Remedial Solutions

Just as the ideas of the critics of progress shaped the future academic studies on materialism and the scales, so too did the ideas articulated by Strong, Carnegie, and Roosevelt. Although these ideas played a lesser role, they nevertheless can be seen in how Belk viewed those who personified materialism as scoring high on 'nongenerosity', holding a 'negative attitude toward charity', and possessing the traits of 'greed, [and] miserliness'.[808] Similarly, Richins viewed materialists as 'self-centered': The 'overriding concern with possessions and acquisition for oneself [was] inherently incompatible with sharing and giving to others'.[809] The remedies proposed by Strong had the effect of creating a social standard in which people were *expected* to give, to share, to be benevolent, regardless of

[807] Ibid.
[808] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 268, 266.
[809] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 308.

wealth levels. Indeed, perhaps Strong's greatest effect was that he helped to expand Carnegie's Gospel of Wealth from being an expectation of the self-made millionaire to being an expectation for all Americans.

Secondly, the effects of Strong's, Carnegie's, and Roosevelt's ideas can be seen in what elements academics deemed to be 'true' sources of 'self-esteem' and self-actualization.[810] Pulling from Abraham Maslow's hierarchies of needs (1943), which ranked motives guiding people's behaviour (physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization),[811] scholars denoted 'non-materialistic' pursuits as including: 'the need for belonging,…aesthetic and intellectual needs';[812] 'the fulfilment of 'psychological needs for…competence, connection to others, and autonomy;'[813] and prosocial values and altruism commitments' that seek to make 'the world a better place'.[814] In their denotation of these pursuits, the use of material goods in achieving these aspects was muted, relegated to be applicable only to those who adopted a materialistic lifestyle. Accordingly, academic studies of materialism often reinforced the bifurcation between *higher* goals and *lower* material pursuits, perpetuating a false dichotomy about 'materialism'. However, we all use goods to accomplish things in life. So why is it that this division between 'materialistic' versus 'non-

[810] Kasser et al., "Materialistic Values: Their Causes and Consequences," 20.
[811] Abraham Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50 (1943), 383.
[812] Ronald Inglehart, "The Silent Revolution in Europe: Intergenerational Change in Post-Industrial Societies," *The American Political Science Review* 65, no. 4 (1971): 991–992.
[813] Kasser et al., "Materialistic Values: Their Causes and Consequences," 20.
[814] Tim Kasser and Richard M. Ryan, "A Dark Side of the American Dream: Correlates of Financial Success as a Central Life Aspiration," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 65, no. 2 (1993): 411.

materialistic' goals continues? By looking at the original intentions behind these divisions, we can start to find an answer: the speech acts time and time again reinforced the idea that certain goods were permissible *so long as they helped to create productive citizens*, and wealth was permissible *so long as it contributed to creating a productive society*. In essence, classifications of 'materialism' acted as a mode of delegitimizing discourse to channel the American dream. As one American historian recounted, the dream was:

> [T]he belief that it was possible to create and order a society in which…every man and woman would…have the opportunity of rising to full stature [through]…equality before the law,…equality of economic opportunity or even of education.[815]

Americans were to have the ability to live 'the fullest possible life of which they were capable'.[816] Yet rather than having 'communistic restrictions upon individual initiative and acquisition',[817] it was to have a mode of discursive, disciplinary power used to maintain ideals of social order—to control acquisitiveness shifting into greed or possessiveness overpowering benevolence and altruism.

[815] James Truslow Adams, "What of 'The American Dream'?," *New York Times*, May 14, 1933, sec. 6, SM1.
[816] Ibid.
[817] Ibid.

Chapter Fourteen

Tracing the Development of 'Materialism' through the Decades: Private Vices versus Civic Virtues

The 'materialism' we know today stems from a history in which America's consumer market, desire for global economic power, and political tensions coalesced. In this chapter, the allegations of 'materialism' are explored chronologically to bring to the fore this historical emergence. From this analysis, three trends become apparent. First is how the epithet of 'materialism', now saturated with pejorative associations, was used to denounce and delegitimize behaviours that challenged or denied the core aspects of America's dream: greed, nongenerosity, possessiveness, and, as per accusations directed at the Babbitts, conformity. This latter element, which at times stood opposed to self-expression, was manipulated over the decades pending the interests being advanced. When consumer conformity devalued or took away from the intellectual or political elites' sources of capital, it was labelled as 'materialistic'; however, when it contributed to their agendas, especially during the Cold War, it was praised as a civic virtue.

Clearly exemplified in this rhetoric is the second and previously documented trend: the directionality of the accusation of 'materialism' shifted pending the

underlying interests, and the internal and external pressures that informed these interests.

The third trend reveals how, during moments of intense social or moral crises, 'materialism'—as an alleged instigator—came to prominence, and advocates proposing a simple life became exalted over proponents of prosperity and progress. These were moments when the inherent tension between the American dream of economic freedom and self-expression, and the desire to preserve social order, became obvious and unmanageable. Thus, so long as the American society seemed to be functioning, achieving progress and gaining global dominance, critics of progress and their remedy of a simple life were often subdued, until there was an apparent crisis—the stock market crash of 1929, the Soviet's demonstrating superiority over America with their missile and satellite launches in 1957, and the energy crisis of 1973. These crises created openings for critical views of America's dream to not only be voiced but also listened to, and, to a certain extent, legitimized.

'Materialism' and the Progressive Era: 1900-1910

In the early 1900s, America was on a path to achieving its manifest destiny. Those who decried the effects of 'materialism' were predominately the threatened religious and intellectual elite. Although many of them at times called for an embracement of a simple life, they could not renounce goods

outright. The Progressive Era's rhetoric, which propagated the view that America's progress was an essential element of the nation's identity, had reaffirmed a truth that was too dominant to be ignored. This was an era steeped in Theodore Roosevelt's Presidential call to 'maintain the high level of our present prosperity', in order that America might 'assume that commanding position in the international business world which we believe will be more and more hers.' America's 'economic fitness' was deemed critical to 'dry up the springs of the pestilential social conditions in our great cities, where anarchistic [socialist] organizations have their greatest possibility of growth.'[818]

I. The Proponents' Validation: 'Materialism' becomes a 'Patriotic Duty'

Proponents of material progress accordingly refuted allegations of 'materialism' by sanctioning it—noting how it had led to the development of loftier accomplishments—and by deflecting it—shifting the allegations towards socialism. For example, as the *New York Times* wrote, although New York 'has been held up for reproach as the most materialistic city in the world, given over to the pursuit of wealth' it was changing its ways.[819] It had invested in art and culture. Its wealthy men had recognized their 'patriotic duty' and built a museum. In so doing, it had prevented the far more

[818] Theodore Roosevelt, "First Annual Message, State of the Union Speech," The American Presidential Project (Washington, DC, December 3, 1901), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29542.
[819] "More Art in Public Schools," *New York Sun*, March 16, 1907, sec. Image 4.

dangerous materialistic element of socialism by teaching the 'poor man' about the 'ideal side of life' and demonstrating how the 'rich men' blessed society.[820]

These sorts of justifications made it difficult for critics of progress to completely oppose consumerism, unless they wanted to be treated with disdain or be accused of supporting anarchistic organizations. Gladden, for instance, proposed in his 1908 publication, *The Church and Modern Life*, the antidote of choosing a 'simpler life' to 'turn back [the] tides of materialism'; however, he did not equate the simple life to one that stripped 'our lives bare of beauty' or consigned 'ourselves to the meagreness of the anchoretic regimen' of a hermit like-life'.[821] He sought, rather, to temper the control goods held over society by shifting the hierarchy of pursuits. As he noted: 'We shall have our beautiful homes and abundant pleasures; but we must learn to make our spiritual interests supreme…and not let our love [be] stifled in the atmosphere of modern materialism.'[822] This would allow Americans to 'live a freer life.' It would 'save our nation from decay' and from the 'artificialities and extravagances' in which 'the soul is enfeebled and belittled, and the national vigor is lost.'[823]

[820] Ibid.
[821] Gladden, *The Church and Modern Life*, 192; "Anchorite, N.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, March 2015), http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/7235.
[822] Ibid.
[823] Ibid., 191.

Gladden, rearticulating many of the ideas of his fellow Social Gospel advocate, Josiah Strong, adjusted these ideas to meet his socialistic interests and concerns about the working class. Yet he also had to be careful and assuage the fears society had of the revolutionary fever connected with socialistic ideas. Accordingly, he positioned a simple life to mean a 'revolution, not by violence' but 'by choice, by effort, by struggle and resistance'.[824] It was Strong's antidote of self-denial, but with the remedial efforts geared towards brotherhood more so than missionary work. As Gladden described, people were to make their 'deepest relation in human society…not to things, but to persons'. Society was to be redeemed from the 'untempered mortar' of 'materialistic foundations' by recognising that 'personality and not property is the primordial fact; that our relation to persons is deeper and diviner than our relation to things; and that there can be no enduring society which is not founded on the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.'[825]

Likewise, the Catholic priest, John A. Ryan, who was one of strongest proponents of a simpler life of moderation, did not entirely renounce consumerism. As he noted, the 'pursuit of material goods…for the sake of beauty and refinement…have a legitimate place in any complete theory of right living, but their importance is only secondary. They ought not to be sought or obtained to the detriment of the primary goods of life, such as

[824] Ibid., 191–192.
[825] Washington Gladden, *Christianity and Socialism* (New York : Eaton and Mains; Cincinnati : Jennings & Graham, 1905), 51–52.

health, mentality, virility, good morals, [and] contentment.'[826] Under his socialistic rhetoric, he called for people to choose a level of 'moderate comfort in the matter of material satisfaction,'[827] so that they could then distribute their wealth through 'benevolent giving' and embrace 'a more effective notion of brotherly love.'[828]

Accordingly, although these advocates of a simpler life could not outright denounce the benefits of material prosperity, they did seek to temper 'materialism' by legitimizing a hierarchy of worthy pursuits. Under their rhetoric, relationships, intellectual pursuits, and spiritual enlightenment became separated from, and valued above, material pursuits of life.

'Materialism' and the Threat of New Fads and the Promise of More: 1910-1920

By the 1910s, as the Progressive Era reforms tackled corruption in politics and improved civil service, and the mandates implemented by President William Howard Taft (1857-1930) broke up many of the large corporate trusts,[829] the concerns around progress and allegations of 'materialism' shifted increasingly

[826] Ryan, "The Fallacy of 'Bettering One's Position,'" 155.
[827] Ibid., 156.
[828] John A. Ryan, *Distributive Justice : The Right and Wrong of Our Present Distribution of Wealth* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919 [c. 1906]), 318.
[829] Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!: An American History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 605–606, 610–615.

from a focus on the misconduct of politicians or the businessman towards a focus on the effects of the multiplicity of goods on society at large. Commentators used the concept of 'materialism' interchangeably to denounce the pursuit of wealth and the consumption of things (i.e., goods and entertainment) that wealth could buy. This had the effect of drawing more attention to the way material goods—versus the Boss or the Businessman—controlled society.

I. The Critics' Raise a Flag: The Social Ills of Inventions and Wealth

Within this shift warning flags were raised: the religious and intellectual elite, attempting to protect their cultural and symbolic capital, wrote articles that not only spoke out against the moral and social crisis caused by 'materialism', but also pushed more directly for a return to a genteel or simple life. They became more vocal in their criticisms of material goods and the inventions progress had created, and often did not attempt to temper this with a list of worthy expenditures. Although these were unpopular views, they laid down ideas that would gain further traction in the 1920s.

For example, in 1913 an ardent Protestant wrote an article in the *Ladies Home Journal* about the 'Wave of Materialism which has caused such a growth of immorality among us'.[830] Calling herself the 'plain country woman', she berated

[830] The Country Contributor, "The Ideas of a Plain Country Woman," ed. Edward W. Bok, *The Ladies' Home Journal* 30, no. 10 (October 1913): 46.

the shameless fashion that exposed women's figures, the silly hats and ugly shoes, the 'feminine passion for novelty' that was 'thoroughly perverted'. She reprimanded the 'very respectable people' who had chosen to sit through an 'infamous' but 'vulgar' show instead of doing the 'very simple and sincere thing of going home after the first act', as she had done. She castigated the Protestant Church for making a mockery of faith: it had destroyed the spiritual essence of the sanctuary by decorating it 'with paper flowers' and making it 'the scene of money-raising and secular entertainment.' She deplored the way material progress had led to the 'degeneracy of society and the decline of home', calling for people to recognise the 'strange hypnotic force of evil', to push against the 'pretty' goods 'foist[ed] upon them', to walk away from vulgar entertainment, and to protest against the non-spiritual elements of the church. Recognising her opinions as being the unpopular view, she deplored the 'innocent bystander' who did nothing to 'speak up', who was too 'afraid of making enemies' and 'wished to be popular, and who thus let 'foolish fashion or unkind custom[s]' continue.[831]

Professor Ross L. Finney, in 1913, also spoke out, calling attention to the growing consequences of materialism in his essay "The Social Harvest of Materialism". His assertions read like a summary of the 'harmful effects'

[831] Ibid.

previous pronounced by Father Ryan.[832] Finney proclaimed that 'materialism' destroyed the family as the 'strain to maintain the standard of living demanded by materialistic ideals' was 'too great for the family ties to endure', resulting in 'many a divorce'.[833] It diminished the influence of the Church, causing men to grow 'too busy to attend its services' and to grow 'so practical…that they have no use for the spiritual good of the religious life.'[834] It infected the clergy causing priests to 'estimate themselves in terms of salaries' and to offer 'sacrifices upon the altars of Mammon'. [835] It esteemed money and consequently corrupted politics as men, lured by 'opportunities to secure what is considered the highest good', became inattentive to 'public interests' or entered public life with an ambit for making money, often 'dishonest money': A 'materialistic nation' was to 'inevitably expect its government to be honeycombed with graft.' [836] Finally, it led to dissatisfaction. It caused 'fret, anxiety, and disappointment', drawing 'heavily on our vitality':[837]

> [The] protracted service of a god who can not satisfy the depths of the human soul shall leave us in the end oppressed by the devitalizing world-weariness and pessimism always characteristic of a decadent epoch.[838]

[832] John A. Ryan, "The Fallacy of 'Bettering One's Position,'" in *The Catholic World*, vol. 86, 512 (New York: The Mission Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York, 1907), 148-152.
[833] Ross L. Finney, "The Social Harvest of Materialism," in *Personal Religion and the Social Awakening* (Cincinnati : Jennings and Graham ; New York : Eatons and Mains, 1913), 71.
[834] Ibid., 71–72.
[835] Ibid., 72.
[836] Ibid., 72–74.
[837] Ibid., 74–75.
[838] Ibid., 75.

Ignoring the Progressive Era's mantra about progress and reform, Finney brazenly criticized America and its government reforms that were 'materialistic at the basis': they had infected 'the imagination of American people' with desires of material 'emulation'.[839] Finney's remedies for 'materialism' focused on recapturing the spiritual and relational essence of man, best personified by those who lived 'a simple life' and who were content 'with small means'.[840] Rather than material goods, people were to seek out a 'revival of personal religion' to bring about 'social salvation'. Starting with the self and the home, individuals and parents were to embrace Jesus' teachings of altruism, brotherly love, and to make family-life and the 'home an ideal principality of the Kingdom'. By implanting this moral code within the personal lives of society's members, government and business could be 'readjusted and reorganized'. Yet, similar to the 'plain country woman', Finney recognised his views were in the minority: his reforms called for strong, 'good folk' to push against the prevailing 'exaggerated individualism' and pressures of material pursuits.[841]

[839] Ibid., 68–69.
[840] Ibid., 76.
[841] Ross L. Finney, *Personal Religion and the Social Awakening* (Cincinnati : Jennings and Graham ; New York : Eatons and Mains, 1913), 24–25, 53.

II. The Proponents' Sanctioning: 'Materialism' and the Improvement of Society's Welfare

As the few critics of progress voiced their opinions, the supporters of progress worked on refuting allegations of 'materialism' levelled at America as a nation, and its business culture. As per the previous decades, proponents of progress sought to sanction America's material prosperity by demonstrating how it was used for acts of benevolence and for worthy causes, and importantly, had led to 'rising standards of living'.[842] Its material pursuits were likewise sanctioned as it had led to innovations, which in turn greatly benefited mankind and improved the welfare of society.

For example, in 1913, the American lecturer and writer, Hamilton Wright Mabie (1846-1916), called into question the 'charges of materialism' laid out by 'foreign observers'. In the widely read book, *American Ideals Character and Life*, (which formed part of the reading material for the popular Chautauqua adult education movement),[843] he described how the money-getting behaviour of Americans was 'not only misleading, but a caricature of the American spirit.'[844] He sanctioned the wealth of America, advocating that Americans were in fact the opposite of materialistic: they used their money for ethical and cultural purposes. As he stated:

[842] Walter E. Weyl, "The New Wealth," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, December 1, 1915, 613.
[843] Charlotte Canning, *The Most American Thing in America : Circuit Chautauqua as Performance*, Studies in Theatre History and Culture (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005), 6–10.
[844] Hamilton Wright Mabie, *American Ideals¸ Character and Life* (Chautauqua, N.Y.: Chautauqua Press, 1915), 325–236.

> The charge of materialism, which has become the stock in trade of many critics of American society, is largely made, as is most criticism of nations by foreign observers, from a very superficial knowledge of conditions.[845]

Americans, he argued, did not 'sell their soul for money', but rather they blessed people with their money, 'often lavish[ing] it on…family' and giving 'it away in increasing amounts'. 'Misers [were] almost unknown in America.' Indeed, 'the great fortunes which have subjected [men] to sharp criticism in America have made vast contributions to public uses.'[846]

Similarly, Walter E. Weyl (1873-1919), an intellectual leader of the Progressive movement, challenged the perception that America's 'new wealth' would 'intensify our proverbial American materialism.'[847] As he stated in a 1915 article featured in *Harper's*:

> It is doubtful…whether America really grows more materialistic as it grows wealthier…. Ours is still "The Land of Dollars," but surely our present materialism is at least somewhat tempered by idealism…. [M]ultimillionaires, who have acquired wealth legally and illegally, morally and immorally, make wise donations to hospitals, libraries, research laboratories, art-museums, and other works of social progress.[848]

Cutting off criticisms of America's 'vain-glory' and 'ostentation in competitive benevolence', he argued that these weighed 'but lightly against the real sense

[845] Ibid., 306–307.
[846] Ibid., 326–327.
[847] Weyl, "The New Wealth," 614.
[848] Ibid.

of social obligation which these gifts reveal."[849] There were a multitude of benefits that had occurred through America's progress and its 'slow but immense diffusion of our national wealth'. It resulted in 'a far higher standard of comfort' across the population—the 'well-to-do, comfortable, and moderately poor' alike. It had lessened the 'death-rate': babies could be 'treated by physicians…[and] assured of a better diet'. 'Children of America [could] be better fed, better clad, better housed, better amused, better educated than before."[850] If 'wisely applied', America's 'vast new wealth' could mean:

> [T]he passing of illiteracy, the abolition of…child labor,… the end of low wages, of dangerous and unsanitary factories, of excessive or deleterious toil, of unemployment, of under-employment, of industrial uncertainty,… It would mean the end of evil housing conditions; the building of new and healthful, if not always beautiful, suburbs; a bold and successful campaign against typhoid, tuberculosis, and other plagues, a diminution of city mortality, an increase in the amount and a betterment of the quality of life. It would mean improved recreation, enlarged pleasure, a diminution of drunkenness and disease, and an escape from that haunting fear of poverty which so accentuates the gambling element in our civilization.[851]

In a similar vein, the business community vindicated its associations with 'materialism' by reframing 'materialism' to be something that supported social ideals. For example, Edward W. Bok (1863-1930), editor of *The Ladies' Home Journal*, reflecting upon his own rags to riches story, justified the

[849] Ibid.
[850] Ibid., 615.
[851] Ibid., 615–616.

world of business and its materialism, challenging wives to think differently about their spouses. He contested the perception of wives who 'shun' their husbands under a false pretence that business was 'sordid' and 'materialistic', and who believed that the life of an artist or painter was of greater social worth. As he described in the article, 'business today has many vital factors' and embraces some of the 'greatest spiritual qualities inherent in man':[852]

> [C]ourage, honor, tenacity, impartiality, insight, sympathy, justice, and imagination—are called for in the materialistic world of the business of today.[853]

Wives were mistaken to elevate the life of the artist, for the artist only '*reflects* Life' while 'the business man of today *shapes* Life.[854]

By the end of this decade, Americans believed that a higher standard of living could be achieved by all with the aid of the businessman. Production was unleashed. Consumption was within reach. But with this, came a surge of allegations of 'materialism' directed at the bourgeoning consumerism society. These allegations would gain amplitude and resonance as America experienced an era of intense moral crisis.

[852] Edward W. Bok, "The Business Man and His Wife," ed. Edward W. Bok, *The Ladies' Home Journal* 33, no. 6 (June 1916): 9.
[853] Ibid.
[854] Ibid., (Formatting original.)

'Materialism' in the Age of Jazz Degradation and Babbittry: 1920-1930

Voices declaring the way 'materialism' affected moral and social order increased in volume in the post-World War I era as America entered the 'machine age' and flashy jazz age, and proceeded down an irreligious path of degradation. The 1920s marked America becoming a full-fledged consumer society and the 'machine' coming to the fore as America's national advantage.[855] Henry Ford's assembly line led to a surge in production efficiency and a flood of mass produced goods, and with this surge came the need to get consumers to buy. The advertising industry expanded to increase consumer awareness of products. Consumer credit and instalment buying plans were offered to ensure consumers could buy the goods. Catalogues and chain stores such as Woolworth's expanded to give consumers' ready access to goods. As the United States Chamber of Commerce described in 1924: 'Production cannot be possible unless it produces, first of all, consumers.'[856] National papers promoted the view that the 'first importance' of an American was 'no longer that of citizen but that of consumer.' 'Consumption' was the 'new necessity': 'The way to make business boom is to buy.'[857, 858]

[855] Richard Guy Wilson, Dianne H. Pilgrim, and Dickran Tashjian, *The Machine Age in America 1918-1941* (New York: Brooklyn Museum in association with Abrams, 1986), 23–42, 65–90.
[856] As cited in: Lawrence B. Glickman, "Rethinking Politics: Consumers and the Public Good during the 'Jazz Age,'" *OAH Magazine of History*, July 2007, 18.
[857] As cited in: Robert Staughton Lynd, *Middletown : A Study in American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace ; London, 1929), 88.

I. The Critics: Defending Genteel Ideals Against 'Materialistic' Unproductive Consumerism

Within this context, 'materialism' came to represent the new fads of consumerism that appalled the elite. Social critics, especially in the first half of the decade, rarely proffered views that supported a simple life as this went against the dominant identity Americans championed: America was suppose to be the world's leader of progress and prosperity. Accordingly, social critics instead advocated for a return to their ideals of consumption; consumption vested in a traditional, genteel life.[859]

Many intellectual and religious elite saw the machine and its machine-made goods as dominating too much of society.[860] The mass production of standardized goods threatened to devalue the elite's cultural capital and to

[858] Herbert Hoover et al., "Report of the Committee on Recent Economic Changes of the President's Conference on Unemployment," in *Recent Economic Changes in the United States*, ed. Committee on Recent Economic Changes of the President's Conference on Unemployment, vol. 1, 2 vols., National Bureau of Economic Research (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1929), ix – xxii; Glickman, "Rethinking Politics: Consumers and the Public Good during the 'Jazz Age,'" 16–20.
[859] "The Menace of Thrift," *Nation*, February 16, 1921, 112 (2902); Samuel Strauss, "Things Are in the Saddle," *The Atlantic Monthly*, November 1924, 577–588.
[860] Aldous Huxley, "The Outlook for American Culture: Some Reflections in a Machine Age," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, August 1927, 265–274; Edward Filene, *Successful Living in This Machine Age* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931); Lewis Mumford, A Renewal of Life Series: *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and company, 1934), 273-276; *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1938); *The Condition of Man* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1944); *Conduct of Life*, 1st ed (London: Secker & Warburg, 1951); Lewis Mumford, The Myth of the Machine Series: *The Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967); *The Pentagon of Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970).

'force all intellectual and artistic individualism into the mass pattern'.[861] The leisure time created by the time- and- labour-saving devices became spent doing commercialised, recreational activities rather than more intellectual or spiritual pursuits.[862] In an attempt to redefine the hierarchy of consumption patterns, the intellectual and religious elites used 'materialism' to demean these cultural goods and leisure time activities. Correspondingly, they elevated the 'non-materialistic' elements they valued—relationships, family time, religion, high-art, and intellectual pursuits—as the true signifiers of a 'cultured' person.

The 'twentieth-century…Epicureans' were particularly targeted by this rhetoric since their 'materialistic ideal' was considered to result in:

> [L]axity of standards of conduct, the flexibility of moral convictions, the playing at fast and loose with the marriage bond, the popularity of vulgar amusements, the loss of reverence, the most of trifling with holy things, reckless indulgence simulated by a mad chase after purely physical sensations.[863]

'Materialism' was 'the disease' that plagued society. It infected the youth, causing them to embody lose morals of 'immodest dress, loose talk' and 'jazzing'. There was a 'lost sense of duty, [a] lack of spiritual or even intellectual

[861] James Truslow Adams, *Our Business Civilization: Some Aspects of American Culture* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1929), 189.
[862] Lewis Mumford, "The City," in *Civilization in the United States, an inquiry by thirty Americans*, ed. Harold Stearns [New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922], 13.
[863] John William Frazer, *The Untried Civilization* (New York ; Cincinnati: The Abingdon Press, 1921), 37.

aims' as people embodied 'an accepted doctrine of do as you please'.[864] As one writer noted a decade later in looking back, 'the World War, our sudden expansion of trade, our huge profits, the end of immigration and the whole of the jazz age' caused the American dream to change 'into a nightmare of gambling and corruption and mad spending.'[865]

Similarly, John L. Stoddard (1850-1931), a lecturer, author, and converted Catholic, described in his famous apologetics work, *Rebuilding a Lost Faith* (1921), how America's 'prevalent materialism has lowered man's moral standards'.[866] He deplored how the 'greatness of this age' was 'material, not moral; rapid, not religious' as 'mechanical inventions and the art of money-getting' dominated society.[867] As he noted, 'we are paying the penalty for this' with a youth prone to 'self-indulgence and indifference to religious questions', 'who see in money, luxury, and pleasure the only things worth caring for':[868]

> Their temples are the theatres, their shrines the "movies," their Scriptures the newspapers, their Sunday-school books the Sunday "Comic Supplements"! …This state of things has brought about one of the most conspicuous characteristics of our age,—*Irreverence*, especially for everything connected with religion.[869]

[864] John R. McMahon, "The Jazz Path of Degradation," ed. Barton W. Currie, *The Ladies' Home Journal*, January 1922, 26.
[865] James Truslow Adams, "What of 'The American Dream'?," *New York Times*, May 14, 1933, sec. 6, SM1.
[866] John L. Stoddard, *Rebuilding A Lost Faith* (New York: P.J. Keneday & Sons, 1922), 61.
[867] Ibid., 17.
[868] Ibid.
[869] Ibid., 17–18.

The examples he depicted abounded, including sacrilegious usage and desecrations of church relics, sensational novels, profanity, and 'monstrous' improprieties.[870]

As these writings indicated, World War I had weakened the traditional holds on society. Paula Fass notes that 'for the traditionalist' (i.e. those who sought to uphold the Victorian genteel ideals), 'the war had dealt a final blow to the sustaining and stable values of American culture.'[871] In the post-War era in which mass production led to the proliferation of goods, the youth sought to define their own idea of self-expression, which, 'to the traditionalist…smacked of immorality, self-indulgence, and irresponsibility.'[872] The youth's self-expression threatened to deride religious creeds, and to devalue and potentially supplant the elite's ideas of appropriate art, literature, entertainment, and fashion (i.e., with their movies, the comics, the jazzing, the immodest dress). As such the traditionalist attempted to wield allegations of 'materialism' to delegitimize the youth and the new fads.

Yet these elites were no longer alone in their laments about 'materialism'. As Chapter 12 alluded to, novelists and journalists joined in the reproofs. Together, these writers helped to solidify the shift that had started earlier in the

[870] Ibid., 18–19.
[871] Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful : American Youth in the 1920's* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 36.
[872] Ibid., 23.

era, moving 'materialism' from the producers to the consumers. This shift aligned with Americans separating out the producer—i.e. the businessman and the labourer—from the consumers. As the political economist, Sidney A. Reeve (1866-1941) described when he coined the concept 'consumerism' in 1921: 'a prime aim in the term consumerism is to exclude specifically the producers from participation in organized economic sovereignty…. [Producers] are slaves to [Consumers] for whom…they may produce.'[873] The consumer had become king, yet in this ascension came efforts among the elite to delegitimize the growing threatening mass of consumers.

'Materialism' accordingly came to represent the shallow 'extravagance' of consumers.[874] Novelist and journalists spun this rhetoric and, moreover, expanded the allegations beyond the youth to include other consumer groups: the nouveau riche and the upper-middle class. These social groups, like the youth, were using the proliferation of goods for self-expression: they strove to acquire the goods necessary to affirm a higher social status. To the intellectual elite, this smacked of shallow emulation. As noted, the 'materialist's fairy tale' became viewed as a 'tragic lie' in the life of the nouveau riche: 'motor-cars and champagne do not make for happiness'.[875] Unlike the youth who were seen to be embracing a *nonconforming* consumer ideal, the upper-middle class

[873] Sidney A. Reeve, *Modern Economic Tendencies: An Economic History of America* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1921), 731.
[874] Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York: Baker & Taylor Co. for the American Home Missionary Society, 1885), 189.
[875] "An Essay on Money," *The Living Age*, July 3, 1920, 46, 47.

consumers were deemed to be 'materialistic' for embracing a *conforming* consumer ideal in their acquisition of status symbols. Sinclair Lewis helped inspire these criticisms by collating these ideas into a simple pejorative: the Babbitt.

These writings situated the Babbitt's consumer conformity and nouveau riche's ostentatiousness as going against an America ideal: they were deemed to not be true embodiments of self-expression. It did not matter if a person's desires for expression rested in belonging to an upper class; this sort of self-expression was unacceptable. It was deemed to be emulative rather than original; shallow rather than deep in purpose. It was, I argue, considered to be *unproductive* consumption and expenditure of wealth: this vulgarity did not contribute to advancing America's cultural capital towards genteel pursuits, which was what these intellectual elite wanted, nor did it contribute to improving society at large as it took away from acts of benevolence. As Daniel Horowtiz writes about this era: What intellectuals preferred 'usually centered on lives passionately lived, in which….the conforming, passive consumer' was contrasted against 'the plain people whose old traditions modernization bypassed' or against 'the solitary artist and intellectual who [struggled] to maintain a cultivated and dignified life in a materialistic world.'[876]

[876] Horowitz, *The Morality of Spending*, 162.

The journalist Katharine Fullerton Gerould exemplified this latter sentiment. She deplored how 'materialism' perpetuated an emulative vulgarity. As she described, the 'root of most of [America's] vulgarity' was that 'we are servants of Mammon': 'From that attempt, and the false positions that result, come most of our absurdities and many of our sins.'[877] America's vulgarity came from 'the fact that we worship money without knowing very well what money is good for'. An American began to work for money too young, resulting in no time for him to 'consider how best to use the money when he finally gets it.' He assumed 'the most expensive thing is necessarily the best thing' or, 'he buys from the best-advertised firm'. He has 'never had time to educate himself', and thus, does not exercise 'his own judgement' as he has 'no judgement to exercise.'[878] Those people, she explained, were captured by the 'man whom Mr. Lewis calls Babbitt:'[879]

> [T]he man whose kitchen is probably the best room in the house because he knows how to deal with plumbers and his wife has studied "home economics" in the magazines; because a good kitchen demands only money and common sense, not any of those more difficult and disturbing assets such as knowledge, taste, travel, sense of form.[880]

The upper- and middle-class consumers were accordingly debased in their consumer choices, deemed to lack sufficient intellect to properly appreciate

[877] Katharine Fullerton Gerould, "This Vulgarity of Ours," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, July 1926, 135.
[878] Ibid., 136.
[879] Ibid., 137.
[880] Ibid.

goods. Only those of 'some measure of education, leisure, and wealth'[881] —i.e. the characteristics of the genteel of past—could appropriately navigate the consumer market. Moreover, the Babbitt's and nouveau riche's materialistic consumerism, based on falsehoods and shallow intents, was assumed to contribute to 'personal happiness [being] on the decline'.[882] As Gerould described, an aura of discontent seemed to pervade America due to:

> [T]he loss of religious faith and the popularizing of science with its belittling of man; to the hysteric greed of a materialistic civilization and the satiety that follows; to the nervous wear and tear of the age of machines and inhuman speed; to the breaking down of conventions that kept us in safe and comfortable ruts.[883]

Notably, the assumption of unhappiness was rarely, if ever, directed towards those who *legitimately* pursued the goods of a genteel culture as they were viewed as upholding the conventions that had kept society in check. Indeed, the novelists and journalists, who often thought of themselves as the legitimate consumers of cultured goods, used their writings not to preach a simple life message, as per the religious and intellectual elite of the 1910s, but rather to enforce a level of social distinctions. They did not renounce the consumption of goods outright; but they certainly delegitimized or called into question the consumption of the upper-middle class Babbitts and nouveau riche. In the process, they elevated themselves above the consuming masses. 'Materialism' in

[881] Ibid., 136.
[882] Katharine Fullerton Gerould, "The Sense of the Future," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, August 1928, 379.
[883] Ibid., 379–380.

this light came to represent a conforming consumption that demonstrated a lack of judiciousness and autonomy. It was humankind ignorantly consuming goods, controlled by aspirations towards a higher social status. It was assumed that no genuine pleasure could be had from such consumption.

II. The Proponents' Valorization of 'Materialism': An Embracement of 'Modernity'

Proponents of America's material progress challenged the critics in a number of ways. Some attempted to deflect the accusation by directly calling into question the merits of the criticisms. The American journalist Garet Garrett (1878-1954), for example, argued that the 'melancholy solicitude about people [being] demoraliz[ed] with prosperity' or losing 'their souls' as they ran 'after things' merely reflected misplaced haughtiness:[884]

> This dread of materialism is at bottom snobbish. When material things were differently divided, the few having much and the many very little, there was almost no fear that the few, by reason of their possessions, would lose their souls.[885]

He challenged the perception that the '[m]achine civilization with its standards and methods of mass production is sunk in idolatry of a fabulous materialism, power, wealth, success.' The critics' questions of: 'Where is culture in this vulgar scheme? Where is nature?', were based on fears of having 'its own world of

[884] Garet Garrett, *The American Omen* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1928), 182.
[885] Ibid.

remembered images, ideas and relations…swallowed up'.[886] The elite could not imagine how to recreate their cultural and symbolic capital in this new reality.

Similar to other decades, some advocates *sanctioned* progress and its focus on material pursuits by elaborating upon the benefits gained. The distinguished American-Serbian inventor and physicist, Michael Pupin (1858-1935) in refuting the indictments of 'sordid materialism' stemming from European critics, claimed that they failed to recognise that America's materialism was a quest for improvement and 'the most effective means of advancing the creative power of American industries.'[887] It was 'scientific idealism'.[888] It had led to the steam engine, telephone, the gas engine of motor cars and aeroplanes, amongst many other ingenious machines that furthered human capabilities.

The New York weekly opinion journal, *The Outlook*, challenged Chief Justice Taft's comment that the most 'disturbing element in our National life' was 'the materialistic philosophy which places wealth and worldly success ahead of every other consideration in life.'[889] As the editors contended, 'It is not our things, but how we use them that will determine our civilization. An age of material things does not necessitate a materialistic philosophy.' In building upon the arguments of prior decades, the editors not only elaborated upon the

[886] Ibid., 234.
[887] Michael Pupin, *Romance of the Machine* (New York ; London: Charles Scribner's sons, 1930), 1, 4.
[888] Ibid., 4.
[889] Editorial, "This Materialistic Age," ed. Francis R. Bellamy, *The Outlook* 151, no. 6 (February 6, 1929): 220.

way America's progress had increased 'the standard of living', and the way men of means were using their wealth to 'cultivate the more essential arts of living', but they also started to contest the narrow view critics held of the *reasons* why people sought wealth and goods. As they argued, it was 'possible to do something else with surplus wealth than to use it in "keeping up with the Joneses."' It allowed people to 'express objectively an idea or an ideal' through such means as publishing a book. It allowed people to enjoy 'the exercise of power', whether that was 'the power of driving an automobile up and down hills or at great speed'; or the 'the erection of a great building;' or the 'sense of command over men and materials.'[890] The article argued, people sought material progress and goods not merely for the 'satisfaction of physical needs and desire for admiration' or 'to impress…neighbors', as many opined about the middle class, but rather for self-expressive purposes.[891]

Another advocacy group was clearly rising up: those who wanted to advance consumerism. A prominent example was Christine Frederick (1883-1970), an American home economist who sought to leverage the household inventions to improve women's efficiency of domestic work. Her writings, shaped by the popular industrial idea of the era, Taylorism or Scientific Management (focused on optimizing workplace efficiency and workflows), were highly influential amongst middle-class women, appearing in the *Ladies' Home Journal* and as a

[890] Ibid.
[891] Ibid.

popular household column in *American Weekly* (from 1917-1944). Moreover, her book, *Selling Mrs. Consumer,* was one of the first to articulate and push forward the consumer idea of 'progressive obsolescence'.[892] As she explained, progressive obsolescence meant women would have to acquire an 'open' mind and embrace 'anything new either in the shape of a new invention or new designs or styles or ways of living.' They needed 'a readiness to "scrap"…an article before its natural life of usefulness is complete, in order to make way for the newer and better things.' And finally, they needed a 'willingness' to spend 'a very large share of one's income' to acquire the 'new goods or services or way of living', even at the cost of savings.[893]

In an attempt to convince women to adopt this mind-set, however, she had to overcome the negative views held about seeking 'human satisfactions through the purchase of more of the fascinating and thrilling range of goods and services'.[894] As she argued:

> For years we have had a bit of an inferiority complex about these attitudes; hearing from foreign critics and others accusations of "materialism," "unstable character," "keeping up with the Jones'," etc., until we felt a sense of "sin," or waste or folly in our natural reaction in favour of the characteristics [of progressive obsolescence]. In other words, we have for years believed that what is now called the practice

[892] Janice Williams Rutherford, "Frederick, Christine," *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, February 2000), http://www.anb.org/articles/20/20-01930.html.
[893] Christine McGaffey Frederick, *Selling Mrs. Consumer* (New York: The Business Bourse, 1929), 246. (Formatting original.)
[894] Ibid.

> of "progressive obsolescence" was just one of our low-down, restless, common-clay American traits that we really should suppress.[895]

She continued, directly attacking the writings of the journalists, '"Superior persons, such as Katharine Fullteron Gerould', who critiqued the middle class consumers. They had told 'us common Mrs. Consumers that':[896]

> [T]he truly cultured, aristocratic way was to live in a home filled with antique furniture and art objects, reassuring the old, living on tradition and cultivating a beautiful snobbery of family origin and old-world culture, disdaining the new as a plebeian horror and maintaining ourselves distinctly aloof from the hurly-burly of the modern, "mechanistic" world.[897]

In a reversal of allegations, Frederick deplored how this attempt to cling to an 'aristocratic tradition' had resulted in the vulgarity, 'the hypocrisy of inferiority and imitation, and a misfit individuality' that humiliated Americans: They had been 'hoodwinked' into buying 'fake "masters" of art', and 'cunning imitation' of 'antique furniture', and had amassed 'carloads of machine-made replicas of all period furnitures [sic] *ad nausea*,' instead of seeking to express 'the personality…of this modern present period.'[898] For Frederick, the way forward for Americans was not to be ashamed of its materialism, but to embrace the 'modernistic trend', becoming 'co-creators…not imitators.'[899]

[895] Ibid., 246–247.
[896] Ibid., 247.
[897] Ibid.
[898] Ibid., 247–248.
[899] Ibid., 248, 249.

Frederick, in refuting the allegations of 'materialism', sanctioned consumerism, positioning it as something that women *could* embrace without fear of betraying American culture, and moreover as something women *should* embrace. In another reversal of ideas, she argued that women's happiness and the wellbeing—or rather, as per Taylorism, the efficiency—of society was predicated upon this. Mrs. Consumer's happiness rested on an equation: she needed to consume goods 'at the same approximate rate of change and improvement that science and art and machines can make possible'. As she argued:

> [I]f designers and weavers and inventors or rapid machinery make it possible to choose a new pattern of necktie or dress every few weeks, and there is human pleasure in wearing them, why be an old frump and cling to an old necktie or old dress until it wears through?

'To cling to the old one' would discourage the production process: designers would be discouraged 'from designing new ones', inventors 'from making fast machinery', and 'business men from offering new things'. There was 'nothing civilized or cultured in this.' Clinging 'to old goods' decreased the general income while 'buying plenty of new goods' increased it: 'We have more because we spend more.'[900]

Frederick's writings demonstrate another important shift: the concept of 'progress' and its materialistic pursuits increasingly became redefined as

[900] Ibid.

embracing 'modernity'. Throughout the book, she addressed the traditional views and apprehensions, proclaiming Mrs. Consumer could not stop and should not fear the changes occurring in the production and distribution of goods; rather, Mrs. Consumer was to find her 'salvation [in] the use of modern mechanical labor and time eliminating methods.'[901] She encouraged women to embrace the modern methods and ideal of progressive obsolescence by glorifying them with the label of 'modern woman'.[902] She challenged the old divisions between consuming materialistic luxuries, versus consuming necessities, reframing it as seeking modern goods. As she wrote:

> What is taking place is a vast realignment of standards of living on the modern basis which makes use of our new health and dietary and artistic knowledge. The old labels of luxury and necessities are useless, and so is any criticism of consumers as seeming to prefer luxuries to necessities.[903]

For Frederick, to embrace the modern American life accordingly meant a change in perspective from the traditional way of doing and judging things to the modern way of doing and judging things. Within this rhetoric, the accusation of 'materialism' was treated as an out-dated belief that had no place in the modern world. These views would eventually feed into the consumer culture mantra of the 1950s.

[901] Ibid., 318.
[902] Ibid., 52, 249.
[903] Ibid., 77.

III. Changes in the Directionality, Categorizations, and Remedies of 'Materialism': The Glorification of American Business and its March Towards Material Progress

In the above excerpts we see how in the 1920s, the social and moral disruptions led to a shift in the directionality of 'materialism': it was consumers' materialistic drives that came to the fore more so than the wealth and material pursuits of business. Similar to the politician becoming redeemed through the Progressive era's political reforms (c.1900-1920), the businessman had in the 1920s become vindicated from their 'materialism'. As presidential messages from Wilson Woodrow (president from 1913-1921), Warren G. Harding (president from 1921-1923), and Calvin Coolidge (president from 1923-1929) affirmed, business had become the providers of employment, the crafters of America's inventions, the 'lifeblood of our material existence';[904] they had made America the 'greatest capitalist in the world.'[905]

This was an era in which Republican ideas of free market capitalism were pushed forward through government mandates and speech acts from politicians, intellectuals and even religious figures. The popularity of the book by the advertising executive, Bruce Barton (1886-1967), *The Man Nobody*

[904] Warren G. Harding, "Second Annual Message, State of the Union Address," The American Presidential Project (Washington, DC, December 8, 1922), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29563.
[905] Wilson Woodrow, "Seventh Annual Message, State of the Union Address," The American Presidential Project (Washington, DC, December 2, 1919), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29560.

Knows, in which Jesus was upheld to be an advertising genius and business leader,[906] represented perhaps an extreme view of the esteem of business, but it nonetheless pointed to the shift that had occurred in society: as President Calvin Coolidge exclaimed in 1925, 'the chief business of the American people is business.'[907]

After the sound defeat of the democrats in the 1920 elections (Republicans won over 60 percent of the votes),[908] the young Franklin D. Roosevelt, as the democratic vice-presidential candidate, surmised that the war was to blame. As he poignantly stated: 'Every war brings after it a period of materialism and conservatism; people tire quickly of ideas and we are now repeating history.' The war had unleashed a 'tidal flow of discontent and destructive criticism', and a search among people for a semblance of individual control and freedom of opportunities.[909] Roosevelt appropriately predicted that it would only be a serious depression that would bring a change of view and the re-emergence of depreciating comments directed at business' materialism.[910]

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[906] Bruce Barton *The Man Nobody Knows*, 1st Collier Books edition (New York: Collier Books, 1987 [c. 1925], 57–67, 78–85, 95–96; Joseph Conlin, *The American Past: A Survey of American History* (Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2009), 653.
[907] Calvin Coolidge, "Address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Washington, D.C.," The American Presidential Project (Washington, DC, January 17, 1925), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=24180.
[908] David Leip, "1920 Presidential General Election Results," *National Election Results*, 2012, http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/national.php?year=1920.
[909] As cited in: Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order: 1919-1933, The Age of Roosevelt* (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2003), 366; and Shi, *The Simple Life*, 217.
[910] Ibid.

Accusations about business and its materialism still occurred, especially after the stock market crash that triggered the Depression (October 24, 1929); however, for most of the decade these views were in the minority and when voiced, where often readily denounced. For example, when Edward Bok retired from being the editor of the *Ladies Home Journal*, he started to voice radically different views about business, which was called into question by others.[911] The belief he expressed in 1916—that the materialistic focus of business inspired the 'greatest spiritual qualities inherent in man'—was replaced by the view that the material and wealth pursuits of business were the 'real panacea for the world's ills'.[912] In 1924, he proclaimed that 'industrial productivity and…the accumulation of great wealth' had not brought 'happiness to mankind', nor would they. Instead, society was 'seeing poverty, distress, perplexity, and crime following in the wake of economic prosperity'. The 'faith of the materialist in gold and silver as the bulwark of a nation' was faltering.[913] He deplored the state of society in which 'Money is King. Business is our God. Commerce Rules', and challenged the businessman to turn away from 'his self-centred course', to *not* live 'within one's means' but to apply 'ordinary thrift' so that one could retire and take up philanthropic pursuits, or, as he put it 'service'.[914] In rhetoric similar to Carnegie's "Gospel of Wealth", he claimed:

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[911] Hans Krabbendam, *The Model Man: A Life of Edward William Bok, 1863-1930* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 220–223.
[912] Bok, "The Business Man and His Wife," 9; Edward W. Bok, "When Money Is King and Business Our God," *World's Work*, 1924,(Reprinted in: *Dollars Only* (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2005 [c. 1926]), 6).
[913] Bok, *Dollars Only*, 7–8.
[914] Ibid., 4, 63, 84, 49.

> The problem is no longer how to make more money; it is the problem of what can money best accomplish…. It is taking that which came from the public and giving it back to the public for the advancement of its higher, and not for its material, life. It is appealing to the spirit rather than to the body.[915]

Bok admitted that he was 'not so confident that the time had come when a cautionary word would be favourably received or even read,'[916] and he was right. His ideas were treated as 'un-American'.[917] The American publisher and author, William Feather (1889-1981) decried that Bok, who was 'ashamed to work', ashamed of profits', and who regarded 'trade as inferior', held misplaced ideals:

> Doing Good, patronizing the stupid and weak, giving the people something they don't want, is his idea of worthwhile life. I contend that no 100 per cent American subscribes to such a doctrine. The 100 per cent American dies in [the business] harness…. [He] understands that a first-class executive can do more good at the head of a great corporation than he can by making poor speeches…. The 100 per cent American…laughs at his European-minded compatriots who go in for uplift.[918]

Similarly, the president of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and editor-in-chief of the *Century*, Glenn Frank (1887-1940), denounced Bok's 'gospel of retirement from business and devotion to public service' as 'dangerous and

[915] Edward W. Bok, "Where I Think Glenn Frank Is Wrong," ed. Glenn Frank, *The Century Magazine* 106, no. 3 (July 1923): 450, 451; Reprinted in: Bok, *Dollars Only*, 90, 91.
[916] Bok, *Dollars Only*, ix.
[917] William Feather, "A Fourth of July Speech—New Style," *Nation's Business*, July 1926, 14.
[918] Feather, "A Fourth of July Speech—New Style."

essentially anti-social doctrine.' It grew out of a 'fallacious conception of business and a fallacious conception of social service'.[919] As he contended:

> It is not an exodus from business that we need; it is a re-direction to business by business men who realize that the wise and worthy administration of a great business is in itself a vast and complex social service beside which any mere uplift movement is child's play.[920]

Frank argued that a separation of 'men's private business and their public service' was wrong.[921] The 'greatest opportunity…to render public service' came *through* 'private business', as it could 'make uplift unnecessary' through the 'primary processes of production, distribution, and consumption' that 'touch life at more points and oftener than all other social processes combined'. Business could lead reforms to 'raise wages, shorten hours, lower prices, and increase profits at one and the same time'.[922] It could influence consumers: 'The show-windows of the department stores of Chicago [were] as good an instrument as The Art Institute of Chicago for exerting an influence upon the popular taste of the city.'[923]

Exemplified in these speech acts was a shift away from the traditional view, in which business was suppose to counteract any materialistic tendencies by being benevolent and paternalistic, to one in which business could sanction its

[919] Glenn Frank, "An American Looks at His World: Why Edward Bok Should Have Retired," ed. Glenn Frank, *The Century Magazine* 105, no. 6 (April 1923): 957.
[920] Ibid., 958.
[921] Ibid., 958-959.
[922] Ibid., 960.
[923] Ibid.

materialism by demonstrating how it could do good for society by just operating *efficiently* and *profitably*. Edward Filene (1860-1937), president of a reputable bargain basement store, advocate of employee relation programs, and respected philanthropist[924] exemplified this, stating in 1925: 'No policy is sound policy that does not contribute to permanently successful business.' Matters of 'social justice, cooperation, and general welfare' were to be addressed 'not on the business of philanthropy or paternalism' but on the basis that it helped to develop a 'successful business'. The 'solution' for counteracting the 'temptation…for business men to swing either to the extreme of a harsh materialism or to the extreme of a sentimental paternalism' was to be reached by finding 'the best and most scientific way of doing business, for the *best* way of doing business will be found to be the most *just* way of doing business.'[925] This '*best* way' involved: improving production processes and reducing costs; cutting 'waste'; lowering the 'price of necessities of life'; 'creating 'better and better working condition'; shortening work hours and enlarging 'the margin of leisure'; eliminating 'periodic depressions and recurrent unemployment'; paying 'higher real wages'; and increasing 'the comfort and prosperity of both their employees and their customers'. This would give America 'decent social progress.'[926]

[924] Yankl Stillman, "Edward Filene: Pioneer of Social Responsibility," *Jewish Currents*, September 2004, http://www.jewishcurrents.org/2004-sept-stillman.htm.
[925] E. A. Filene, *The Way Out; a Forecast of Coming Changes in American Business and Industry* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1925), 11–12. (Formatting original.)
[926] Ibid., 46–47.

Filene's rhetoric, like others of the era, reflected the popular ideas of Scientific Management and its desire to improve economic efficiency through optimizing labour productivity. Within this context, businessmen could push aside the accusations of 'materialism' by striving to achieve 'the best way of doing business'. As an article surmising the canons of Henry Ford affirmed, the theme of business was 'not of materialism, but of release from material conditions'. The 'true aim' of industry, as Mr. Ford claimed, was 'to liberate the mind and body from the drudgery of existence by filling the world with well-made, low-price products'. Its standardization would not result in an 'automatic world' that cramps 'the human soul' and deadens the brain, but 'a world in which people will have a chance to use their brains' as they would not be 'occupied from early morning until late at night with the business of gaining a livelihood.'[927]

Motivating these speech acts were global-level tensions. This was an era in which America was starting to assert its right to its own cultural capital, and to claim superiority in its world status due to its economic capital. It no longer wanted to be held to European expectations in regards to consumerism, ideals of culture and art, nor principals of business. Bok's appeals to benevolence and paternalism captured what many thought were a European inspired approach to business ethics, or as William Feather stated, 'un-American'. America sought distinction from Europe. It accordingly started to push against the accusations of 'materialism' often levelled at the nation by changing the rhetoric so that it

[927] Charles Merz, "The Canonization of Henry Ford," *The Independent*, November 27, 1926, 617.

supported the American way of doing things. As Frederick argued in *Selling Mrs. Consumer*, America's consumerism was not 'materialistic', it was seeking 'modernity'. And as Filene wrote, America's business was not adopting a philosophy of 'harsh materialism' but rather a philosophy of doing good business.

Pro-business advocates who vindicated America's materialism, noted in a similar vein how its industry had led to a 'healthy, intelligent materialism' versus a life of everyday struggle.[928] We see in this rhetoric contrasting meanings of 'materialism' come to the fore: America's 'materialism', equated to embracing and leveraging the benefits of material progress, was weighted against a 'materialism' equated to the lower classes of *other* countries and their excessive focus on meeting basic material needs. As the social reformer and publisher, E. Haldeman-Julius (1889-1951) wrote in a torrent of patriotic praise:

> [I]t is a very good thing that America has, let us say, the healthy materialism of wealth rather then the sickly materialism of poverty; that it has the sound materialism of comfort rather than the rotten, rickety materialism of discomfort and sordidness; that it has the flourishing materialism of an efficiently organized and progressive life rather than the stagnant materialism of a country living wretchedly, working hard and producing little.[929]

[928] Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, *The Big American Parade* (Boston: The Stratford Company, 1929), 28.
[929] Ibid., 28–29.

Americans often used this discourse to affirm their new position as the global leader of the new way—or rather modern way—of living. As Haldeman-Julius proclaimed: 'Throughout the world man is stimulated by desire to realize more fully the solid advantages of modern life', and it was America who 'leads the rest of the world in the universal march of material progress'. It could 'fairly be called' the 'land of prosperity and opportunity'. '[C]lass for class…American standards [were] attractively higher than in any other country'. Americans had 'more comfort, better conditions of labor, a fairer, more substantial and more hopeful life than his fellow in England, France, Germany, Italy—anywhere.'[930]

America could now justify its materialism by likewise noting that it was no longer alone in its materialistic pursuits: '[T]he spirit of industrial enterprise, the modern "materialistic" tendency of life, the urge toward a scientific production of things, [was growing] throughout the world.' Nations who once criticised 'American "materialism" [were] eager to share in the results of that "materialism"'. They wanted 'the products of American machines', the 'machines for [their] own use', and the 'steady stream of goods' American factories sent 'around the world'. In fact, the 'charge of "materialism" [was] something upon which America [was] ready to accept congratulations rather than condemnations.'[931]

[930] Haldeman-Julius, *The Big American Parade*, 30-31.
[931] Ibid., 29-30.

In attempting to valorize America's materialism, Haldeman-Julius, however, created a number of separations. A *good*, 'well-rounded materialism' was said to inspire 'mental growth and independence' (akin to what academics later termed 'instrumental materialism'); a *bad*, 'incomplete…materialism' that would 'grow stale and unsatisfactory' was one in which a man 'thinks only of accumulating dollars and surrounding himself with costly, ostentatious possessions' (akin to what academics denoted as 'terminal materialism'). [932]

Secondly, Haldeman-Julius reasoned that a lower standard 'materialism' of 'wealth-getting, of comfort, of a technically well-arranged life' had to be overcome before one could obtain a higher-order 'materialism'. To achieve a 'lofty…materialistic structure' meant one had to pursue 'culture, artistic and intellectual interest, a richer personal life mentally and emotionally, a social life of many-sided cultivation and broad outlook'.[933] These ideas were eventually affirmed and popularised through academic discourse. For example, the American psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), in his hierarchy of needs (1943), separated and ranked people's needs, positioning the provision for basic physiological goods (food, water, shelter) as a product of lower-order aspirations. These basic needs had to be fulfilled before a person could achieve the higher order needs of safety, love or belonging, esteem, and finally self-

[932] Ibid., 33.
[933] Ibid.

actualization.[934] The implication of this hierarchy, unfortunately, resulted in perpetuating a view in which impoverished citizens are assumed to be too focused on inferior material pursuits to pursue high-culture material pursuits, and are unable to exhibit 'culture' or 'intellectual life'.

By the close of this decade, the businessman had elevated his economic capital and was well on his way to gaining full legitimacy in the eyes of the American people. He had managed to undermine the intellectual and religious elites' cultural capital, claiming that it was 'wealth', not the human imagination alone, that 'stimulates art and literature and knowledge and the more esthetic [sic], beauty-creating social activities."[935] Yet on October 24th, 1929, as the stock market crashed, so too did his lofty position.

'Materialism' and the Malaise of America's Depression (1930s)

The profit-orientation that business used to justify its 'materialism' in the 1920s came under intense criticism as the circumstance of the Depression opened up opportunities for social critics and politicians to call into question the American way of life, and its truth and value system.

[934] Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation."
[935] Haldeman-Julius, *The Big American Parade*, 33.

Initially, under the helm of President Hoover, the political mantra reaffirmed the established view that business, if left free from government intervention, could resolve the economic turmoil.[936] Hoover, a Quaker and former professional mining engineer, believed that a complete revolution of the economic order was not necessary: the most efficient way to run an economy was to have business and government work in partnership together, rather than have government interfere in, or take over, the responsibilities of business.[937] This, he claimed, would result in the 'destruction of equal opportunity and the incarnation of tyranny through bureaucracy.'[938] To encourage business to behave more 'morally', he deployed the 'truth' of America's Christian origins: he called for Americans to return to a spiritual and moral code from yesteryears. Business and communities were to work towards uplifting society from the depression by adopting Christian values of volunteer cooperation and by instilling confidence. As he reassured Americans in an address in October 1930, America would not fall pray to a 'blind materialism'. Although 'economic aspiration…strongly mark[ed] the American system' it was not 'an end in itself' but 'one of many instruments to accomplish the…purposes of the American people', which were 'largely religious in origin'. America was 'supremely dedicated, not to the pursuit of material riches, but to pursuit of a richer life for

[936] Herbert Hoover, "Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union," The American Presidential Project (The White House, Washington, D.C., December 3, 1929), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=22021.
[937] Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America 1929-1941* (New York: Random House, 2009), 54–60.
[938] Herbert Hoover, "Address on the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Kings Mountain," The American Presidential Project (Kings Mountain, South Carolina, October 7, 1930), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=22379.

the individual.' To 'safeguard' this 'true spirit of America' and to not 'weaken our own institutions and destroy the very forces which upbuild our national greatness', required Americans to summon 'our highest sense of public service'.[939]

Hoover's ideas harkened back to the early 1900s ideas of business paternalism and Christian ideals of brotherhood: businesses that pursued merely profits became delegitimized with the accusation of 'materialism'; businesses that used their operations for the betterment of society by providing jobs, maintaining wages, and making investments that stimulated the economy could be redeemed from such vulgarization. In fact, like Henry Ford who proclaimed in November 1929 that he would raise wages and expand his operations, they could be classified as heroes.[940]

Hoover, who refused to waver from his stance of non-governmental intervention, needed to convince business to change its ways and to become more community—rather than profit—orientated. [941] Within this process, he used 'materialism' as a ploy of assimilative reform. For example, in his acceptance speech for the Republican presidential nomination in 1932, he criticized business' selfish behavior:

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[939] Ibid.
[940] McElvaine, *The Great Depression*, 73.
[941] Davis W. Houck, *Rhetoric As Currency: Hoover, Roosevelt and the Great Depression* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), 54–93; "Nature Takes Its Course: The First Years of the Depression" in McElvaine, *The Great Depression*, 72–94.

> In the race after false gods of materialism men and groups have forgotten their country. Equality of opportunity contains no conception of exploitation by any selfish, ruthless, class-minded men or groups. They have no place in the American system.[942]

The problems facing America, he argued, were 'not only economic…[but] also moral and spiritual.' The Depression was a 'check' on America's 'national conscience'—it was an opportunity to 'revalue and reshape our drift from materialism to a higher note of individual and national ideals.'[943]

He likewise needed to instil confidence in consumers and get them to trust that America's material prosperity had positive implications and could be reclaimed. In many of his speeches he reiterated the 1920's mantras that separated a selfish 'materialistic' pursuit of producers from the redeeming pursuits of progress: the pursuit of production could benefit society's progress and expand the freedom of choice and opportunities. His speeches celebrated America's accomplishments that had, over 'the 150 years of growth…brought to [Americans] the richness of life', and the 'ideals and systems' that brought about this wealth. It was a reiteration of those aspects proponents of progress—intellectuals, inventors, and advocates for Social Christianity—had articulated throughout the decades. As he described, America had 'one-fourth more…children in grade schools than the most advanced other country in

[942] Herbert Hoover, "Address Accepting the Republican Presidential Nomination," The American Presidential Project (Constitution Hall, Washington, D.C., August 11, 1932), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=23198.
[943] Ibid.

Europe, and…six and one-half times as many in colleges and universities.' It had a 'incomparably greater diffusion of material well-being': 'twice the number of homes owned'; 'four times as many telephones and radio sets'; far greater 'use of food and clothing'; 'only one-twentieth as many people in the poorhouse or upon public charity'. Opportunity had brought immeasurable wealth, both in 'tangible things' and 'intangibles'—'our sense of freedom, of liberty, of security, our confidence of future progress'. Hoover declared, America was faced with a 'problem of growth', not 'decay', and should thus not abandon its 'ideals and systems', but 'follow them with confidence.[944]

Unfortunately, Hoover's rhetoric failed to build confidence, as it did not connect with nor address the realities on the ground. The crash of the stock market and collapse of banks had severely reduced business and consumer confidence. Unemployment spiked. In 1930, an estimated 26,000 businesses failed. Big Business did its best to uphold its pledge to not cut wages, but in response to a drop in consumer demand and reduction in consumer prices, businesses responded by cutting investments and jobs.[945] As the Depression deepened, the ability of business and communities to participate in volunteer cooperation diminished. Hoover's envisioned solution failed to materialise.

[944] Hoover, "Address on the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Kings Mountain."
[945] McElvaine, *The Great Depression*, 73–75; Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 690–693; "Unemployment Statistics during the Great Depression," *United States History*, 2015, http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1528.html.

I. The Critics Call for the Reform of Business and its 'Materialism' Provocations

After the stock market crash in 1929, a receptive discursive opened up for critics to air their concerns and propose alternative ways of living and doing business. Within this discourse, the intellectual elite often used accusations of 'materialism' as a defensive ploy—to delegitimize the businessman and the belief in the need for mass production that threatened to undermine the value of education. In a society swept up in producing goods, the leisure time required for intellectual or spiritual reflection had dwindled. This was a fight to regain status: the intellectual and religious elites were trying to reclaim lost cultural and symbolic capital.

For example, the historian and social critic, James Truslow Adams, was applauded for his book, *Our Business Civilization: Some Aspects of American Culture* (1929), which gave a 'brilliant' diagnosis of the 'American malaise' and the 'diseased tissues of the body politic'. As a reviewer of the book wrote in *The Outlook* in November 1929, the book added to the 'gathering body of social criticisms' that called into question the 'bases of our economic life'. It contributed to the 'slowly yielding…formula…for a counter-revolution in the United States.'[946] Adams had aptly noted that America rested 'her civilization on the ideas of business men', which in turn led society to be dominated by 'the

[946] John Carter, "The American Malaise: As Seen Through Recent Books," *The Outlook*, November 27, 1929, 511.

philosophy of the counting house and the sole basic idea of a profit', and by 'the new frontier country of the Standard (of Living)'.[947]

In his book, Adams brought back the anti-progress diatribes, and stripped away the veneer of beatitudes that society had extolled upon business. He explained that the 'fundamental preoccupation with making a profit' had emerged as business shifted from 'the individual to the corporate form', tied up in a 'new triple relationship of workmen, executives, and stockholders'.[948] This in turn had 'colored…[the] business man's view of his entire world'. Blinded by his constant dealings with material things and with satisfying the 'world's material wants', he had erroneously placed 'happiness in *them* rather than in the intellectual and spiritual'. He had become 'a complete materialist', prone towards: short views; 'distrust'; disregard for 'what he is doing' and thus for the environment (if 'he can make his personal profit by ripping the forests off the face of half a dozen states in a decade, he is content to let those who come later look after themselves'); neglect of 'leisure' necessary 'for the development of his whole human personality', and a misplaced 'narrowness of interests' on the material aspects of life.[949] As Adams described:

> He may live in a palace, ride in the most luxurious cars and fill his rooms with old masters and the costliest manuscripts which his wealth can draw from under the hammer at Christie's but if he cares more for

[947] Ibid.
[948] Adams, *Our Business Civilization*, 18. (Formatting original)
[949] Ibid., 19-20.

> riches, luxury, and power than for a humanely rounded life he is not civilized but what the Greeks properly called a "barbarian."[950]

Adams questioned the effect of the 'growing dominance of the business type' and its ideals on the American civilization, calling for a return to a simple life in which consumption was based on 'a rational standard of safety and of genuine comfort'.[951] To build support for his alternative way of life, he criticised the established system of truth, revealing the underlying interests that had dominated society for too long. Adams surmised, '[t]he problem comes back…to what people consider [is] the real value in life'. The 'doctrine' of America 'considers a man capable of beginning his 'real spiritual freedom and influence in personal relationships' only after he 'has conformed to the material American standards'. 'Moreover…in Europe one [could] preach and practice renunciation of the material for the sake of the spiritual': that 'doctrine in this country is considered un-American'. If this 'simple life' was 'carried out by many' it would 'obviously bring the whole system of mass production crashing about our ears.' This was the 'last thing' the business leaders would want 'preached or practiced'. The profits of the businessmen depended upon 'the public's [sic] becoming more and more materialistic'.[952]

> The gigantic powers of manufacturing now in existence require for their profitable exploitation that the public shall be made steadily to develop new wants, wants that can be satisfied only by manufactured articles. Hoover and others may prate all they like about the concurrent need of

[950] Ibid. 19.
[951] Ibid., 21; Adams, "What of 'The American Dream'?," SM2.
[952] Adams, *Our Business Civilization*, 190.

> an intellectual and spiritual life, but how is that life to develop if people are to be made to use their whole energies in satisfying new wants on the material plane?[953]

Adams' diatribe importantly points to the status deprivation the intellectual elites were fighting to prevent. They had become 'steadily more pinched between the two classes benefiting by mass production'—'the owners' who set 'ever higher standards of living' and the 'operatives' (i.e., consumers) who pressed 'past them in an orgy of material well-being'.[954] As he questioned:

> [W] hat will become of the intellectuals and how long will they continue to struggle and deny themselves, and have their wives do the laundry, in a civilization which will more and more look down upon their lack of earning power and their declining economic and social status?[955]

For Adams, the solution was for consumers to become empowered enough, to break away from the 'unthinking' 'road of conformity' to craft a life that reflected their individual preferences, rather than adopt the life pushed on them from the businessman. He assumed that such a life would lead to lower materialistic consumption as people would find more intrinsic satisfaction in relationships, a 'depth and a richness of experience', and self-expression.[956]

Another fellow intellectual, the social economist Arthur Dahlberg (1888-1989), echoed Adams denouncement: the current mode of business was the '*root cause*

[953] Ibid., 190–191.
[954] Ibid., 192.
[955] Ibid.
[956] Ibid., 304–306.

of our materialistic civilization'.[957] He described it as a vicious cycle. The 'selfish producer' driven by the lure of profits, and committed to providing his employees with a long work day, is 'forced 'to lead [America] into a commercial religion and materialistic philosophy'—'forced to stimulate standards which stress the desirability of a large consumption of physical goods.' Yet to sell goods to satiated consumers, the 'energetic salesmen' and 'manufacturer' become 'forced to seek some human frailty' they can 'cultivate into a new demand.' They do so by convincing 'the purchaser that consuming more physical goods is spiritual expression.' 'Advertising campaigns' are their 'sermons'. '"Consume More", is [their] text.' They are 'forced to inject materialistic standards to dispose of those products which the long working day compels [the manufacturer] to make."[958] Dahlberg's proposed solution reflected his socialistic views: he wanted business to shorten work hours but pay more per hour. He believed this would ensure a more equitable redistribution of profits, increase employment opportunities, and allow society to benefit from more leisure time.[959]

Most of the common themes for reform that appeared in books, magazines and journal articles swayed towards correcting the relationship between the

[957] Arthur Dahlberg, *Jobs, Machines, and Capitalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), 224.
[958] Ibid., 224-227.
[959] Ibid..

producers and consumers.[960] The perception was that consumers were being duped by either the producers or the admen. In the aptly named book, *Our Master's Voice: Advertising* (1934), the social activist and writer, James Rorty (1890-1973), deplored how the 'ad-man's pseudoculture' controlled consumers.[961] He described how 'the press, including the magazine press, [was] used as an instrument of rule' to 'enforce "the command to buy." This rule [was] exercised…by direct injunction to buy and by the promotion and stimulus of emulative and snob motives'. The enforcers were 'the manufacturers, advertisers, distributors, financers, etc.'. Their objective was to 'extend, complicate and consolidate sheer emulative materialism as a way of life.'[962]

The sociologist, Robert Lynd captured a similar view in his article, "The Consumer Becomes a 'Problem'", noting how consumers were constantly barraged 'over the counter and out of the loud speaker' by an unprecedented 'advertising and merchandising', and confused by too much choice and by 'producers'…"deliberate obsolescence"—an invention of the Devil to outmode his bathroom, furniture, automobile, or clothing by artificially enlisting social opprobrium before the article in question is worn out.' Lynd described the consumer as alone, helplessly exposed to the evils of producers. He stood

[960] Jerome Davis, "Capitalism and the Church," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 174 (December 1, 1936).
[961] "Dedication", in: James Rorty: *Our Master's Voice: Advertising* (New York: The John Day Company, 1934) .
[962] Ibid., 73–74.

against an 'army of salesmen, advertising men, and other [business] jockeys.' Although he knew he bought 'wastefully' and that 'his desires and insecurities [were] exploited continually', he still had to buy: 'he needs an overcoat, or his wife a dress…so he pays down his money and hopes the purchase will turn out all right.[963]

II. Changes in the Social Order: The Rise of the Protected Consumer and Fall of the 'Money-Changers'

These speech acts marked two shifts that occurred. The first was an increased tendency for intellectuals to position themselves out of the realm of problematic consumption: to stay seemingly impartial it became 'the consumer' who was a 'problem'; they, as the intellectuals, did not count as a consumer and certainly were not apart of this duped consumer group. As Chapter 15 notes, this tactic becomes repeated in the studies on materialism. By positioning the problem to be with 'the consumer', the intellectuals had full reign to judge and criticise without having to call into question their own consumption habits.

The second apparent shift was towards instilling the belief that consumers needed to be protected. If left alone in the marketplace, consumers would continue to be 'forced to inject materialistic standards'.[964] Moreover, unless

[963] Robert S. Lynd, "The Consumer Becomes a 'Problem,'" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 173 (May 1934): 6.
[964] Dahlberg, *Jobs, Machines, and Capitalism*, 227.

consumers gained power over the producers, the producers would dictate the amount and price of goods. In a time like the Depression, the fear was that producers would opt to curtail production, limit hours, and raise prices.[965] It was important, thus, to shift the focus from the producer to the consumer.

The result of this intellectual rhetoric and activism led to support for research on consumers and the establishment of consumer groups. For example, the Consumers' Research, was founded in 1929 by the business critic and social economist, Stuart Chase (1888-1985), and the consumer activist, F. J. Schlink (1891-1995). An offshoot, the Consumer Union, was founded in 1936. These groups tested products and published the information in bulletins and consumer reports. Under the New Deal, the government established the Consumer Advisory Board in 1933 as part of the National Recovery Administration.[966] These resulting institutional structures opened up a role for academics from which they could rebuild their esteem within a consumer-orientated society: they became the guardians of consumers.

The rhetoric and sentiments of disconcerted citizens also became the lynchpin upon which Roosevelt built support for his Presidential election and justified the level of government intervention required by the New Deal. The New Deal,

[965] Gardiner Means: "The Consumer and the New Deal," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 173, no. 1 (May 1, 1934): 7–17.
[966] Sharon Zukin, *Point of Purchase: How Shopping Changed American Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 177–179; Cross, *An All-Consuming Century*, 124; Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *The Coming of the New Deal, 1933-1935: The Age of Roosevelt*, vol. 2 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2003), 128–132.

articulated and enacted over the course of 1933-1938, focused on reform of the banking system, recovery of business through establishing industry standards for output, prices, and working conditions, and relief for the unemployed, struggling farmers, and homeless. It introduced public work initiatives, employing millions of Americans on public land maintenance or construction projects. It led to the construction of government housing and government backing of home ownership loans.[967]

In prior years to the Depression, such government interventions during peacetime would have been accused of verging too close to communism and creating a society dependant on and dictated by the government. Hoover had framed such actions as betraying the American values of individual freedom and opportunity. Yet the Depression had created fertile grounds for a shift in 'truths'. Roosevelt used this opportunity to reorder the hierarchy of society. No longer were the producers and businessmen to be the heroes, providers, and controllers of society. Rather, government was to be the benevolent hero, and the non-business elites were to reclaim their status as esteemed and valued members of society. As Roosevelt proclaimed in his inaugural address in 1933, the 'money-changers', '[s]tripped of the lure of profit; by which they induced 'our people to follow their false leadership' had 'fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization'. Now America could 'restore the temple to the

[967] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 700–708.

ancient truths.' It would 'measure' its 'restoration' by the 'extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit.' As he concluded:

> Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort. The joy and moral stimulation of work no longer must be forgotten in the mad chase of evanescent profits. These dark days will be worth all they cost us if they teach us that our true destiny is not to be ministered unto but to minister to ourselves and to our fellow men.[968]

Although Roosevelt, in this popular speech, did not use the word 'materialism', the concepts he brought to the fore to tarnish the image of the businessman resonated with the era's meaning of 'materialism'. It was the 'lure of profit', the 'generation of self-seekers', the 'falsity of material wealth as the standard of success'.[969] A year later he would contrast 'materialism' against the 'integrity, unselfishness, responsibility and justice' that was needed to bring about prosperity, happiness, and an increased human welfare for American society.[970] The era of the businessman had passed. And in its place stood: a government focused on creating a 'new order of competence and of courage' and restoring 'America to its own people;'[971] and a society that started to believe that to ensure freedom and equality in democratic rights, the economy should be centred on the consumer.

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[968] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Inaugural Address," The American Presidential Project (Washington, DC, March 4, 1933), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=14473.
[969] Ibid.
[970] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Annual Message to Congress," The American Presidential Project (Washington, DC, January 3, 1934), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14683.
[971] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago," The American Presidential Project (Chicago, July 2, 1932), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=75174.

'Materialism' and the Fight for the Right to Consume Pre- and Post-War (1940s)

The effects of Roosevelt's societal realignment reflected in the discourse of the 1940s. As America recovered from a decade of forced austerity, the rhetoric around 'materialism' shifted from the producer back towards the consumer. This was, in effect, a product of Roosevelt's promise in the early 1930s to 'think less about the producer and more about the consumer.'[972]

The German sociologist, Leo Löwenthal (1900-1993), noted the profound shift in his analysis of societal heroes: during 1900-1915, 75 percent of 'heroes of biographies' came from 'political life, business, and the professions" by 1941, 73 percent of these heroes came from 'spheres of consumption'.[973] The discursive power accordingly was increasingly aimed at controlling consumption.

I. The Critics' Lone Calls for Self-Restraint

During the wartime era, simple life advocates such as Lewis Mumford, encouraged restraint of consumption and a shift of values away from 'tawdry materialism' was encouraged by.[974] In his book, *The Condition of Man* (1944),

[972] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Country Needs, The Country Demands Bold, Persistent Experimentation," The American Presidential Project (Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia, May 22, 1932), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=88410.
[973] Leo Löwenthal, "On Sociology of Literature," in *Literature and Mass Culture: Communication in Society*, trans. Andy Blunden, vol. 1 (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1984), https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/lowenthal/1948/literature.htm.
[974] Mumford, *The Condition of Man*, 415.

Mumford urged people to use the wartime to awaken and 'renew the sense of self-direction' and seek a 'healthy personality' rather than to remain ruled by a drive for 'materialistic repletion'.[975] Other books, such as *The Consumer Goes to War: A Guide to Victory on the Home Front* (1942), written by the consumer activist and professor of history, Caroline F. Ware (1899-1990), encouraged women, who were primarily responsible for spending decisions, to shift their consumer behaviour away from trying to keep up with the Joneses. Rather, as she phrased it: 'both we and the Joneses must "keep down."'"[976, 977]

II. The Proponents' Challenge of False Beliefs

As much as these critics vied for people to restrain their consumption, others pushed back, deploring ignorant remarks, and revealing the inanity and biases behind negative claims about America's materialism. For these pro-consumer advocates, America's progress and ability to consume was something that should be allowed and encouraged. It was not empty 'materialistic' stimulus; it was what led to a more fulfilled life, especially when faced with forced asceticism and death from war.

For example, in a scathing article aimed at the prominent American journalist, Dorothy Thompson (1893-1961), the Harper's columnist and veteran war

[975] Ibid., 330.
[976] Caroline F Ware, *The Consumer Goes to War¸ a Guide to Victory on the Home Front¸* (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1942), 3.
[977] Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, 20–47.

correspondent, Bernard DeVoto (1897-1955) contested Thompson's critique of America's materialistic, consumer society. He argued that Thompson's belief that 'our war effort is failing because "our business' economy has been based on the rapid turnover of quickly obsolescent goods"' was flawed. Likewise was her assumptions that: 'Our people think "that without silk stockings and permanent hair waves, love will vanish from the Universe"; that 'Life in America has been despoiled by the advertising business, which consists of instilling fears…fears that our neighbors will despise us, fears that no one will employ us… unless we spend more than we have or more than we should"; and that "We have made our civilization anarchic, false, and tawdry" and thus 'we have got to change our habits, our ideals, and our hearts.'[978] As he retorted: 'Of course it is true that people are seeing a lot of movies, patronizing night clubs and dance halls, buying clothes, doing their best to have a good time', but this did not mean that Americans would 'work any less hard, be any the less willing to fight or make sacrifices, or is any the less concerned about the triumph of our cause.' The people she accused of being 'heedless pleasure-seekers' had 'already gone deeper into the war than their government has required them to'. And there was 'nothing base or recreant in shrugging off' the 'imminence of death' and 'strain in wartime': 'The puritanical [were] wrong, and it is better morale to go dancing than to spend the evening on one's knees praying to be pure.[979] The

[978] Bernard Devoto, "The Easy Chair: 'Wait a Minute, Dorothy,'" *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 189, no. 1111 (December 1, 1942): 110.
[979] Ibid., 111–112.

'highly paid castigators' were wrong. Their denunciations of 'American life as materialistic' were unfounded, hypocritical, and needed to stop'[980]

Rhetoric that sought to reveal false ideas promoted by the anti-materialistic and simple life advocates continued to increase in the post-war era. As Chapter 13 demonstrated, in the Cold-War era America fought its battles and attained its global status by pushing forward its mantra of economic prosperity and by spreading its consumer ideology. Presidential speeches reiterated an expectation in which America's consumerism—phrased as achieving a 'better standard of living'—would bring about 'freedom and dignity', and 'peace and brotherhood'.[981] Thus, similar to the late 1920s, 'materialism' became predominately celebrated for how it could benefit society, or it was refuted—often deflected towards communism or sanctioned and vindicated through a glorification of America's way of life.

An article written in 1947 by the outspoken essayist, Mary McCarthy (1912-1989) contended that to say Americans were materialistic revealed an ignorance of their true nature. As she argued, '[t]he virtue of American civilization is that it is unmaterialistic':[982]

[980] Ibid., 111.
[981] Harry S. Truman, "Address at a Luncheon of the National Conference of Christians and Jews," The American Presidential Project (Mayflower Hotel, Washington, DC, November 11, 1949), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13354.
[982] Mary McCarthy, "America The Beautiful: The Humanist In The Bathtub," *Commentary*, 1947, 203.

> It is true that America produces and consumes more cars, soap, and bathtubs than any other nation, but we live among these objects rather than by them.[983]

'Americans [built] skyscrapers', they did not worship them like 'Le Corbusier' (a Swiss-French modernist architect);[984] they used the vending machine unlike 'Ehrenburg, our Soviet critic,' who 'fell in love with the Check-O-Mat in American railway stations, writing home paragraphs of song to this gadget'. While these nations deplored 'American materialism', they themselves were the real 'materialistic people'.[985] The 'un-materialistic character of American life' was most obvious in the conditions tolerated. 'What the foreigner finds most objectionable in American life is its slack of basic comfort.' A nation with 'any sense of material well-being' would not 'endure the food we eat, the cramped apartments we live in, the noise, the traffic, the crowded subways and trains."[986] America's way of life, often assumed to be worldly, actually pointed to the 'unworldly assumption' upon which the 'republic was founded':

> The inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness appear, in practice, to have become the inalienable right to a bathtub, a flush toilet, and a can of Spam.

Although this 'buying impulse' was often critiqued as being 'crass' and 'acquisitive', it was merely the 'exercise of a spiritual right'. The poor American

[983] McCarthy, "America The Beautiful: The Humanist In The Bathtub," 204.
[984] "Introduction" by Jean-Louis Cohen in, Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, trans. John Goodman (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007).
[985] McCarthy, "America The Beautiful: The Humanist In The Bathtub," 204.
[986] McCarthy, "America The Beautiful: The Humanist In The Bathtub," 204.

'bought a bathtub, not because he wanted to take a bath, but because he wanted to be in a *position* to do so.' As she explained:

> [Desired possessions] are not wanted for their own sakes but as tokens of an ideal state of freedom, fraternity, and franchise. "Keeping up with the Joneses" is a vulgarization of Jefferson's concept, but it too is a declaration of the rights of man, and decidedly unfeasible and visionary…. [America] is a nation of twenty million bathrooms, with a humanist in every tub.[987]

'Materialism' in the Landscape of Consumers (1950s)

In 1950, the sociologist David Riesman (1909-2002) published a best-selling book that was frequently cited, deliberated and applied to explain America's way of life.[988] *The Lonely Crowd* detailed the pressures that caused people to conform. It noted how America had shifted from a producer-based society guided by 'inner-directed' goals to a consumer-based society guided by 'other-directed' goals. Inner-directed goals were implanted by familial elders through normative pressures, and resulted in a focus on production and conspicuous consumption for the purpose of fitting into a role demanded by a person's station, or 'hoped-for station', in life.[989] 'Other-directed' goals were acquired from peer groups, mass media, and indirect acquaintances, and resulted in a heightened sensitivity to external signals, and the expectations and preferences

[987] Ibid. (Formatting original.)
[988] "Forward" by Todd Gitlin, in David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, (with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney)(New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001[c. 1950]), xii–xiii.
[989] Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, 15, 117–118.

of others. It resulted in a focus on consumption as people attempted to fit into society.[990]

In his analysis on 'materialism', he applied this 'inner' versus 'outer' psychographic explanation, yet he also engaged in an interesting ploy on meanings that resonated with themes in McCarthy's commentary. In his analysis, he was vindicating Americans from the allegations of 'materialism'. He did so by first challenging the perception that Americans were 'materialistic', noting that as 'other-directed' people were prone to do, they gave too much credence to others' opinions and not enough to their own thoughts and feels: 'between the advertisers on the one hand and the novelist and intellectuals on the other' Americans had assumed 'that other Americans were materialistic', uncritically accepting the criticisms on the national character. He disproved this judgement. Americans were clinging to and perpetuating an out-dated perception of their consumerism. Indeed, the classification of 'materialism' really belonged to Europeans and inner-directed people—those who held 'real acquisitive attachment to things'. As he claimed, the older European cultures had managed to hide their 'materialism' in their tradition-imposed 'status system'. It was only recently that the 'European masses…had the money and leisure…to duplicate American patterns of consumption'. This duplication was often 'more vulgar' and 'more materialistic'. Consequently, it was time for Americans to stop listening to and believing European accusations that they

[990] Ibid., 21.

were the 'materialistic…*nouveaux riches*'; it was now 'the turn of the rest of the world to be *nouveaux riches*, to be excited over the gadgets of an industrial age, while…Americans…turned away in boredom from attaching much emotional significance to the consumer-goods frontier.[991]

Riesman's analysis of the American society resulted in a significant shift in how 'materialism' was perceived. By vesting the motivational goals of people *within* individuals, motives such as 'materialism' increasingly became vested *within* the consumer, rather than something that was *imposed* upon the consumer. His work helped to affirm the importance of tapping into the subconscious motivational factors that influenced people's behaviour. This affected studies on materialism in that it supported a trend that situated 'materialism' as something that should be studied to understand: i) the motivations of an organization's workforce; and ii) the motivations of consumer markets. 'Materialism' was no longer just an accusation, it was a motivator that could be tapped *if* it could be measured and better understood.

I. Materialism and the Beginning of its Psychometric Scales

In organizational theory, Roger Birkman pioneered the trend of studying 'materialism' as a trait of employees. In 1950, Birkman created a psychometric

[991] Ibid., 228-229. (Formatting original.)

scale that the US Air Force used to select pilots.[992] He measured 'materialistic' behaviours and attitudes (which is now less pejoratively termed 'the need for advantage') by asking questions that related to money conscious behaviours, and the pursuit of tangible benefits often at the expense of others. Questions included: 'I would rather have money than for people to like me'; and 'I would rather do without something than take advantage of someone' (the latter being scored in the reserve).[993] He contrasted a 'materialistic-winning' attitude (competitiveness, individual incentive, and a preference for concrete rewards) against the pursuit of 'intangible values' (idealistic attitudes, a preference for teamwork and value of trust and relationships).[994] His scales probed for behaviours and attitudes of 'materialism' that were not in line with Riesman's analysis nor the dominant political rhetoric of the era; rather, they reflected vestiges of the 1930s' accusations of 'materialism' previously levelled at the profit-orientated 'money changers'. Moreover, it was highly influenced by his Christian frame of reference and captured decades of assimilative delegitimizing discourse that separated out people's material and monetary desires from relational or more intangible pursuits. Although slightly out of line with the era's discursive context, these attributes of the psychometric scales for

[992] Frank R. Larkey, *The Birkman Method: Reliabilities and Validities Summary* (Houston: Birkman International, 2003), 2.
[993] Sharon Birkman-Fink and Stephanie Capparell, "Online Assessment," in *The Birkman Method: Your Personality at Work* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2013), https://www.birkman.com/news/view/the-birkman-method-your-personality-at-work.
[994] "'Components: Advantage," *Birkman Beginnings*, 2015, https://www.birkman.com/touchpoints/touchpoints_9.htm.

'materialism' carried forward. They became repeated by others studying materialism from a consumer behaviour perspective in the 1970s.

For consumer researchers, marketers and companies in the 1950s, Riesman's work made it apparent that they should rethink their approach to consumers. If Riesman's diagnosis was correct, America was not a society that could readily be categorised and marketed along class-specific tastes. Rather, it was a society where consumers' peers and exposure to media mattered more than their class habits garnered from parents. In a society in which the consumer was king, companies recognised that rather than persuading people to buy and appealing to them along class-based segmentations, they should instead understand what motivated consumers to buy and categorise people based on these motivational driving forces. Accordingly, in the 1950s it became increasingly popular for companies to establish motivation research (MR) departments, and to attempt to tap into the subconscious, non-rational levels that motivated consumers to buy.[995] As Stephen Fox notes of the time: 'Rather than starting with the product and proclaiming its virtues, MR began with the buyers and what they wanted, even if they did not know what that was.'[996]

[995] Adam Arvidsson, "On the 'Pre-History of The Panoptic Sort': Mobility in Market Research," *Surveillance & Society* 1, no. 4 (2003): 462; Stephen R. Fox, *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 183–185.
[996] Fox, *The Mirror Makers*, 184.

This trend was initially started in the late 1930s by the psychologist and marketing research expert, Ernest Dichter (1907-1991). Often considered to be the father of motivational research, Dichter applied Freudian psychoanalytics to explain the subconscious desires and urges that affected consumer behaviour. He conducted depth interviews to probe into the rationalization of consumers.[997] His initial publication, *The Psychology of Everyday Living* (1947) steered clear of the concept of 'materialism'.[998] But by the late 1960s, in a response to criticisms, he directly addressed the 'moralistic hypocrisy' of 'materialism'.[999] His response was levelled at social critics, such as Vance Packard (1914-1996), who called into question his approach. In the popular book, *The Hidden Persuaders* (1947), Packard accused Dichter of encouraging ad agencies to manipulate 'human motivations and desires' to control consumers' behaviours, 'to sell emotional security', to 'discover the psychological hook', and 'to give moral permission to have fun without guilt' so that consumers were not prevented from consuming due to an 'old-fashioned puritanism'.[1000] Dichter responded, arguing, 'we might go to the church and deny the materialistic world and decry it as immoral', yet 'in the remainder of the week we would subscribe to and live in a realistic world of possessions,

[997] Stefan Schwarzkopf and Rainer Gries, "Ernest Dichter, Motivation Research and the 'Century of the Consumer,'" in *Ernest Dichter and Motivation Research: New Perspectives on the Making of Post-War Consumer Culture*, ed. Stefan Schwarzkopf and Rainer Gries (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3–40; Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, 51–64.
[998] Ernest Dichter, *The Psychology of Everyday Living* (New York: Barnes & Noble, inc., 1947.
[999] Ernest Dichter, *The Strategy of Desire* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004 [c. 1960]), 86.
[1000] Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 20–21, 25, 48.

goods, and materialistic desires.'[1001] 'To want material things…[was] a natural human desire, engendered partly by biological forces, the wish for security and protection, and reinforced by our contemporary culture.' Thus the division between 'materialistic goods and idealistic goods [was] an erroneous one':[1002]

> There is no sharp dividing line between materialistic and idealistic values. To make such a distinction is unscientific. It is cheap moralistic hypocrisy…Raising vegetables, taking a trip, the child's thrill with a new pair of shoes, the new Broadway shows, what are they all? What values do they represent?[1003]

> To separate materialism from idealism, one with a negative, the other with a positive and more desirable connotation, is naïve, to say the least…. We have to accept the realistic behaviour of people and eliminate morality judgments in a scientific approach.[1004]

Dichter's response unfortunately came at the end of MRs initial heyday of popularity. MR research groups dominated the consumer and marketing research approach in the 1950s, but by the 1960s this was waning.[1005] The movement, however, did not die off completely. It eventually resulted in the standardized scale measuring peoples 'Values, Attitudes and Lifestyles' (VALS).

Arnold Mitchell (1918-1985) developed VALS in the late 1970s by combining Riesman's theories with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. VALS was highly popular in the 1980s, and remains a common marketing segmentation tool. Not

[1001] Dichter, *The Strategy of Desire*, 85.
[1002] Ibid., 86.
[1003] Ibid..
[1004] Ibid.,109.
[1005] Fox, *The Mirror Makers*, 184–187; Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, 62–63.

surprisingly, 'materialism' was a motivator used to describe the 'achiever' segment. These were consumers with a 'me-first' attitude, 'peer conscious' and driven by the belief that 'money is the source of authority'.[1006] VALS classification of 'materialistic' behaviour does not reflect Riesman's nor Dichter's interpretations of 'materialism', rather, as the section on the 1960 and 1970s will explore, it reflects the dominant rhetoric around 'materialism' of these decades. Mitchell developed his theory while attempting to explain the social changes and cultural upheavals occurring in the 1960s.[1007] He was also influenced by ideals of 'voluntary simplicity' stemming from the 1970s energy crises and the resulting assimilative rhetoric around reducing consumption.[1008] In fact, the 1970s dramatic shift away from the 1950s pro-materialism rhetoric might explain why Dichter's and Riesman's interpretation of 'materialism' failed to carry forward within the consumer behaviour literature.

In addition to the research on consumer behaviour for marketers, academics started to look at the effects of 'materialism', or as it was phrased, 'material attitudes' on family monetary practices. This approach differed from the studies in the 1930s, such as those undertaken by Angell (1936). Those prior studies

[1006] *VALS: An Abbreviated Guide* (Menlo Park, CA: SRI, 1997), 4, http://www.aranet.com/a98/jgutnbrg/a98-t15.pdf; "VALS: Sample Characteristics," *Strategic Business Insight*, 2015, http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/characteristics.shtml.
[1007] "About VALS," *Strategic Business Insight*, 2015, http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/about.shtml; Refer also to the "Introduction" in: Arnold Mitchell, *The Nine American Lifestyles: Who We Are and Where We're Going* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1983).
[1008] Duane Elgin and Arnold Mitchell, "Voluntary Simplicity," *Co-Evolution Quarterly*, 1977, http://duaneelgin.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/voluntary_simplicity.pdf.

assessed the relationship of 'materialism' and the family by applying subjective interpretation of data—that is, the academics who conducted studies on family budgets or case studies (such as those undertaken by Angell), did not set out to measure materialism but rather took their data and classified certain expenditures, behaviours, or beliefs as reflecting 'materialism'.

One of the first recognised studies on 'material attitudes' that attempted to quantify materialism through developing scales and survey questions was conducted by two pioneers in nutrition studies from Mississippi State College, Dorothy Dickins and Virginia Ferguson.[1009] In their 1957 study on the practices and attitudes of rural white children and parents in the lower costal plains area of Mississippi, they conducted exploratory interviews from which they created a list of statements to investigate 'money-centered' and 'material' attitudes. Respondents graded whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements on a scale ranging from 1 ('That's very true') to 4 ('That's very wrong'). Statements for parents probed at beliefs, such as: 'Wanting more money really keeps many of us from enjoying the more worthwhile things of life'. The statements captured the ideas that the materialist envied others ('I often wish I had as much money as some rich person I know') and defined success by wealth ('It's only natural to look up to a man who has made a lot of money').[1010] Statements

[1009] Bob Ratliff, "Dorothy Dickens: Nutrition Pioneer," *Mississippi Landmarks*, 2005.
[1010] Dorothy Dickens and Virginia Ferguson, "Practices and Attitudes of Rural White Children and Parents Concerning Money," Technical Bulletin (Mississippi: Mississippi State College, April 1957), 6.

for children asked children to chose from a selection of answers, often contrasting material-centered attitudes against more intangible 'idealistic' attitudes. For example, one question asked:

> Would you like a job?
> (1) That you would like to do
> (2) Where you would make a lot of money
> (3) Where you could help a lot of people[1011]

Their findings indicated that parents and children from families with lower socioeconomic ratings had more 'money-centered' and 'material' attitudes. Their conclusion resonated with the 1950's mantra of 'abundance for all' recognising that materialistic qualities could be overcome by a 'rise in the socio-economic scale'— such a rise 'provides more opportunity for appreciation of the less tangible yet worthwhile things in life.'[1012]

The 1950s was thus an era in which 'materialism' became situated as a consumer *motivator*. But because many of the psychometric scales were either developed pre or post the 1950s pro-consumer mantra of increased standards of living, they failed to encapsulate any of the positive views being pontificated about 'materialism'. Rather, they embodied the negative qualities that decades of delegitimizing discourse had built up.

[1011] Ibid., 35.
[1012] Ibid., 31.

II. 'Materialism' and the Rhetoric of 'A Better Life for All'

For most of the 1950s, the dominant rhetoric was one filled with a glorification of materialistic pursuits as economic and political spheres increasingly aligned. The political Cold War banter promoted America's freedom to consume, and businesses pushed for increased consumption as they leveraged their post-War mass production capabilities and technological advancements. President Truman's proclamation in 1949 in his second inaugural speech framed the truth of the decade to follow:

> The American people desire, and are determined to work for a world in which all nations and all peoples are free to govern themselves as they see fit, and to achieve a decent and satisfying life.[1013]

By the end of the 1950s, political opinion surveys revealed that over 80 percent of Americans believed in the statement: 'Our freedom depends on the free enterprise system.'[1014] To denounce the free enterprise system was often considered to be un-American, and if viewed from the wrong perspective, could lead to allegations of supporting communism, to imprisonment, or in the least, to losing jobs.

This was a decade of 'red hysteria', in which fears of Communist espionage and attacks led to the establishment of government committees to monitor and investigate disloyal or subversive activities, the use of 'red squads' to gather

[1013] Harry S. Truman, "Inaugural Address," The American Presidential Project (Washington D.C., January 20, 1949), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=13282.
[1014] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 821.

information on the political activities of citizens, the requirements of sworn loyalty oaths by public and government employees, the removal of un-American books from libraries, the omitting of left-wing speakers from campus talks, and the imprisonment of Communist Party leaders and supporters.[1015]

The enforcement of the truth of prosperity and free enterprise accordingly affected the discourse around 'materialism'. During this decade, the mantra that prevailed, which was repeatedly used to justify or refute 'materialism', was the belief that consumerism could lead to a 'better life for all'.[1016] Even the French author and Catholic philosopher, Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), in his *Reflections on America* (1958), noted that the 'old tag of American materialism' was 'no more than a curtain of silly gossip and slander.' Americans had rather proven themselves to be driven by 'generosity, good will, the sense of human fellowship.'[1017] They had 'gone beyond either capitalism or socialism to "economic humanism".'[1018]

The editorial in a special issue on the Good Life in *Life* Magazine headlined: "Leisure Could Mean A Better Civilization: By Using it to Pursue True Happiness, Americans can Raise Standards of Excellence Higher than Any in the World's Past". It noted that:

[1015] Ibid., 801–804.
[1016] "America, I Love You," *Time*, June 30, 1958, 62.
[1017] Jacques Maritain, *Reflections on America* (New York: Scribner, 1958), http://www3.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/etext/reflect1.html#IV.
[1018] "America, I Love You," 62.

> Americans have exploited their freedom to get and enjoy property to the utmost, thus creating our present affluence. If they should seem to have a somewhat materialistic view of happiness, it is partly because the founding fathers, unwilling to impose their own notion of happiness on any citizen, set things up that way. An outward looking people, Americans have characteristically externalized their criteria of happiness, seeking it in the conquest and improvement of their physical and social environment. In the process they have now virtually eliminated one of the chief drives behind all human effort, namely, the fear of poverty.[1019]

Businessmen and admen played into these beliefs. Although in the 1930s their social status had diminished, through their contributions in the war they had started to regain a level of respect within society. The 1950s presented them with an opportunity to re-establish their status and economic and cultural capital. They did so by positioning their institutions as the provider and enforcer of the democratisation of a decent standard of living. For example, as one *Time* magazine article reported, businessmen had changed their *modus operandi* from being all about profits to 'sharing the profits'. Although still focused on monetary rewards, such a profit plan was 'less materialistic' and more altruistic, carrying the 'spirit of capitalism to mass citizenship'.[1020]

In a 1956 *Time* article celebrating the president of General Motors, Harlow Herbert Curtice, as man of the year, GM took the opportunity to explain that planned obsolescence and proliferation of new car models was not

[1019] "Leisure Could Mean A Better Civilization: By Using It to Pursue True Happiness, Americans Can Raise Standards of Excellence Higher than Any in the World's Past," *Life*, December 28, 1959, 63.
[1020] "Sharing the Profits: Businessmen Get a New Religion," *Time*, December 6, 1954, 58.

'materialism', but rather a way to democratise goods: 'the American system' demanded that 'something newer must replace the nearly new so that those who cannot afford the newer can still afford what was once new whether it is a house, a sewing machine or a car.' Moreover, the automobiles enabled idealistic achievements: '[E]ven the sleekest, hottest automobiles' were 'not ends in themselves, but only means'—means to travel to the countryside, to get to 'school-board meetings or a movie', to drive 'kids to school…the beach, and [to] pick them up again, to 'move the family' in hopes of finding a better job. A car was thus 'something far beyond fad and fashion'; it was perhaps 'a new level of community enterprise.'[1021]

Perhaps most telling of the progress of business' status and reclaim of capital was the 1959 impromptu "Kitchen Debate" between Vice President Richard Nixon and the Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. Recorded on rolling videotape, the two politicians debated the merits of their own countries at an exhibition set up in Moscow. Nixon, pointing to an exhibition of an American kitchen, wanted to demonstrate that freedom in America meant the right to consume and to benefit from a life of 'prosperity': 'The American system [was] designed to take advantage of new inventions and new technique.' It made 'life easier for…housewives'. It celebrated 'diversity, the right to choose.' This

[1021] "Man of the Year," *Time*, January 2, 1956, 51.

differed greatly from Russia's consumerism that was decided 'at the top by one governmental official.'[1022]

The 1950s were accordingly an era in which the mass consumer economy seemed to align with public policy, political practice, and American values, attitudes, and behaviours. This was the decade of the demographic surge as the post-war generation of baby boomers was born. Between 1950 and 1960, America's population increased by more than 18 percent (28 million people). Americans, specifically middle-class white Americans, moved to the suburbs. By 1960, 23 percent of white Americans lived in the suburb. This led to increases in household ownership, car ownership, purchases of household furnishings and demand for new domestic appliances. In 1950, 60 percent (three out of five) of American families owned a car; by 1960 more than 78 percent (four out of five) American families owned a car.[1023] As Lizabeth Cohen describes of this time:

> In the postwar Consumers' Republic, a new ideal emerged—the purchaser as citizen…. Now the consumer satisfying personal material wants actually served the national interest, since economic recovery after a decade and a half of depression and war depended on dynamic mass consumption economy.[1024]

[1022] Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev, *The Kitchen Debate - Transcript* (U.S. Embassy, Moscow, Soviet Union, 1959), http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/16/1959-07-24.pdf.
[1023] "People of Plenty: The Transformation of American Society" in Andrew J. Dunar, *America in the Fifties* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 167–203.
[1024] Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008), 8–9.

Mass consumption in postwar America was accordingly shifted from being viewed as a 'personal indulgence' to being viewed as a 'civic responsibility designed to provide "full employment and improved living standards for the rest of the nation."'[1025]

III. Signs of a Revolt: Questioning The 'Materialism' of Prosperity

Although there was a clear hegemony of consumer freedom rhetoric, there were moments in which challenging perspectives offered by counter-movements and social critics broke through.

The Beat generation, for example, through their poems, articles, and lifestyle pushed against the 'excess' and the 'conformity' of American life, adopting a 'wait-and-see detachment'.[1026] As the beat writer, John Clellon Holmes (1926-1988) defined in the 1952 *New York Times Magazine* article (which introduced the phrase 'beat generation'), the beat generation was one 'of extremes, including both the hipster and the radical young Republican in its ranks':[1027]

> For the wildest hipster, making a mystique of bop, drugs and the night life, there is no desire to shatter the 'square' society in which he lives, only to elude it…. Equally, the young Republican, though often seeming to hold up Babbitt as his culture hero, is neither vulgar nor materialistic, as Babbitt was. He conforms because he believes it is socially practical, not necessarily virtuous. Both positions, however, are the result of more

[1025] Ibid., 113; as cited original in *Life* magazine article: "Family Status Must Improve It Should Buy More for Itself to Better the Living of Others," *Life*, May 5, 1947, 33.
[1026] John C. Holmes, "This Is The Beat Generation," *The New York Times*, November 16, 1952, http://www.litkicks.com/ThisIsTheBeatGeneration.
[1027] Ibid.

> or less the same conviction -- namely that the valueless abyss of modern life is unbearable.[1028]

The 'excess and conformity' led to a life of 'valuelessness, faithlessness'.[1029] These words became the new descriptors of a disillusioned life bred by 'materialism'. In a movement similar to the Transcendentalists, the Beats sought spirituality to overcome 'materialism'—although their spirituality was defined by embracing the 'hipster' life of drugs and detachment. The Beats creatively spun mantras that pushed for a return to spirituality and deplored the American life in which men:

> [W]ere burned alive in their innocent flannel suits on Madison Avenue amid blasts of leaden verse & the tanked-up clatter of the iron regiments of fashion & the nitroglycerein shrieks of the fairies of advertising & the mustard gas of sinister intelligent editors, or were run down by the drunken taxicabs of Absolute Reality.[1030]

In reaction to the rhetoric of prosperity, the Beats adopted a rhetoric of the simple life. As the prominent beat writer and poet, Jack Kerouac (1922-1969) described, the Beats sought a different vision 'all inspired and fervent and free of Bourgeois-Bohemian Materialism'.[1031]

[1028] Ibid.
[1029] Ibid.
[1030] Allen Ginsberg, *Howl: Original Draft Facsimile, Transcript, and Variant Versions*, ed. Barry Miles (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 5.
[1031] Jack Keroauc, "About the Beat Generation" (1957); Jack Keroauc, "Aftermath: The Philosophy of the Beat Generation", *Esquire*, (March 1958); as cited in Ann Charters, *Beat down to Your Soul: What Was the Beat Generation?* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), xxix.

Standing in contrast to the Beats were the academics who used social and economic theories to challenge the rhetoric of abundance and consumer freedom. The American historian, David Potter (1910-1971), wrote a foundational text that contributed to this intellectual movement: in his 1954 book, he analysed the emergence of America's national character as a *People of Plenty*. In his analysis, Potter hit on a raw nerve that Riesman's work had triggered: Riesman pointed out that American's conformity was primarily a result of a need for approval, which made them susceptible to be directed by peers and the mass media.[1032] As Riesman critiqued: although Americans were born free, they were at risk of loosing 'their social freedom and their individual autonomy in seeking to become like each other.'[1033] Potter latched on to this concern. He noted that America's 'people of plenty' ideal and their drive to achieve abundance were primary a result of the institutional power of advertising. This 'powerful' institution's most 'important effects' was not 'upon the economics of our distributive system' but 'upon the values of our society'. Unlike 'the school and the church', which inculcated 'beliefs [and] attitudes…held to be of social value', advertising shaped 'human standards' towards 'the exploitation of materialistic drives and emulative anxieties', and then sought to validate, sanction, and standardize 'these drives and anxieties as accepted criteria of social value.'[1034] As such, he argued:

[1032] Refer to the introduction by Todd Gitlin in Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, xiii.
[1033] Ibid., 307.
[1034] David M. Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009 [c. 1954]), 188.

> [A]dvertising should be recognized as an important social influence and as our newest major institution—an institution peculiarly identified with one of the most pervasive forces in American life, the force of economic abundance.[1035]

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, more academics joined the foray against advertising and against the ideals of abundance. Vance Packard (1914-1996) published numerous, popular books. *Hidden Persuaders* (1947), for example, cast media and advertisers in a very negative light, depicting them as manipulators of consumer behaviours.[1036] In *Status Seekers* (1949), Packard postulated that far from having 'prosperity for all in a classless society' (as Nixon declared to the Soviets),[1037] America was socially stratified and was reinforcing these stratifications through its consumerism.[1038, 1039] In *The Waste Makers* (1960), he attacked the notions of abundance and planned obsolescence, questioning: 'What is the impact on the human spirit of all these pressures to consume?'; and 'What is the mere availability of ever-greater material abundance doing to American habit patterns?[1040] He concluded, the 'new pressures' caused people to 'find their main life satisfaction in their consumption role rather than their productive role'. They made 'such traits as pleasure-mindedness, self-indulgence, materialism, and passivity as

[1035] Ibid.
[1036] Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972).
[1037] As quoted in: Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 809.
[1038] Vance Packard, *The Status Seekers* (New York: McKay, 1959).
[1039] Ann T. Keene, "Packard, Vance," *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, February 2000), http://www.anb.org/articles/16/16-03407.html.
[1040] Vance Packard, *The Waste Makers* (New York: D. McKay Co., 1960), 232.

conspicuous elements of the American character.'[1041] Packard lamented. The 'preoccupation with consumption—and other forms of materialism' had resulted in: destabilizing family solidarity (household appliances were blamed for putting families in a situation were wives became deprived of 'traditional…homemaking functions' and were forced into the workplace to help cover costs);[1042] leading youth to reject the 'traditional American' values of building 'a better world' through ambition, dedication, and self-sufficiency;[1043] deadening the ideal of brotherhood (the 'sensitivity to other human beings');[1044] and negating the pursuit of knowledge.[1045] It was a roll call that read like a list of 'materialism's' ills, accumulated across the decades.

Packard, however, not only listed the social ills but pointed a finger directly at the culprit—business. He revealed how business gurus recognised that they were contributing to 'decadence, self-indulgence, materialism, cynicisms, irresponsibility, selfishness', and 'loading people up with redundant goods, creating superficial and vulgar wants, and generating the kind of opulence that turns luxuries into necessities'.[1046] Although business might cause Americans to 'get soft and decadent and finally drift down into a quagmire of decay that was

[1041] Ibid., 233.
[1042] Ibid., 236.
[1043] Ibid., 237.
[1044] Ibid., 238.
[1045] Ibid., 239.
[1046] Ibid., 242.

Rome's fate', business gurus were urging managers to view these ideas as 'irrational Puritan reaction against the good life'.[1047]

Packard's questioning of abundance and the wastefulness and negative effects of America's consumerism resonated with concerns previously voiced by others, including: the historian of economic thought, Robert L. Heilbroner; the economist John Kenneth Galbraith; the social critic Joseph Wood Krutch; and the environmentalist Rachel Carson (1907-1964). These critics of progress pushed for antidotes to 'materialism' that sought to encourage civic virtues that focused on public needs over personal consumer needs. They advocated for government to increase expenditures on public goods, such as education, and to recognise environmental concerns. These were elements in society that were undervalued. Yet these elements also spoke directly to the sources of cultural and symbolic capital of the academics and their social movements.

Heilbroner pulled apart the idea of America's theory of prosperity by assessing the historical evolution of the acquisitive man. In the concluding chapter of his book, *The Quest for Wealth* (1956), in between praises for the American system's accomplishment of 'general *acquiescence*' and 'economic liberty', he raised a warning: America's 'mass money-orientated mind' could pervert values,

[1047] Ibid.

leading to a materialistic society in which freedom 'to pursue whatever economic end one desires' came before the public good.[1048] It would lead to:

> [A] society which is fully capable of levelling its slums, improving its educational facilities, and doing all the things which everybody agrees ought to be done,… paralyzed into doing none of them because they are not "money-making propositions."… In a word, it is the implacable materialism, the amorality, the lack of ethical standards which stigmatizes the acquisitive society.[1049]

Galbraith, in 1958, published *The Affluent Society*, one of the key critiques that started to break through the hegemony of America's theory of prosperity.[1050] In his book he described how America's economy was inorganic: it was created not by consumers' needs but by consumers' wants and their desire for emulation. Similar to Potter, Galbraith pointed to the mass media as the culprit: it was advertising that fostered a 'craving for more elegant automobiles, more exotic food, more erotic clothing, more elaborate entertainment—indeed for the entire modern range of sensuous, edifying and lethal desires.'[1051] The result was a 'tendency to accord a superior prestige to private goods and an inferior role to public production'.[1052] It led to an imbalance: private production and consumption overruled public spending and investment; there was 'private opulence' yet 'public squalor'.[1053] Such an economy perpetuated social

[1048] Robert L Heilbroner, *The Quest for Wealth; a Study of Acquisitive Man.* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), 244, 246, 247. (Formatting original)
[1049] Ibid., 246.
[1050] Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, 103.
[1051] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1998 [c. 1958]), 115.
[1052] Ibid., 112.
[1053] Ibid., 191.

disparities and reduced the government's ability to channel funds into public goods, education and research. As Galbraith described:

> This disparity between our private and public goods and services…is no matter of subjective judgment…. Schools are old and overcrowded. The police force is inadequate. The parks and playgrounds are in- sufficient. Streets and empty lots are filthy, and the sanitation de- partment is underequipped and in need of staff. Access to the city by those who work there is uncertain and painful and becoming more so. Internal transportation is overcrowded, unhealthful and dirty. So is the air. Parking on the streets should be prohibited, but there is no space elsewhere.[1054]

Galbraith urged American politicians to rebalance private spending and public needs. Although Galbraith did not systematically spell out what he thought public sector spending should involve, scattered throughout the book were references to what he wanted out of a rebalance of the private versus public spending: education and scientific research ranked as critical. The other needs—urban renewal, environmental protection, housing, transportation, health care—relied on America's 'resources of intelligence and education'.[1055]

Given that Galbraith's book was aimed at infiltrating the Cold War mind set of the federal government, it is not surprising to find that he couched many of his arguments in carefully worded statements: moralistic jargon, such as 'materialism', was neutralised so that his work might be taken as an objective

[1054] Ibid., 186–187.
[1055] Ibid., 260.

reading on the American society and economic situation. For example, he noted that in the past a 'common error of those who have speculated on the sanctity of present economic goals—those who have sought to score against materialism and Philistinism' did so to 'advance their own view of what adds to human happiness'. This often resulted in a substitution of 'crude economic goals of the people at large for more sensitive and refined but irrelevant goals of their own.'[1056]

Galbraith's book had considerable impact on national debates. His ideas resonated with critical themes that the Democratic party were vocalizing. When John F. Kennedy (1917-1963) took office in 1960, Galbraith, who had served other Presidents, joined as a member of the administration, giving him the ability to influence the national social policy debates.[1057]

Krutch, on the other hand, who published a book for the general public a year after Galbraith, did not refrain from denouncing the 'materialistic' consumption that resulted from the 'condition of prosperity'. In *Human Nature and the Human Condition* (1959), Krutch extended Potter's concerns about the role of advertising in increasing our perceptions of the need for abundance.[1058] He opined that this had led to a shift in which 'materialism, conspicuous

[1056] Ibid., 256.
[1057] Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, 106.
[1058] Joseph Wood Krutch, *Human Nature and the Human Condition* (New York: Random House, 1959), 31.

expenditure, waste, and improvidence' guided society, and 'private vices' became 'private as well as public virtues.'[1059] He documented the rhetoric being assailed upon society, which was pushing America towards the disturbing value of materialism. Society was being told: 'If you don't want prosperity to falter then Buy, Buy, Buy—on credit of course'; 'Love things above all else; learn to want more and more; waste rather than conserve; spend what you do not have.'[1060] Krutch questioned the rationality behind 'prosperity', noting that:

> All prudential moralists used to agree that to live within one's income was the first requisite for a materially secure existence, but prosperity now depends upon everyone's exceeding it…. Plain living, even if accompanied by high thinking, is a sort of treason—or un-American at the least'…. [But] if our present condition really does force upon us a pattern of economic behavior inconsistent with the pattern of behavior everywhere else advisable, then does that not suggest in turn that this condition, for all its smiling aspects, is somehow dangerous? Does it not suggest that even prosperity is not worth the price if the price involves violating those principles of wisdom which everywhere else are valid?[1061]

Finally, the 1950s also saw a push against America's quest for prosperity as environmentalists, such as Rachel Carson, started to question the environmental degradation 'materialism' caused. Her speech, given in 1954 before a thousand women journalists, resonated with the themes raised by James Adams in the late 1920s and 1930s about the businessman's short-sightedness, and propensity to eradicate forests without thought of

[1059] Ibid., 37.
[1060] Ibid., 36–38.
[1061] Ibid., 36–37, 38.

replenishment or care of future generations.[1062] Carson argued that Americans had become 'blinded by the dollar sign' and thus not able to stop and appreciate the beauty of the natural world. Its 'generation, in its selfish materialism' was destroying nature.'[1063] In 1962, her book, *Silent Spring*, revealed the hidden truth of the poisonous toxins DDT was emitting upon the environment and human bodies.[1064] Although it did not contain an out lash against 'materialism', it did plant the seeds for the environmental movement that would take up materialistic consumption as a key enemy.[1065]

Speech acts, such as these about 'materialism', where able to challenge the prosperity 'truth' and gain a sense of legitimacy as America's political and economic interests started to separate. Two events were critical instigators of this separation. The first came on August 21st, 1957, when the USSR successfully tested the first intercontinental ballistic missile. The second occurred on October 4th, 1957, when the Russian's launched Sputnik—putting the first satellite into space. These incidents were leveraged by the Democratic

[1062] Adams, *Our Business Civilization*, 18. (Formatting original)
[1063] Rachel Carson, a speech given at the Theta Sigma Phi Matrix Table Dinner, April 21, 1954, Columbus, Ohio, as quoted in: Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, 154.
[1064] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston; Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin ; Riverside Press, 1962.
[1065] Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America: How the Youth Revolution Is Trying to Make America Livable* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), 320; E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as If People Mattered* (London: Abacus, 1973), 23.
For a good overview of how the environmental movement grew from Carson's publication, refer to: Adam Rome, "'Give Earth a Chance': The Environmental Movement and the Sixties," *The Journal of American History* 90, no. 2 (September 1, 2003): 525–54; "The Sixties Rebellion:" The Search for a New Politics" in Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington: Island Press, 2005), 121–160.

party as they built up to the 1960 presidential elections, which, under the allure of John F. Kennedy, they would win.[1066]

In the publicity campaigns, Kennedy's speeches raised concerns over the 'missile gap' between Russia and America, while striking at issues about America's mass consumerism that had, for the past decade under the stranglehold of red hysteria, gone predominately unsaid. In December 1957, on the heels of the Russian's exploits, Kennedy claimed that America, on its 'economic front' was 'in danger of losing out to the Russians in the race for industrial productive superiority'. Although America could produce 'twice as much steel as the Soviet Union', too large of a proportion went to consumer goods: 'roughly one-fourth…goes to automobiles,' a 'large proportion' went into 'refrigerators, washing machines, and other consumer goods.' The Russians, on the other hand, productively used their steel, and in doing so they had passed America in 'the production of capital goods, in industrial output generally, in its rate of industrialization and productive growth, and in the production of military end items.' For America to 'compete successfully with the Russians' and to 'restore our nation's prestige and security' it needed to adopt the 'principals of our Judaic-Christian heritage': 'self-discipline'—the 'sacrifice [of] economic convenience and physical comfort'.[1067]

[1066] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 842–843.
[1067] John F. Kennedy, *Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at the National Conference of Christians and Jews Dinner* (Chicago, IL, 1957), http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/National-Conference-of-Christians-and-Jews_19571203.aspx.

Kennedy's speech acts against prosperity gained legitimacy as he continued to attribute national and societal ills to America's consumer-centrism. As he deplored, the 'slow corrosion of luxury' had led to a 'slow erosion of our courage'.[1068] America 'as a nation' had 'gone soft' and was 'in danger of betraying [its] traditions.'[1069] Although 'profits' and the 'standard of living' were up, the rates of 'crime', 'divorce', 'juvenile delinquency', 'mental illness', drug use, and school drop outs were also up.[1070] America was 'losing that Pilgrim and pioneer spirit of initiative and independence' as goods made life too easy: Americans had 'cars to drive and buttons to push and TV to watch', and 'pre-cooked meals and prefab houses'. It took for 'granted our security, our liberty, and our future—when we cannot take any one of them for granted at all.'[1071]

Kennedy, influenced by Galbraith's arguments, had latched on to the idea of rebalancing private and public interests. If the Democrats won the election, they could rebalance not only the private and public sphere interests, but also the status of businessmen versus politicians. It was the age-old battle for dominance over the American society. Similar to the 1920s, the businessman had become too powerful. It was time to rectify this. By the time Kennedy gave his acceptance speech for the democratic presidential nomination in 1960, he

[1068] Ibid., 34.
[1069] Edmund Ions, "Speech by John F. Kennedy, Washington, D.C., 1 January 1960," in *The Politics of John F. Kennedy* (London: Routledge, 1967), 33.
[1070] Ibid.
[1071] Ibid.

had branded his vision as 'the New Frontier'. As he positioned it, it was what he intend to *ask* of the American people. They were to join him in being 'pioneers on that New Frontier'—a 'Frontier' that appealed to 'pride, not to [the] pocketbook—it holds out the promise of more sacrifice instead of more security.' It stood in stark contrast to the Republican rhetoric of *giving* American's prosperity. Yet Kennedy implored, Americans *had* to make a choice between 'the public interest and private comfort', between 'national greatness and national decline', and between 'determined dedication and creeping mediocrity.' The times demanded change.[1072]

Although Kennedy did not phrase his description of the New Frontier with rejections of 'materialism', when his friend and advisor, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. (1917-2007) translated his appeal, 'materialism' was at the core of the ideals the New Frontier wanted to delegitimize: 'materialism' as a private virtue was shifted to a public vice. The 'new mood in politics', Schlesinger stated, symbolised a 'new epoch in our national life'.[1073] Americans were searching for something 'deeply worth-while'.[1074] Its economy was narrowly focused on producing 'things for consumers' rather than producing 'better people or better schools or better health or better national defense or better opportunities for

[1072] John F. Kennedy, "Address of Senator John F. Kennedy Accepting the Democratic Party Nomination for the Presidency of the United States," The American Presidential Project (Memorial Coliseum, Los Angeles, July 15, 1960), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25966.
[1073] Arthur Meier Schlesinger, "The New Mood in Politics (1960)," in *The Politics of Hope and The Bitter Heritage: American Liberalism in the 1960s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 105.
[1074] Ibid., 106.

cultural and spiritual fulfillment.' It produced 'more gadgets and gimmicks to overwhelm our bodies and distract our minds'. America, who 'self-righteously condemn' the Communists of a 'godless materialism' had seemingly 'dedicated ourselves to a godly materialism of our own.'[1075] As Schlesinger described:

> [M]aterialism—the belief that the needs of life can be fulfilled by material opulence—is not enough…. It will not truly achieve…the promise of American life…. And it will not offer an effective counterfaith—or even an effective counterbalance—against communism. Under the spell of materialism, our nation has allocated its abundance to private satisfaction rather than to public need, with the result that the wealthiest nation in the world suddenly seems to be falling behind in education, falling behind in science, falling behind in technology, falling behind in weapons, falling behind in our capacity to stir the minds and hearts of men.[1076]

This became the challenge 'of the 60s': to reorganize 'American values'. If America was going to defend 'against communism in the world' and build a 'satisfying life at home', then 'the production of consumer goods [would] have to be made subordinate to some larger national purpose.[1077] By doing so, 'America' could 'be herself again'.[1078]

[1075] Ibid., 107–108.
[1076] Ibid., 108.
[1077] Ibid., 116.
[1078] Ibid., 119.

'Materialism' in the Counter-Culture Revolution and Beyond (1960s-1980s)

Schlesinger's words were prophetic. The 1960s became the decade in which America predominately critiqued, rather than praised or refuted, its 'materialism'. Fittingly, it was a decade of economic prosperity and technological advancements. America caught up and started to surpass Russia with its satellite, space, and warfare technology. Colour televisions started to spread across American homes. Universities, businesses and governments expanded the uses of computers. Visa and Master Charge (Mastercard) were launched, leading to a proliferation of credit cards. Imports, such as electronics from Japan and cars from Germany, became a normal part of the American consumer landscape. Wal-Mart opened its first store. Over the decade, GDP would increase by almost 50 percent. America's material progress was clearly advancing.[1079]

Yet against this backdrop, America's social fabric was coming apart. Americans were increasingly questioning what life should be about and what values should guide the country as they came face to face with the reality of inequality in their society, the potential danger of nuclear war, and a seemingly senseless war in Vietnam. The protests of the civil rights movements exemplified that America's rhetoric of freedom and equality was empty words. The mounting

[1079] Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, 163.

tension in the Cold War resulted in a near nuclear war when, in October 1962, America went head to head with the Soviet Union to stop the Soviets from building a missile base in Cuba. The unsettled youth who formed a counterculture movement, took up the Beat's rejection of the American way of life and shifted it into visibly disruptive actions: they vocally questioned authority and political decisions; they protested against the war in Vietnam, poverty, and inequality; they embraced their own, often drug-induced, hippie culture.

The critiques of 'materialism' reflected this social and moral mayhem as groups levelled the allegations of 'materialism' at each other in attempts to delegitimize the contesting culture. The youth, for example grasped onto Schlesinger's idea: what Americans' 'self-righteously condemn as the godless materialism of the Communists' was covering up 'a godly materialism of our own.'[1080] They expressed their 'antipathy towards bourgeois materialism' and 'the apotheosis of prosperity' by embracing a lifestyle and literature that resonated with themes of a more natural and spiritual (often drug-induced) way to live.[1081] They adopted a more ecologically-aware and earth-friendly approach to living, such as consumption of organic foods.[1082] They hurled the allegation of 'materialism' not through the word itself, so much as through their slang and through

[1080] Schlesinger, "The New Mood in Politics (1960)," 108.
[1081] Eugene F. Timpe, "Hermann Hesse in the United States," *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures* 23, no. 1 (March 1, 1969): 77.
[1082] Scott MacFarlane, *The Hippie Narrative: A Literary Perspective on the Counterculture* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007).

depicting the commodization of society in their literature. As Scott MacFarlane notes about this era, a novel such as Richard Brautigan's (1935-1984) *Trout Fishing in America* (1967) illustrated the 'absurdist sense that the wilderness could be turned into a commodity, a junk-yard product to sell'. This ironic humour appealed to the hippie's 'rejection of materialism and "plastic" society.'[1083]

Journalists and other writers spread the word that the 'hippiedom lives' were not just a drug, sex, and rock and roll youth movement—it was fundamentally a rejection of the middle-class values and America's materialistic approach to life. A report printed in *Time* on the gathering of Woodstock surmised that the hippies had elevated the 'pleasure principle…over the Puritan ethic of work':[1084]

> To do one's own thing is a greater duty than to be a useful citizen. Personal freedom in the midst of squalor is more liberating than social conformity with the trappings of wealth. Now that youth take abundance for granted, it can afford to reject materialism. It is easy enough for adults to reject the irrationality and hedonism of this ethic. But the young are quick to point out that the most rational and technically accomplished society known to man has led only to racism, repression and a meaningless war in the jungles of Southeast Asia.[1085]

Yet as much as the youth condemned the 'materialism' of the mainstream, middle-class consumer, the middle class likewise pushed back, denouncing the youth movements as harbouring materialistic tendencies of their own. As the

[1083] Ibid., 79.
[1084] "Woodstock: The Message of History's Biggest Happening," *Time*, August 29, 1969, 43.
[1085] Ibid.

social critic and writer Norman Podhoretz (b. 1930) panned in reflecting back on the decade, the 'new breed of hustlers (rock stars, publishing tycoons, drug dealers, and other enterprising entrepreneurs)' of the sixties were hypocrites:

> [These] hustlers…amassed huge fortunes by preaching against "the rat race", "materialism", "consumerism", and "middle-class values" in general, while providing entertainment and other services to a new mass market defined precisely by its repudiation of such values, but still prosperous enough, thanks to parental allowance and grandparental trust funds, to enrich those catering to its particular tastes.[1086]

In looking back on the decade, the scholar and literary critic, John W. Aldridge (1922-2007), surmised that 'materialism' went both ways. The older generation, in their 'materialism', had mistakenly placed the emphasis on things instead of relationships and had failed to relate to the youth in non-material ways. They had given the youth 'a world which seemed to be designed exclusively for their pleasure and comfort, and yet which was impoverished in nearly all the resources necessary for the humane life, the adventurous life, the life of feeling and the life of thought':[1087]

> As we grew in affluence and became more permissive in an effort to atone for [the youth's] steadily increasing estrangement from us, we bribed them with money to buy cars, clothes, popular records—the accessories of a purely materialistic, endlessly diversionary existence. And ultimately we subsidized their equally materialistic and diversionary rebellions against our materialism and affluence; their escapes into hippyism, in which they borrowed the costumery and bad manners of an outdated décor Bohemia; their experiments with drugs,

[1086] Norman Podhoretz, *Breaking Ranks: A Political Memoir* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 150.
[1087] John W. Aldridge, "In the Country of the Young," *Harper's*, October 1, 1969, 51.

> in which they substituted the narcosis of psychedelics for our own narcosis of reproduction.[1088]

These charges of 'materialism', reflecting ploys of *defensive* delegitimizing discourse, created a discursive environment in which who and what was 'materialistic' was open for definition. By the 1970s, the idea of 'non-materialistic' consumption would reflect a fusion of hippie ecological-friendly consumption and middle-class moralistic ideals.

The war against 'materialism' was, however, not only confined to the delegitimization of consumer lifestyles; it was also used to call into question the influence of the private sector, and government's prioritization of technological and military pursuits over other, more humane and ecological concerns. As President Kennedy surmised in 1962, America, as a nation, was fighting against a worldview that held 'the United States…[to be] a rather harsh, narrow-minded, militaristic, materialistic society.'[1089] This national reputation, articulated by prominent societal figures, opened the gates to further criticisms. For example, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968) spoke out against America's material-domination, hoping to restore respect and value for human life. As part of his anti-Vietnam war speech, given in 1967, he called for a 'shift from a "thing-oriented" society to a "person-orientated" society'. So long as

[1088] Ibid.
[1089] John F. Kennedy, "Remarks at a Meeting With the Headquarters Staff of the Peace Corps," The American Presidential Project (Washington D.C., June 14, 1962), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8718.

'machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.'[1090] Charles Reich (b.1928), as part of the environmental movement, deplored in his book, *The Greening of America* (1970), that Western values gave 'scientific technique, materialism, and the market system' ascendance over more 'humanistic meaning'.[1091] An article in the *Time* magazine in 1969 perhaps summarised the prevailing public sentiment when it asked: how could Americans 'heal a nation' and save themselves from the 'shared materialism' that science and industry had infected into society?[1092] As it noted, not only were the hippies demonstrating a 'romantic resistance to rational materialism', but there was a prevailing 'pessimistic objection to the present course and rate of improvement—indeed to the whole idea of material progress'.[1093] Many 'middle-class white students' were arguing that progress had in many ways 'made men worse not better':[1094]

> 'No matter how dazzling GNP can never spell God. Rockets, computers, the fair distribution of enough goods and services have little value except as machinery used to create a society. That society is valuable only in terms of the calibre of its people…. Freedom itself is ultimately valuable only if the individuals exercising it are choosing something valuable'.[1095]

[1090] Martin Luther King, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence" (Riverside Church, New York City, April 4, 1967), http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0115-13.htm.
[1091] Reich, *The Greening of America*, 17.
[1092] "To Heal a Nation," *Time*, January 24, 1969, 17, 20.
[1093] Ibid., 20.
[1094] Ibid., 21.
[1095] Ibid.

America, facing a decade of protests and cultural and social upheaval, was turning towards a decade of conservatism. A poll of the American people conducted by *Time* in 1969 revealed that 67 percent of Americans believed that the morality of the country had declined during the decade: many perceived the cause to be due to an increase in materialism.[1096] They wanted to see a return of the golden rule, where love and respect for the family prevailed. They wanted a return of the ideals of hard work, and a return of 'religious rules [they were] raised on'.[1097] People were questioning the moral structures and values that guided America. As the *Time's* article asked: 'Has the American Dream become the American damnation, a formula for selfishness rather than equality and excellence?'[1098] There was a 'creeping pessimism' as Americans 'began to question the durability of their power.'[1099]

The ideas and concerns about America's pursuit of abundance and national power became further amplified as America faced a fuel crisis in 1973 and started to experience economic stagflation. Between 1973 and 1981, America's average economic growth rate was only 2.4 percent, yet its inflation was on average 10 percent per year.[1100] The stagflation undermined the belief that continued economic growth was achievable. The fuel crisis resulted from the response of oil producing Arab countries cutting production and placing an

[1096] "Changing Morality: The Two America," *Time*, June 6, 1969, 18.
[1097] Ibid.
[1098] "To Heal a Nation," 17.
[1099] Ibid., 18.
[1100] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 905.

embargo on oil after America gave aid to Israel. America's oil production had been in a state of decline since the 1970s, and thus they relied heavily on oil imports for gas and energy purposes. The result was a spike in the prices and shortages: the price of a barrel of oil went from $3.00 to $12.00 by 1974; in the last week of February 1974 approximately 20 percent of America's gas stations had no fuel, and in fast growing areas, such as the South-east area, shortages affected approximately 36 percent of stations.[1101]

At the start of this crisis, the British, internationally renown economist, E. F. Schumacher, published a book, *Small is Beautiful* (1973), that added to the rhetoric of America's need to shift from its materialistic pursuit of prosperity: the desire to obtain a 'higher standard of living' had merely led to 'cultivating greed and envy and thus building up a vast array of totally unwarrantable wants'.[1102] The reality of living such a life—a 'life that bases itself on materialism, i.e. on permanent, limitless expansionism in a finite environment' was something that could not last.[1103]

These events and the speech acts of intellectuals, economists, and eventually government officials, shifted what it meant to be middle class in America. The idea of the 1950s that Americans performed a civic duty by consuming—since

[1101] David Frum, *How We Got Here: The 70s The Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better Or Worse)* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 312–322.
[1102] Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful*, 23.
[1103] Ibid., 123.

consumption provided 'employment and improved living standards for the rest of the nation'[1104]—was no longer valid. American jobs in manufacturing had slowly been moved overseas. As part of the Cold War effort, the government had encouraged businesses to strengthen the industries of its anti-communist allies, Germany and Japan. By 1971, America, for the first time in the twentieth century, imported more goods than it exported.[1105]

Perhaps the shift in rhetoric can best be exemplified by contrasting the speech acts of America's presidents. In 1969, President Richard Nixon (1969-1974) summarised that although there were 'some who see America's vast wealth and protest that this has made us materialistic', American should not be 'apologetic about our abundance':[1106]

> We should not fall into the easy trap of confusing the production of things with the worship of things. We produce abundantly, but our values turn not on what we have but on what we believe.
>
> And what we believe very simply is this: We believe in liberty, in decency, and the process of freedom. On these beliefs we rest our pride as a nation. In these beliefs we rest our hopes for the future. And by our fidelity to the process of freedom we can assure to ourselves and our posterity the blessings of freedom.[1107]

[1104] "Family Status Must Improve It Should Buy More for Itself to Better the Living of Others," 33.
[1105] Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 904.
[1106] Richard Nixon, "Address at the Dedication of the Karl E. Mundt Library at General Beadle State College, Madison, South Dakota," The American Presidential Project (South Dakota, June 3, 1969), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2080.
[1107] Ibid.

By 1979, when President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) faced the nation, he decried America had lost its values in its tendency to worship consumerism:

> In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-knit communities, and our faith in God, too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns. But we've discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning. We've learned that piling up material goods cannot fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose.
>
> The symptoms of this crisis of the American spirit are all around us. For the first time in the history of our country a majority of our people believe that the next 5 years will be worse than the past 5 years…. The productivity of American workers is actually dropping, and the willingness of Americans to save for the future has fallen below that of all other people in the Western world….[T]here is a growing disrespect for government and for churches and for schools, the news media, and other institutions. This is not a message of happiness or reassurance, but it is the truth and it is a warning. [1108]

Carter called for the American people to rally behind their need for energy. It was 'on the battlefield of energy' that Americans could 'win for our Nation a new confidence, and [could] seize control again of our common destiny'.[1109] With this rhetoric, Americans' civil duty became redefined: it was no longer to be expressed through consumerism, but through restraint and self-denial. Unlike Kennedy's pleadings for self-denial, the external context of limited resources meant Americans had little choice but to follow. Communism was

[1108] Jimmy Carter, "Address to the Nation on Energy and National Goals: 'The Malaise Speech,'" The American Presidential Project (Washington D.C., July 15, 1979), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=32596.
[1109] Ibid.

not the feared enemy, but America's over-reliance on other countries.

Americans were instructed:

> [F]or your good and for your Nation's security…take no unnecessary trips,… use carpools or public transportation whenever you can,…park your car one extra day per week,… set your thermostats to save fuel. Every act of energy conservation like this is more than just common sense—I tell you it is an act of patriotism.[1110]

'Materialism', was once again, a weapon of assimilative reform, used to encourage the middle class to limit their consumption. It became a private vice, and the simple life became a private *and* public virtue.

The 1970s was the decade in which the American middle class saw its economic capital steadily decrease. To prevent loss of status, they compensated by making claims to moral superiority and to fulfilling civic duties. In the 1980s, however, another battle for status ensured. This time it took on the form of the Yuppies versus the middle class. When America's economy shifted away from manufacturing towards services, the Yuppies—often employed in a professional service industry—started to gain higher economic status. They were viewed, however, not as positive ambassadors of America's potential prosperity, but as embracing a self-indulgent life. Their hard work was tainted: they showed a 'great deal of concern for performance, achievement, success' but it 'manifested through material possession and money, hard work, and high-quality goods and

[1110] Ibid.

services regardless of price.'[1111] The assumption was that they exhibited 'values that are selfish and too materialistic'.[1112] To be a Yuppie was 'to be a loathsome undesirable creature'.[1113] As Chapter 1 laid out, these perspectives and vocalised opinions were ploys of a delegitimizing discourse. Members of the middle class were defending their status. In trying to prevent status deprivation, they glorified their ideals of restraint and denounced the Yuppie lifestyle as 'materialistic'.

This context of the 1970s and 1980s framed the academic discourse around 'materialism'. Academics increased their investigations of what caused the moral ineptitude of 'materialism,' and what the consequences were. Moreover, they pulled apart the founding truths of America's national character: was it really a nation in which God had granted a destiny for it to achieve amazing feats of progress? Fundamentally, they questioned whether America could achieve continual progress.

Post-modernists such as the American sociologists, Daniel Bell (1919-2011), sceptically questioned the sustainability of America's capitalist system. As he described it in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976), America's cultural sphere was being guided by a 'materialistic hedonism' that had

[1111] John Burnett and Alan Bush, "Profiling the Yuppies," *Journal of Advertising Research* 26, no. 2 (May 1986): 29.
[1112] Ibid.
[1113] Ronald Alsop, "American Express Ads Focus on the Nicer Side of Yuppies," *Wall Street Journal*, May 16, 1985, 28.

replaced the 'Protestant ethic as a social reality and a life-style for the middle class'.[1114] This cultural system created unsustainable demands on the economic and political spheres: Americans increasingly expected the state's welfare system to maintain a hedonistic, materialistic culture and to support an economic environment in which continual growth might occur. Yet as the 1970s started to reveal, the belief that continual growth was possible and should be pursued was something that needed to be rethought. Within this academic discourse, 'materialism' was viewed as a detrimental value: rather than reflecting abundance and prosperity, 'materialism' could spell the demise of a nation.[1115]

The culmination of the popular perceptions and academic discourse about 'materialism' reinforced a truth system in which 'materialism' was positioned as a social ill. Over the decades, this system has become steadily reinforced. As Chapter 1 made apparent, when morals were called into question, 'materialism' became the culprit. When a group's behaviour wavered from the social norm of controlled consumption, allegations of 'mindless materialism' readily appeared. It was 'materialism' that led to the 'dubious deeds' of politicians and public figures who had 'betray[ed] the public trust'; it under laid the 'transgressions',

[1114] Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, 2nd ed (London: Heinemann, 1979 [c. 1976]), 12.
[1115] Wilfred M. McClay, "Where Have We Come Since the 1950s? Thoughts on Materialism and American Social Character," in *Rethinking Materialism : Perspectives on the Spiritual Dimension of Economic Behavior*, ed. Robert Wuthnow (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 25–72; "The Energy Crisis and the Quest to Contain Consumption" in Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, 203–224.

the 'weakness of will to moral laxity' and the 'hypocrisy to uncontrolled avarice.'[1116] These perceptions of 'materialism' and its negative effects on 'both personal and societal well-being'[1117] became the framing devices that shaped the conceptualization of 'materialism' within the consumer behaviour literature.

[1116] Walter Shaprio, "What's Wrong," *Time*, May 25, 1987, 28.
[1117] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 265–266.

Part V

‘Materialism’: Rethinking the Consumer Behaviour Perspective

Chapter Fifteen

‘Materialism’ and the Consumer Behaviour Literature

In the 1970s, academics studying consumer behaviour started to gather empirical evidence to substantiate the claims that marketing activities, especially advertising, affected young people. Prior studies by sociologists such as Riesman and Potter, and theories proposed by motivation research gurus, created a belief that advertising could be used to either socialize consumers or to subconsciously influence their purchasing behaviours. They pontificated that advertising exploited ‘materialistic drives and emulative anxieties,’[1118] but was this actually the case? Consumer research groups grew increasingly concerned. Policy makers wanted to take action. Yet little empirical data existed on which decisions could be made.[1119] Two marketing professors, Scott Ward and Daniel Wackman, set out to address this knowledge gap.

In 1971, they published the results of their study that assessed the influences of family and media on the consumer socialization of adolescents. In their article, they defined ‘materialism’ as ‘an orientation which views material goods and

[1118] David M. Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009 [c. 1954]), 188.
[1119] Scott Ward, “Consumer Socialization,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 1, no. 2 (September 1974): 1, 3–5; George P. Moschis and Gilbert A. Churchill Jr., “Consumer Socialization: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis,” *Journal of Marketing Research* 15, no. 4 (1978): 599.

money as important for personal happiness and social progress.'[1120] They used four questions to measure materialism (refer to Appendix A), probing for whether people thought 'money can buy happiness', and whether they thought possessions and monetary earnings were important.[1121]

Based on the results of their survey, completed by over 1,000 American youth, predominately from the middle class, they concluded that exposure to television advertising did not cause a 'materialism orientation', rather, a materialism orientation influenced the reason why adolescents viewed commercials.[1122] 'Adolescents' consumer learning [was] not simply an individual stimulus-response phenomenon, but [was] a social learning process.'[1123] 'Materialism' was positioned as an orientation that social pressures—not exposure to advertising—created.

A few years later, another team of academics, George Moschis and Gilbert Churchill, Jr., worked on extending Ward & Wackman's findings to contrast the influence of different socialization mechanisms—family, newspapers, mass media, peers, and school. Their sample was composed of youth, from a spectrum of social classes and from rural and urban areas in Wisconsin. They used the Ward & Wackman's scales, adding a few more questions related to

[1120] Ward, "Consumer Socialization," 422.
[1121] Sezgin Acikalin, Ekrem Gul, and Kazim Develioglu, "Conspicuous Consumption Patterns of Turkish Youth: Case of Cellular Phones," *Young Consumers* 10, no. 3 (August 28, 2009): 204.
[1122] Scott Ward and Daniel Wackman, "Family and Media Influences on Adolescent Consumer Learning," *American Behavioral Scientist* 14, no. 3 (1971): 418, 425.
[1123] Ibid., 425.

impression management motives and the impact of brands (refer to Appendix B).[1124]

Underlying these statements was an attempt to discover if advertising 'strongly influence[d] the youth and result[ed] in undesirable socialization (e.g., materialistic values and the need to consume; nonrational impulse-oriented choices)', or if, as 'defenders of promotional practices' argued, it was 'parents and peers' who were 'the main sources of learning of such cognitions and behaviours'.[1125] Their findings indicated the latter. Materialism was positively correlated with: peer communication about consumption ($b=0.12$; $p<0.001$), 'social utility reasons for watching television show' ($b=0.08$; $p<0.042$), and 'social utility reasons for watching television advertising' ($b=0.16$; $p<0.001$).[1126] They interpreted their findings as indicating that it was *not* exposure to ads that caused the materialistic drive to consume; rather, television exposure led to the 'learning of the "expressive" aspects of consumption'. It was 'social processes (e.g. communications with peers)' that seemed to 'condition the adolescent's perception and interest in goods and services, which in turn cause[d] him to pay more attention to television programs and commercials to learn about the uses of products.'[1127]

[1124] William O. Bearden, *Handbook of Marketing Scales : Multi-Item Measures for Marketing and Consumer Behavior Research* (Newbury Park ; London: Sage, 1993), 115.
[1125] Moschis and Churchill, "Consumer Socialization: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis," 603.
[1126] Ibid., 604.
[1127] Ibid., 605.

The findings of these studies ran contrary to the popular perceptions and the ideas being advocated by other prominent scholars, such as Galbraith, Potter, and Packard. As George Moschis described in his interview, the prevailing assumption at the time was one that positioned materialism in a negative light: 'it was the consequence of living in a society that bombards consumers and makes them like and want products they do not have.'[1128] Their studies pointed out that materialism and advertising were somehow related. And although consumer behaviour scholars posited that it was materialism that affected how advertising was perceived, instead of advertising influencing materialism, in all actuality, as Moschis claimed, scholars did not know that directionality of influence.[1129]

Although the results may have misaligned with prevailing sentiments about 'materialism', the type of questions included in their scales, the underlying assumptions, and the definition of materialism they used were in alignment. Their equation of materialism with desires for social progress and a (futile) search for happiness reflected the rhetoric used against the Babbitts and the nouveau riche in the 1920s, and the disillusioned middle class in the 1960s. Their hypothesis that advertising caused materialism, reflected the on-going debate that had started in the 1920s when the proliferation of goods shifted consumer trends away from the genteel ideals of culture to a more 'vulgar', self-expressive consumerism of the youth. As Chapter 14 documented, this debate

[1128] George P. Moschis, Studying Materialism, interview by Laurel Steinfield, November 1, 2013.
[1129] Ibid.

had come to the fore in the 1960s as sociologists contemplated the consumer culture of the 1950s. These concerns increased in their legitimacy and perceived validity as personal consumption shifted from being a civic virtue to a private vice. Moreover, most academics stood to gain from such delegitimizing discourse, as it could channel much-needed public funds back into education. Ward, Wackman, Moschis, and Churchill, however, were all at business schools, in marketing departments.[1130] They choose a directionality for the materialism-advertising relationship that aligned with their own interests. Others, however, would soon question and probe further into this problem: the 'truth' that advertising caused materialism was too dominant to easily be rejected.

In addition to offering empirical data for policy makers and consumer research groups, these studies significantly influenced the consumer behaviour literature. They were published in prominent consumer behaviour journals. They set the tone for how other scholars subsequently perceived 'materialism'. Ward & Wackman's definition can be traced through the majority of articles that contemplated materialism in the 1970s and 1980s. Their definition and scales are reflected in the prominent materialism scales developed by Belk and by Richins.

[1130]Ward and Wackman, "Family and Media Influences on Adolescent Consumer Learning," 415; Moschis and Churchill, "Consumer Socialization: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis," 599.

Subsequent studies took from Ward & Wackman's definition the equation of materialism with happiness. Yet they would change it slightly so that materialism became equated with *attempts to achieve happiness*. This idea of an 'attempt' was predicated on the underlying assumption that finding happiness through material goods was misplaced. It was the association of materialism with a disillusioned consumerism that decades of delegitimizing discourse asserted—goods could not provide happiness, rather, happiness was achieved through more worthy pursuits such as relationships, religion, or experiences.

The equation of 'materialism' with a superficial pursuit became entrenched in academic thought through the 1981 publication, *The Meaning of Things*. This book captured the results of Eugene Rochberg-Halton's PhD thesis study in which he conducted in-depth interviews with eighty-two families in Chicago. Published by his supervisor, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the book assessed the emotional attachment people made to items in their home, questioning why some families had more positive meaning attached to goods than other families.[1131] In distinguishing between the positive meanings versus negative or indifferent meanings, Rochberg-Halton and Csikszentmihalyi segmented 'materialism' into two different kinds: instrumental materialism and terminal materialism. Instrumental materialism represented consumption for positive and meaningful reasons that contributed to furthering a humanistic goal. Terminal materialism represented consumption for negative and superficial

[1131] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 55–56.

reasons, in that consumption became an end in itself (i.e. I consume just to consume).[1132] Their division of 'good' versus 'bad' consumption carried forward; however, it was the bad consumption of terminal materialism that became the prevailing view.[1133]

Although *The Meaning of Things* conveyed to academics the multiplicity of reasons people valued goods, their results were narrowly interpreted and used to advance concerns surrounding the social consequences of advertising and individual's materialistic consumption. Richard Pollay, for example, was a prominent marketing scholar whose work inadvertently perpetuated the equation of advertising with terminal materialism. In his influential article, "The Distorted Mirror" (1986), Pollay collated the literature written by social scientists (including Potter, Galbraith, Heilbroner, Krutch, and Bell) regarding their views on advertising. As Pollay summarised, these scholars believed advertising reinforced 'materialism, cynicism, irrationality, selfishness, anxiety, social competitiveness, sexual preoccupation, powerlessness, and/or a loss of self-respect.'[1134] Pollay attempted to challenge and critique these negative associations, calling for academics to research whether these beliefs had merit. As he noted: 'Doing nothing…accepts ideology in lieu of academic inquiry and

[1132] Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things*, 8, 230–246.
[1133] L. J. Shrum et al., "Materialism: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," *Journal of Marketing Management* 30, no. 17–18 (December 1, 2014): 1859, 1867-1868.
[1134] Richard W. Pollay, "The Distorted Mirror: Reflections on the Unintended Consequences of Advertising," *Journal of Marketing* 50, no. 2 (April 1986): 18.

information.'[1135] However, Pollay's approach in this article was one that resulted in bringing materialism's history as a mode of delegitimizing discourse into mainstream consumer behaviour literature. He repeated the age-old and the current day (1970s) arguments that positioned 'materialism' in a negative light while elevating those sources of cultural and symbolic capital the intellectual and religious elite valued. In reading through the article, a dividing line between 'materialism' and 'non-materialism' becomes perceivable, as noted in Table 2.[1136]

Table 2: "The Distorted Mirror": Materialism vs. Non-Materialism

Materialism	Non-Materialism
Deadly sins: greed (desire to enjoy worldly things), lust, sloth (desire for leisure), pride, envy, gluttony, anger	Cardinal virtues: wisdom, justice, temperance, courage, faith, hope, love
Pride (desire for social status)	Modesty
Emulation, competition	Reverence, humility, grace
Conspicuous, extravagant consumption	Voluntary simplicity lifestyle
Self-Indulgent behaviour	Spiritual creed/restraint
Feelings displaced to objects	Feelings shared between people
Goods	Relationships, experiences, religion
Low self-esteem	Self-actualization
Dissatisfaction with life	Satisfaction with life
Consumption ethic	Work ethic
Pollution, degradation of nature	Reverence for nature

[1135] Ibid., 31.
[1136] ibid.

Pollay's work illustrates the prevailing assumptions that shaped the minds of those scholars studying materialism. As Belk reflected in the interview I conducted with him, his initial assumptions were 'that materialism is bad, that it isn't good for people.... Although not explicated…[it was] probably in the back of my mind'.[1137] In an article he wrote with Pollay in 1985, Belk expressed his concern that materialism, especially terminal materialism was 'destructive': it 'result[ed] in such specific materialistic traits as envy, possessiveness, nongenerosity, miserliness, greed, jealousy (of one's possessions), and perhaps the tendency to treat people as possessions.'[1138] It had the potential to 'negatively affect others.'[1139]

Richins likewise affirmed in her interview that her scales were based upon 'the cultural representation' of materialism, which held the view that if materialism went 'past some optimal value' it was 'very wasteful…harmful to society from an ecological point of view' and from a personal point of view as it related to 'social and emotional issues.' [1140] And although she did admit that 'the causal direction is pretty unknown,'[1141] she interpreted her findings in a way that

[1137] Russell W. Belk, Studying Materialism and Creation of Belk's Materialism Scales, interview by Laurel Steinfield, May 28, 2013.
[1138] Russell W. Belk and Richard W. Pollay, "Materialism and Magazine Advertising During the Twentieth Century," in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research*, ed. Elizabeth C. Hirschman and Moris B. Holbrook, vol. 12 (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1985), 394–98, http://acrwebsite.org/volumes/6422/volumes/v12/NA-12.
[1139] Ibid.
[1140] Marsha L. Richins, Studying Materialism and the Creation of Richins' Materialism Scales, interview by Laurel Steinfield, October 5, 2013.
[1141] Ibid.

followed rather than challenged this normative view. Indeed, central to their studies on materialism, both Belk and Richins sought empirical evidence to substantiate the claim that materialism led to dissatisfaction with life.[1142]

It is not surprising to find that both of these academics found what they were looking for; however, whether this was the result of the assumptions and biases that informed and shaped their questions, has rarely been asked. Their scales have subsequently been adopted, and used in the general directionality for which they were intended: to unearth the negative consequences materialism bears on consumers and society. What this thesis has argued is that these studies are merely perpetuating the delegitimizing discourse that infiltrated into scholars' minds and the materialism scales. Perhaps by taking a further step back and tracing the literature and arguments that Belk and Richins used, we might better understand what criticisms of consumerism underlie our conceptualization and measurement of 'materialism'.

[1142] Russell W. Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism: Reliability, Validity, and Relationships to Measures of Happiness," in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research*, ed. Thomas C. Kinnear, vol. 11 (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1984), 291–97; Russell W. Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," *Journal of Consumer Research* 12, no. 3 (1985): 265–80; Marsha L. Richins, "Media, Materialism, and Human Happiness," in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research*, ed. Melanie Wallendorf and Paul Anderson, vol. 14 (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1987), 352–56, http://www.acrwebsite.org/search/view-conference-proceedings.aspx?Id=6720; Marsha L. Richins and Scott Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement: Scale Development and Validation," *Journal of Consumer Research* 19, no. 3 (1992): 303–16.

Belk's Trait Theory of Materialism

In 1984 and 1985, Belk published two articles—one in the *Advances of Consumer Research* (1984) and one in the *Journal of Consumer Research* (1985). These articles proposed to measure materialism with a multi-faceted constructed scale. (Refer to Appendix C and D for the scale constructs). The scale tested for the personality traits of:

(1) Possessiveness: 'the inclination and tendency to retain control or ownership over one's possessions';
(2) Nongenerosity: 'an unwillingness to give or share possessions with others';
(3) Envy: 'displeasure and ill will at the superiority of another person in happiness, success, reputation, or the possession of anything desirable.'[1143]

This list would be added to in the 1990s after Belk and Güiliz Ger worked together to make Belk's scales relevant to cultures outside of America. Their research resulted in the additional trait:

(4) 'Preservation: the conservation of events, experiences, and memories in material form.'[1144]

[1143] Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism," 291, 292; Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 267, 268.
[1144] Güliz Ger and Russell W. Belk, "Cross-Cultural Differences in Materialism," *Journal of Economic Psychology* 17, no. 1 (February 1996): 64.

In his 1984 and 1985 articles, Belk defined materialism as:

> The consumer orientation [that] reflects the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions. At the highest levels of materialism, such possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in life either directly (as ends) or indirectly (as means to ends).[1145]

The latter part of Belk's definition, possessions *as ends* or *means to ends*, reflected Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's 'terminal' versus 'instrumental' materialism. Belk's scales, however, primarily reflected terminal materialism: they failed to connect the behaviours of possession, acquisition or envy to a consumer's instrumental motives or personal life. For example, his question, 'I never discard old picture or snapshots' did not ask *why* the consumer held on to these items, but left the perspective open to be interpreted as meaning the person horded things for the sake of *having things*, not memories.[1146]

The logic that shaped Belk's scales was furthermore quite subjective: they were built upon self-contemplation and exercises he conducted with his business school undergraduate classes. As he stated in his interview, his perspective was shaped by the 'sermons on Sunday morning on the radio' that he listened to (one of the few stations he could get where he lived in the mountains), and his internal musing that ensued on 'materialism versus other spiritual values in

[1145] Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism," 291.
[1146] Ibid., 292.

life.'[1147] He generated statements to measure materialism by asking his business students to identify the type of judgements they would make: 'what kind of personal traits, what kind of attitudes, what kind of beliefs' might they expect from a materialistic person? [1148]

In the 1980s, Belk, a prolific writer and contemplative academic, was shifting away from an experimental psychological approach towards a sociocultural perspective. He was still in his 'quantitative phase' trying to measure consumer behaviour, but also exploring 'a more qualitative understanding of the relationship between people and things'.[1149] It is within this paradigm shift that Belk assessed consumerism from two different angles: one direction looked at how consumption could be good if it supported and extended our sense of self;[1150] the other direction assessed how consumption could be bad if it controlled our sense of self.[1151] Belk's materialism scales were based on this latter stream of publications.

[1147] Belk, Studying Materialism and the Creation of Belk's Materialism Scales.
[1148] Ibid.
[1149] Ibid.
[1150] Russell W. Belk, Kenneth D. Bahn, and Robert N. Mayer, "Developmental Recognition of Consumption Symbolism," *Journal of Consumer Research* 9, no. 1 (June 1, 1982): 4–17; Russell W. Belk, "Possessions and the Extended Self," *Journal of Consumer Research* 15, no. 2 (September 1988): 139–68.
[1151] Belk Russell W. Belk, "Worldly Possessions: Issues and Criticisms," in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research*, ed. Richard P. Bagozzi and Alice M. Tybout, vol. 10 (Ann Abor, MI: Association for Consumer Research, 1983), 514–19, http://www.acrwebsite.org/search/view-conference-proceedings.aspx?Id=6172; Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism"; Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World."

In 1982, Belk published two conceptual papers assessing three universal processes he thought shaped consumer behaviour: acquiring, possessing, and collecting.[1152] These articles, which took a more neutral and holistic approach to consumption, unfortunately did not feature in materialism studies beyond Belk's reference to them in his 1984 and 1985 seminal publications. Rather, they informed Belk's other stream of publications, such as "Possessions and The Extended Self "(1988).[1153] In these articles, Belk argued that acquiring, possessing, and collecting are inherent human motivators that transcend the acts of buying and consuming goods. He discussed the myriad of reasons as to why people would want to acquire, possess or collect things, including, for example, to survive, for relaxation or entertainment, to form relationships, to influence others, to express self-concept, or to capture memories.[1154]

Reading these articles helps to frame the underlying presumptions Belk applied, and to clarify some of his less intuitive statements. For example, in one of his 1982 articles on acquiring and possessing, Belk notes: 'Items, such as, heirlooms, keepsakes, and photographs may help the owner to satisfy social

[1152] Russell W. Belk, "Acquisitiveness and Possessiveness: Criticisms and Issues," in *Proceedings of the 1982 Convention of the American Psychological Association*, ed. Michael B. Mazis (Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1982), 70–73; Russell W. Belk, "Acquiring Possessing, and Collecting: Fundamental Processes in Consumer Behavior," in *Marketing Theory: Philosophy of Science Perspectives*, ed. Ronald F. Bush and Shelby G. Hunt (Chicago: American Marketing Association, 1982), 185–90.
[1153] Russell W. Belk, "Possessions and the Extended Self," *Journal of Consumer Research* 15, no. 2 (September 1988): 139–68.
[1154] Belk, "Acquiring Possessing, and Collecting: Fundamental Processes in Consumer Behavior," 186.

needs by affirming linkages to others and establishing a sense of past.'[1155] After reading that excerpt, the statement in his materialism scale, 'I never discard old pictures or snapshots',[1156] grows beyond just the act of hording pictures to explaining why people might keep pictures. Belk's underlying assumption was that:

> [A]ll materialism is instrumental in the sense that we think it's going to make us happy. Because the goal is not that we're just going to have the car, but that the car is going to provide us with popularity. It's going to make us more fulfilled and happier. It's tied to this whole set of consequences of what we think [will happen].[1157]

Unfortunately, many of these deeper motives as to why people would acquire or possess goods did not carry through to his final publications on materialism in 1984 and 1985, nor through to the materialism scale statements. As Belk noted in his interview, 'I think most people would say what I was looking at was closer to terminal materialism than instrumental materialism.'[1158] What transmitted through his articles was the equation of materialism with an extreme acquisitiveness, which he denoted as greed and extreme possessiveness, and reflective of Freud's anal character': 'a person who is stingy, possessive, retentive, and obstinate'.[1159]

[1155] Ibid.
[1156] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 270.
[1157] Belk, Studying Materialism and the Creation of Belk's Materialism Scales.
[1158] Ibid.
[1159] Belk, "Acquiring Possessing, and Collecting: Fundamental Processes in Consumer Behavior," 187.

In his exploratory 1982 articles, Belk hinted at the cultural constructs that shape judgements of consumption, arguing that what is considered to be *too much*, or rather 'superfluous' or 'beyond one's needs or deserts' is predicated on culture, time or societal conceptions of 'deserved'.[1160] However, he still fell back into an attempt to define and measure, drawing a divide between necessities and non-necessities. Similar to the advocates of a simple life, what was considered necessary and thus non-materialistic consumption included the acquisition and storage of items needed for survival such as food, water, and items for safety, such as clothing.[1161]

The prejudices created by Judeo-Christian principles—specifically its deploring of the material world—and the negative perspectives of consumption—that is, consumption that controls our sense of self—came to the fore in Belk's 1983 article, "World Possessions: Issues and Criticisms". This article, published in the more readily available *Advances in Consumer Research*, had a greater influence on future materialism studies than his 1982 articles, as can be seen through references (including work by Richins and other consumer behaviour scholars studying materialism),[1162] and citation levels. Google scholar, for example, records this article as being cited 203 times, versus his 1982 article, "Acquiring,

[1160] Ibid., 186. (Formatting original.)
[1161] Ibid.
[1162] Richins, "Media, Materialism, and Human Happiness"; Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement"; Marsha L. Richins and Floyd W. Rudmin, "Materialism and Economic Psychology," *Journal of Economic Psychology* 15, no. 2 (June 1994): 217–31; David Glen Mick, "Are Studies of Dark Side Variables Confounded by Socially Desirable Responding? The Case of Materialism," *Journal of Consumer Research* 23, no. 2 (1996): 106–19.

Possessing, and Collecting", which was cited 84 times, and his conference paper, "Acquisitiveness and Possessiveness: Criticisms and Issues", which was cited 9 times.[1163]

In this article Belk reviewed the religious and secular philosophies surrounding consumption, leaning towards those philosophies that equated consumption with negative behaviours or outcomes, such as Marx's commodity fetishism, Veblen's conspicuous consumption, Buddhism's rejection of the material world, and Christianity's seven deadly sins. Referencing this article in his seminal work on materialism, Belk drew a direct link between materialism and five of the deadly sins: avarice or greed, pride, vanity, gluttony, and envy. These 'sins' were subsequently reflected in his conceptualization of materialism and in the scales: 'Materialism' was a negative and destructive trait that resulted in 'envy, possessiveness, nongenerosity, miserliness, greed, jealousy (of one's possessions), and perhaps the tendency to treat people as possessions.'[1164] Belk's materialism was saturated with strong sectarian undertones.

To validate his scales, Belk drew from a sample population of American students and adults workers. Thus, rather than ensuring his scales were not culturally myopic, his lack of a cross-culturally diverse sample perpetuated American biases in scale statements. The pilot tests, composed of 30-35

[1163] Google Scholar, "Russell Belk," 2016, http://scholar.google.co.uk/citations?hl=en&user=K-624pgAAAAJ&view_op=list_works.
[1164] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 394.

statements for each of his constructs (possessiveness, non-generosity, and envy), were trialled among 237 business school students. He eliminated statements through factor analysis and pending correlations, resulting in seven to nine statements for each construct.[1165] He tested this version of the materialism scales with business students (n=213), and included additional groups—female secretaries (n=39), male fraternity members (n=27), students from religious institutions (n=32), and machine shop workers (n=27)—to test hypotheses regarding the directionality of materialism.[1166]

Belk predicted that the religious institutions group would have the lowest scores of materialism, and that the machine shop workers would rank highest on all three of the materialism traits. This latter postulation was based on belief that the machine shop workers, due to their lower social status, would engage in compensatory consumption. Belk surmised: 'people whose social or occupational status is limited by discrimination or a lack of skills, redefine success as the acquisition of possessions.'[1167] As predicted, the religious institutional group had the lowest scores and the machine shop workers had the highest scores across all three materialism traits. One could argue, however, that these findings only point to the biases of the scale. Based on Belk's direct connection of his materialism scale to religious dogmas about sinful consumption, it should not be surprising then that those who believe and

[1165] Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism."
[1166] Ibid., 293.
[1167] Ibid., 294.

practice such creeds are less materialistic. In regards to the machine shop workers, the findings might have less to do with compensatory consumption and more to do with the wording of Belk's scales: the statements are more punitive for those who have less and have a lower ability to earn more. 'I worry about people taking my possessions' would be a statement that blue-collar workers could agree to, in part, because they likely have fewer resources in the first place and have a lower ability to replace anything that is taken.

Belk's other comparative group, the female secretaries versus the male fraternity group, did not achieve the materialism levels predicted. Contrary to 'the myth that women are the envious sex', the secretaries scored lower on the envy scale than the male fraternity group, in fact, they were the least envious of all groups.[1168] Belk did not provide an explanation for why females reported lower envy levels, but rather positioned the results as it related to men: incentives for career success had socialized men to be more envious.[1169] Men scored lower on the reversed score statement: 'When friends do better than me in competition it usually makes me happy for them'.[1170]

Belk also found generational differences. The middle age group was more materialistic than the younger or older age group. Belk struggled to explain why this was the case. A lack of within-generational correlations meant that he

[1168] Ibid.
[1169] Ibid., 295.
[1170] Ibid., 292.

could not attribute materialism to values that might have been formed by events, such as the Great Depression. He did not have a conclusive reason, but presumed the results were because the younger age group were more inclined towards activities and the older age group towards memories.[1171]

The scales were not only hampered by unpredictable and unexplainable results, but also by low validity and reliability measurements: the scales produced low and widely-varying Cronbach coefficients (subscales = 0.09-0.81; summed scales = 0.48-0.73) indicating that the statements in each subscale were not reliably measuring the same thing.[1172] In reading his scales, one is left with the impression that they are composed of an arbitrary set of statements that reflect a few individuals' beliefs about consumption, but certainly not everyone's beliefs or practices, which likely accounts for the variability in Cronbach coefficients.

Belk's scales, made and tested in America, consequently did not allow for other cultural views of goods to be considered. Rather, the scales reflected America's dominant Judeo-Christian philosophy, and captured decades of rhetoric and the tensions between one's material world, the spiritual world, and the American desire for material versus intellectual and spiritual progress. To realise just how steeped Belk's studies of materialism were in American socio-cultural trends and societal prejudices one only has to ask: 'Would these statements be

[1171] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 269–270.
[1172] Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism," 293–294.

appropriate to ask in other countries, or could these conclusions be appropriate in other areas of the world?' Statements such as the reversed scored, 'It makes sense to buy a lawnmower with a neighbor and share it',[1173] point not only to specific American lifestyles and trends—suburbia, lawns, and lawnmowers—but also an underlying cultural expression in which individualism had to be tempered by communal needs.

Indeed, Belk's scales struggled to travel to other cultures. In 1988, a study by Wallendorf and Arnould demonstrated how culturally constrained Belk's scales were. They applied Belk's possessiveness scale in Niger and found that possessiveness was not a universal trait. The presence of possessiveness was influenced by the external conditions (ex: drought) and religious beliefs (ex: Islamic-animist).[1174]

The biases introduced by the American centrism of the scales are perhaps made most apparent in the key question driving his studies: 'whether materialism is healthy for the individual'.[1175] As Chapter 14 explored in detail, this perspective reflected the concerns of America at the time and its legacy with judgements regarding progress and materialistic behaviour. To answer this query, Belk measured the correlation between his materialism scales and two scales that

[1173] Ibid., 292.
[1174] Melanie Wallendorf and Eric J. Arnould, "'My Favorite Things': A Cross-Cultural Inquiry into Object Attachment, Possessiveness, and Social Linkage," *Journal of Consumer Research* 14, no. 4 (March 1988): 531–47.
[1175] Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism," 295.

measured the feeling of well-being—defined as positive mental outlooks and happiness.[1176] Belk concluded that there was a strong correlation between materialism and low satisfaction with life ($r=.-30$; $p<.001$), and materialism and unhappiness ($r=-.30$; $p<.001$).[1177] This *proved* the negative effects materialism could have on society. His findings legitimized the previous criticisms and issues of worldly possessions expressed by religious and intellectual elite, effectively tainting consumer behaviour scholarship within the same negative perspective.

Yet were these findings valid, or were they a result of the scale, context and methodology? The prior chapters have demonstrated the American biases that informed Belk's conceptualization of materialism. Delving further into Belk's scale demonstrates that the wording may also be a contributing factor. For example, one statement reads: 'I don't seem to get what is coming to me'. [1178] A person who is not satisfied with her life would likely rate high on this question, which in turn would lead to a higher materialism score.

[1176] Gerald Gurin, Joseph Veroff, and Sheila Feld, *Americans View Their Mental Health: A Nationwide Interview Survey* (New York: Basic Books, 1960); Norman M Bradburn, David Caplovitz, and National Institute of Mental Health (U.S.), *Reports on Happiness; a Pilot Study of Behavior Related to Mental Health, by Norman M. Bradburn and David Caplovitz.* (Chicago: Aldine, 1965).
[1177] Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism," 295; Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 271.
[1178] Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism," 292.

Regardless of these validity and normative problems, Belk's materialism scales were used by numerous academics (refer to Appendix I for details).[1179] Critically, his articulation of materialism, its measurement through multi-faceted, Likert scales (where respondents rated their agreement with a statement on a scale of 1 (disagreement) to 5 (agreement)) and his equation of materialism with low levels of well being, carried forward and directed the consumer behaviour discourse.

In 1986, Belk, while giving a conference talk on 'Third World Consumer Culture', had his cultural myopic concept of materialism challenged by Ger.[1180] In response, he encouraged Ger to work with him to adjust the phrases to increase the scale's reliability and cross cultural applicability. The research, undertaken in twelve countries, including Western and non-Western countries, during an age of limited technology and communications, took nearly a decade to complete.[1181] The tested questionnaire included a revised, extended scale in which some of the items on the subscales were switched, re-worded, and

[1179] Thomas C. O'Guinn and Ronald J. Faber, "Compulsive Buying : A Phenomenological Exploration," *Journal of Consumer Research* 16, no. 2 (1989): 147–57; Scott Dawson and Gary J. Bamossy, "If 'We Are What We Have,' What Are We When We Don't Have? An Exploratory Study of Materialism among Expatriate Americans," *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality* 6, no. 6 (1991): 363–84; Marvin E. Goldberg et al., "Understanding Materialism Among Youth," *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 13, no. 3 (2003): 278–88.
[1180] Güliz Ger, "Volume Introduction: The Journey from Materialism to Legitimations of Materialism, Consumer Desires, and Consumer Cultures," in *Materialism and Consumer Culture : Questioning What Matters in Life*, ed. Güliz Ger, vol. 3, Russell Belk: Legends in Consumer Behavior (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2014), xxi–xxiii.
[1181] Güliz Ger, Studying Materialism and the Adaption of Belk's Materialism Scales, interview by Laurel Steinfield, June 1, 2013.

additional items added, including the fourth trait of preservation (refer to Appendix D for the full scale).[1182]

In America, France (INSEAD), Romania and Turkey, they used focus groups and journal entries to understand the cultural meanings associated with materialistic consumption. Through this qualitative approach they revealed the judgemental nature of the accusation.[1183] Ger described the research process as one in which they asked people to talk about their own consumption. And although they never brought up the term materialism, 'the moment [respondents] started to talk about other people, they used the word materialism.'[1184,] Ger recounted how respondents, when 'talking about their own consumption [were] excited':

> [T]hey talk about all the positive consequences of consuming, but then…when they talk about somebody else, then the other person is materialistic. And then when they reflect on what they are saying, that's when they begin the justifications.[1185,]

Their findings from these studies also demonstrated the subjectivities behind classifications of materialistic consumption.[1186,] As part of their research they asked respondents to list five products that were important to them that they owned, five products that they wanted to buy, and five products that they felt

[1182] Ger and Belk, "Cross-Cultural Differences in Materialism."
[1183] Ibid., 61.
[1184] Ger, Studying Materialism and the Adaption of Belk's Materialism Scales.
[1185] Ibid.
[1186] Güliz Ger and Russell W. Belk, "Accounting for Materialism in Four Cultures," *Journal of Material Culture* 4, no. 2 (July 1, 1999): 183–204.

bad about not owning.[1187] The answers given showed extreme variances in what goods qualified as materialistic consumption: jewellery featured in Romania, money in Ukraine, real estate in Turkey, and stock/bonds in America.[1188] Positive versus negative views about materialism also changed: in the former Communist society of Romania, materialism was viewed as 'an empowering and self-enhancing expression of control and freedom,' rather than a weakness.[1189]

Ger and Belk also found that greater levels of materialism occurred in countries with radical shifts in social conditions and culture; lower levels of materialism occurred in countries with socio-cultural stability and a high prevalence of tradition. India and Sweden, for example, had strong institutional and sociocultural stability and reported some of the lowest levels of materialism. Countries such as Romania and Ukraine, which experienced the upheaval of economic, social, and political powers as it shifted from a communistic, controlled society to privatization and free-market society, reported high levels of materialism.[1190] As they concluded: 'Social change accompanying mobility and confusion in norms coupled with the spread of Western influence and globalization seem to impel materialism'.[1191]

[1187] Ger and Belk, "Cross-Cultural Differences in Materialism," 61–62.
[1188] Ibid., 70–71.
[1189] Ibid., 63.
[1190] Ibid., 73–74.
[1191] Ibid., 74.

Their work started to reveal the influence of social dislocations on perceptions of materialism; however, they stopped short of bringing to the fore the way 'materialism', as a mode of delegitimizing discourse, is enacted to control expanding consumption. Ger and Belk, in trying to write for a constituency of consumer behaviour psychologists, left materialism as a motive that resided within a consumer, rather than situating it, as I have argued, as a subjective label *applied to* people who threaten the stability of social distinctions, and *applied by* those whose position is in jeopardy or being advanced. As Ger described, she was trying to fight 'fire with fire'.[1192] Her motive was actually to show 'how that scale should not really be used': their focus groups had demonstrated materialism's cultural specificity; the Cronbach coefficients pointed to cultural variances in conceptualizations of materialism; and the judgemental nature of materialism meant that social desirability was bound to affect results.[1193]

Although the paper took a quantitative approach to prove the scale did not work, it was rejected by the leading *Journal of Consumer Research*. Such an approach was considered strange and invalid to the consumer behaviour scholarly landscape dominated by experimental psychologists. Few consumer behaviour scholars took heed of the article Ger and Belk published in the lesser known *Journal of Economic Psychology*. In addition, the timing of the

[1192] Ger, Studying Materialism and the Adaption of Belk's Materialism Scales.
[1193] Ibid.

publications in 1996, post Richins and Dawson's seminal work (1992), meant that much of its criticisms and cultural findings were ignored.[1194]

Consequently, although Belk recognised the errors and limitations to his approach, materialism studies continued on unabated, directed by a more reliable and validated scaled by Richins and Dawson.

Richins' Value Theory of Materialism

In 1992, Marsha Richins and Scott Dawson published their materialism scale in the *Journal of Consumer Research*. Although they applauded Belk's pioneering work, they recognized, and attempted to address, the need for a scale that did not reflect 'normative prescriptions of its authors,' which would hopefully 'transcend cultures, subcultures and economic systems.'[1195] They kept Belk's idea of using a multi-facet, Likert-scale format, but created new statements and gave the subscales more amoral titles. Instead of the dimensions of possessiveness, non-generosity, and envy, they measured materialism by the dimensions of centrality, happiness, and success, that is:

(1) The centrality possessions and acquisitions hold in one's life;

(2) The reliance on possessions and acquisitions to pursue happiness;

[1194] Ibid.
[1195] Marsha L. Richins and Scott Dawson, "Measuring Material Values: A Preliminary Report of Scale Development," vol. 17, NA - Advances in Consumer Research (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1990), 170.

(3) The use of possessions and acquisitions to signal desired images of success and to evaluate others.[1196]

The scales used 18-items to capture these three themes (refer to Appendix E for the scales). The statements of these three subscales had achieved high reliabilities in their scale testing experiments: possessions as a symbol of success achieved Cronbach coefficient alphas ranging from .80 to .85, possessions as a source of pleasure achieved a Cronbach coefficient alpha of .76, and possessions as a source of happiness achieved Cronbach coefficient alphas ranging from .75 to .80. A fourth theme, asceticism, viewed as the opposite of materialism, achieved low reliability (Cronbach coefficient alphas = .59 to .67).[1197] It was merged with possessions as a source of pleasure, with the combined subscale reframed as measuring the centrality of goods in a person's life. In 2004, Richins published another paper in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, providing a short-form of the original scale: researchers could choose to use a scale with either 15, 9, or 6 statements.[1198]

In their 1992 article, Richins and Dawson also adjusted Belk's definition of materialism, rephrasing it as:

[1196] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 304.
[1197] Richins and Dawson, "Measuring Material Values," 173.
[1198] Marsha L. Richins, "The Material Values Scale: Measurement Properties and Development of a Short Form," *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, no. 1 (2004): 209–19.

> [A] mindset or constellation of attitudes regarding the relative importance ascribed to the ownership and acquisition of material goods in achieving major life goals or desired states.[1199]

They added, however, a clarifying point that pushed this seemingly neutral definition towards its American pejorative association and narrow perspective: a materialistic person was classified as someone who 'value[d] possessions and acquisitions more highly than most other matters and activities in life.'[1200]

Richins and Dawson, both marketing professors, where interested in consumption, and in particular measuring the impact of materialism. As Richins noted in her interview, she saw 'materialism' as a 'very wasteful value'.[1201] Richins, accordingly, viewed her approach as quite different from Belk's approach: she critiqued Belk's work for his mistaken classification of materialism as a trait rather than a value. When developing her scales, Richins delved into value theories. As Richins and Dawson described in their article, Belk, by situating materialism as a trait, was committing materialism to a form in which it was to be developed at an early age, to be relatively unchanging over one's life span, and to be resistant to environmental effects. As a value, on the other hand, materialism could be situated as 'an enduring belief' that a specific behaviour or 'end-state…is personally or socially preferable'.[1202] It could

[1199] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 307.
[1200] Ibid.
[1201] Richins, Studying Materialism and the Creation of Richins' Materialism Scales.
[1202] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 307.

transcend a specific context, act to guide actions, attitudes, judgements, and decisions, yet it could also 'change with social conditions and with age'—'two important features which appear endemic to materialism.'[1203] Belk's scale needed to be changed. Richins wanted to develop a materialism scale that used statements that reflected people's personal values (thoughts about their own life) and beliefs in general values (societal maxims).

Although Richins believed that the value versus trait dimensions posed a fundamental difference in their approach, in principle, if one compares Belk's assumptions and Richins' assumption, one finds very little distinction between the two. As denoted, Belk believed, and his studies found, that levels of materialism fluctuated within individuals pending their age, their sociocultural backgrounds, and the sociocultural contexts. Although Belk used the term 'trait', he never defined what a 'trait' entailed.

A primary difference can be detected in the explicit Western biases apparent in Belk's statements. For example, 'It makes sense to buy a lawnmower with a neighbor and share it', or 'When Hollywood stars or prominent politicians have things stolen from them I really feel sorry for them' clearly reflect American lifestyles and cultural consumer practices.[1204] Richins' statements asked about more common beliefs or perceptions, for example: 'The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life', or 'I enjoy spending more on things that aren't

[1203] Richins and Dawson, "Measuring Material Values," 170.
[1204] Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism," 292.

practical'.[1205] Although Richins' wording might seem more culturally neutral, her statements still held a negative view of materialism and societal assumptions about appropriate and inappropriate behaviours and beliefs. Indeed, what had initially drawn her to study materialism were her observations of people inappropriately craving more goods. As she described:

> I grew up in circumstances where we were pretty impoverished, and we were happy. We got by. And yet, you see people who always seem to be wanting to get more stuff. I was just sort of fascinated. Like what is this? Why do they want this stuff? [1206]

Thus, although less obvious than Belk's scales, Richins' scales were still predicated on American, Judeo-Christian beliefs and lifestyles that would struggle to be applied across cultures. The statement, 'I enjoy spending money on things that aren't practical', to be appropriate in a cultural context, means that there must be a demarcation of 'non-practical' things for people to buy, and for people to have money to buy these things. In impoverished communities in Africa this concept does not make sense. Richins, in her interview, described the way she studied materialism as being relevant for 'middle class America and higher… well working class America…. [P]eople at subsistence levels [were] outside of the range of my research.' Middle class Americans lived a life in which 'having more does not really translate much into higher well-being', which likely did not hold for 'poverty stricken people'.[1207] Richins' perspective embodied 'materialism's' heritage: it remained a label

[1205] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 310.
[1206] Richins, Studying Materialism and the Creation of Richins' Materialism Scales.
[1207] Richins, Studying Materialism and the Creation of Richins' Materialism Scales.

directed at those whose sufficient economic capital threatened to disrupt the social hierarchy.

Richins' first forays into materialism studies started in the late 1980s when she attempted to determine whether exposure to media caused dissatisfaction with life and a materialistic orientation. In a 1987 publication, "Media, Materialism, and Human Happiness", Richins developed a 7-item materialism scale (refer to Appendix G for this scale). She tested her scale with 252 respondents pulled from an American city using a drop-off and pick-up survey procedure that met gender quotes (50% female; 50% male) and age quotes (50% >40; 50% <40). This initial scale separated out materialism into measuring a general level of materialism through abstract statements that reflected social truisms (for example: 'People place too much emphasis on material things'), and measuring a personal level of materialism through statements that reflected how a person felt about his own life (for example: 'I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things').[1208] Richins' findings established that advertisements alone did not influence materialism: in order for advertising to have any effect on people's levels of materialism, it needed to be realistic, and even then, it only affected general levels of materialism (perceptions of societal maxims) and not personal levels of materialism. Although her findings challenged the prevailing perception voiced by sociologists such as Potter and Riesman that advertising caused materialism, her study also substantiated the assumption that

[1208] Richins, "Media, Materialism, and Human Happiness."

materialism led to low life satisfaction. People high in personal levels of materialism reported dissatisfaction with their standard of living, or as she framed it, they had low 'material satisfaction'.[1209]

Richins perspectives on materialism were further informed by a study she conducted with Susan Fournier in 1991. Fournier and Richins (1991) used an open-ended survey to elicit from American lay people characteristics of materialistic people they knew, including: personality traits and attitudes, values and life goals, attitudes towards possessions, behaviour pertaining to leisure activities and purchases, and criteria for success and happiness.[1210] Their convenience sample of 29 respondents was composed of 11 residents of a blue-collar suburb, 11 airline travelers, and 7 undergraduate students. The responses led to a list that included:

> [E]xcessive status consciousness, condescension, envy, disregard of others and of social issues, self-centeredness, a lack of principles, possessiveness, insecurity, and interpersonal detachment... 82% of respondents mentioned negative or socially-undesirable traits.[1211]

Respondents identified materialistic people as focusing on 'having' and 'getting… socially-sanctioned objects' (i.e. status symbols and symbols of

[1209] Ibid.
[1210] Susan Fournier and Marsha L. Richins, "Some Theoretical and Popular Notions Concerning Materialism," *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality* 6, no. 6 (1991): 407.
[1211] Ibid., 409.

wealth and prestige).[1212] They described materialistic people as continual information gatherers engrossed in the next purchase.[1213]

Fournier and Richins did not ask respondents to discuss their own materialistic behaviours, nor if the respondents thought themselves to be materialistic. They merely cautioned against the limitations of this approach and the biases that might be produced by having respondents focus on describing the behaviour and goals of others. Like Belk, Richins took the societal prejudices as 'truths' and proceeded to build her scales on these subjective judgements.

Dawson's perspective of 'materialism' was likewise tainted by an assumed belief that materialism led to low life satisfaction. Dawson's work on materialism started by interrogating the link between life satisfaction and an adapted version of Belk's materialism scales (refer to Appendix F for this scale). His exploratory study, conducted with American metropolitan adults, attempted to understand how the different constructs of materialism—envy, possessiveness, and non-generosity—affected levels of satisfaction with various areas of life. These included areas of: having (savings, career, personal accomplishments), living (community and living conditions), relating (friends, family, activities outside of work), and health.[1214]

[1212] Ibid., 409–410.
[1213] Ibid., 410.
[1214] Scott Dawson, "Trait Materialism: Improved Measures and an Extension to Multiple Domains of Life Satisfaction," ed. Stanley Shapiro and A. H. Walle (American Marketing

The results Dawson found varied. His findings indicated that materialism was most positively associated with 'having' events ($r=0.13$, $p<.05$), due in part to the materialism-envy subscale having a strong correlation with the having dimension of satisfaction ($r=-.39$, $p<.01$). He concluded that:

> [I]ndividuals who [were] resentful of others' possessions [were] not happy with their own level of success. They may compare what significant others have acquired in the way of material goods and feel dissatisfied that their careers, accomplishments, and finances have not allowed them to achieve the "good life".[1215]

Dawson's findings, which drew parallels to Belk's compensatory consumption, aligned with expected outcomes. The results that did not align, however, were seemingly brushed over. For example, Dawson's table of results shows that his materialism scale had no significant correlation with 'relating' and 'being/living' events.[1216] These findings stood in stark contrast to the popular perceptions of the sacrifices inherent in a materialistic lifestyle—that is, the sacrifices of relationships and of intrinsic experiences.[1217] In addition to the unexplainable results, Dawson's scales suffered from low reliability and inconsistencies. His Cronbach alpha coefficients ranged from .56 to .80. He had merely adapted a faulty scale (Belk's), adding more nuanced statements. For example, one of the additional statements for his possessiveness subscale read: 'I seldom forget to

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Association Winter Educators' Conference proceedings, Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association, 1988), 479.
[1215] Ibid., 480.
[1216] Ibid.
[1217] Pollay, "The Distorted Mirror: Reflections on the Unintended Consequences of Advertising."

take a camera with me when I go on vacation.'[1218] He was assuming that a positive response would reflect an identity based on accumulating material objects, even from experiences. Yet how was a respondent supposed to understand this unarticulated assumption? Dawson recognised some of the inherent weakness in his scale, conceding that the resulting inconsistencies might be due to locational, subcultural, or individual effects.[1219] He was primed to join someone who had a better approach to measuring materialism. Richins offered that approach.

In joining together, Richins and Dawson continued to let an American-centric view determine the meanings and measurements of 'materialism'. In their exploratory research, Richins and Dawson asked 11 American adults (a convenience sample) to describe the attitudes and values of materialistic people they knew and materialistic people in general.[1220] To construct their scale they drew upon their own the earlier work conducted independently and with others, the work by Belk, the scale by Ward and Wackman, and a money attitude scale by Yamauchi and Templer, all of which pulled from American sample populations.[1221] In testing their materialism scales, they used American

[1218] Dawson, "Trait Materialism: Improved Measures and an Extension to Multiple Domains of Life Satisfaction," 479.
[1219] Ibid.
[1220] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 308–309.
[1221] Richins, "Media, Materialism, and Human Happiness"; Fournier and Richins, "Some Theoretical and Popular Notions Concerning Materialism"; Dawson, "Trait Materialism: Improved Measures and an Extension to Multiple Domains of Life Satisfaction"; Dawson and Bamossy, "If 'We Are What We Have,' What Are We When We Don't Have? An Exploratory Study of Materialism among Expatriate Americans"; Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living

lay people or American university students.[1222] Thus, the Western biases underlying the scales were never challenged.

The underlying Judeo-Christian and American beliefs are perhaps most obvious in the four postulations that Richins and Dawson tested in their 1992 article. They assumed that:

> (1) Materialistic people value acquisition and the means to acquire possessions… more than other life goals and more than their relationships with other people.
> (2) Materialistic people are self-centered…. An overriding concern with possessions and acquisitions for oneself is inherently incompatible with sharing and giving to others.
> (3) Materialists will pursue a life of material complexity rather than material simplicity… Voluntary simplicity is the opposite perspective. It is a life-style of moral responsibility, spiritual growth, and self-actualization that is manifested in the economic behaviors of low consumption, ecological responsibility, and self-sufficiency.
> (4) Materialists tend to be less satisfied than others with their lot in life. Although materialists expect acquisitions to make them happy… the lust for good can be insatiable; the pleasures of a new acquisition are quickly forgotten and replaced with a desire for more.[1223]

As part of validating their materialism scales, Richins and Dawson tested each of these postulations with sample populations from American cities.

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in the Material World"; Ward and Wackman, "Family and Media Influences on Adolescent Consumer Learning"; Kent T. Yamauchi and Donald I. Templer, "The Development of a Money Attitude Scale," *Journal of Personality Assessment,* 46, no. October (1982): 522–28.

[1222] Richins and Dawson, "Measuring Material Values"; Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement."

[1223] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 308.

To gauge whether materialistic people valued goods more than other things, they asked respondents to rate the importance of nine values: financial security, warm relationships with others, fun and enjoyment of life, a sense of accomplishment, a sense of belonging, family security, being well-respected, self-respect, and self-fulfilment. Respondents subsequently ranked the four most important values to them. Richins and Dawson found that people who had low materialism scores placed more importance on interpersonal relationships than on financial security in comparison to those who had high materialism scores. They noted, this did not mean that materialistic people *sacrificed* personal relationships for the pursuit of wealth and possessions: high-materialistic people actually gave equal footing to interpersonal relationships and financial concerns.[1224] These results pointed towards an instrumental pursuit of money, yet unfortunately, they did not influence the scale. Statements such as, 'Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions', were not adjusted to allow people to answer whether material possessions were more important than other achievements or relationships, or to explain whether instrumental reasons lay behind their esteem of material possessions. The statement, left unchanged, harkened back to the assumption that materialism led to the pursuit of goods at the expense of more worthy means. Although Richins and Dawson recognised that possessions may be important to people for a myriad of reasons, such as signifying important events or relationships (wedding ring), means of identification

[1224] Ibid., 311.

(Birkenstock sandals), providing comfort or pleasure (musical instruments), their studies and their materialism scales did not allow people to voice these motives.[1225]

In their next series of studies, Richins and Dawson tested the second proposition of whether materialistic people were more self-centred by asking people what they would spend money on if they were unexpectedly given $20,000. Respondents could divide the money up between six possible categories: their own needs, paying off debt, travel, savings, giving to charity/church, giving to friends/family, plus an 'other' category. In comparison to people low in materialism, respondents high in materialism were three times more likely to spend the money on things for themselves ($p<.001$) and would, on average, give less than half the money to charitable or church organizations ($p<.001$) or friends and family ($p<.01$).[1226] These findings, as conclusive as they seemed, muted any explanations for why people reacted this way, and in doing so, it failed to capture what Richins had initially set out to discover: why people behaved this way. These results could have reflected people who felt shunned by others and were therefore uncompassionate towards others' needs, or people at different stages in their life cycle who were attempting to build their lives or become more independent, and were thus in an acquisition phase instead of a giving phase. Instead of understanding the positive instrumental or

[1225] Richins and Dawson, "Measuring Material Values," 173.
[1226] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 312–313.

compensatory motives, the underlying assumption was geared towards casting materialistic behaviour in a negative light.

With regards to the third postulation of materialists pursuing a life of material complexity instead of living the 'simple life', Richins and Dawson correlated their scale with an adjusted voluntary simplicity scale.[1227] The voluntary simplicity scale combined statements that asked people about their behaviour regarding choosing material simplicity (buying used goods or riding a bicycle instead of driving a car), self-determination (making or fixing things instead of buying new things) and ecological awareness (recycling).[1228] The scales were filled out by 89 respondents from a Northeastern college town and 119 respondent from a Northeastern rural area. Richins and Dawson found a significant yet weak relationship between materialism and the voluntary simplicity scale (-.28, $p<.01$). They stressed that the findings were most likely due to the weakness of the voluntary simplicity scale in which a respondent's answers may be more predicated on a person's situation instead of her values or attitudes.[1229] They failed to consider if this same conclusion could apply to their own materialism scales.

[1227] Deborah Cowles and Lawrence A. Crosby, "Measure Validation in Consumer Research: A Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Voluntary Simplicity Lifestyle Scale," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, ed. Richard Lutz J., vol. 13 (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1986), 392–97.
[1228] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 312–313.
[1229] Ibid., 313.

Finally, to measure materialism's correlation with life dissatisfaction, they compared the results of the materialism scales with measures of self-esteem and satisfaction with six life domains: family life, income, standard of living, relationships with friends, amount of fun, and life as a whole. They found significant and negative correlations between materialism and self esteem ($r = -.12$ ($p<.05$)), and five of the life domains. Negative correlations existed between materialism and satisfaction with standard of living ($r = -.39$), family life ($r = -.17$), life as a whole (-.32), level of fun (-.34), and friends (-.31) ($p<0.01$ for all).[1230] The differences in the strength of the correlations led Richins and Dawson to conclude that materialistic people were more dissatisfied with their station in life than with themselves.[1231] Yet, just as Belk's correlation of materialism with low life satisfaction could be predicated on the wording of the statements, Richins and Dawson's statements could be posited as producing similar results. For example, one statement reads: 'I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.'[1232] A person who is not satisfied with his life would likely rate high on this statement, which in turn would result in a higher materialism score.

[1230] Ibid.
[1231] Ibid.
[1232] Ibid., 310.

A Critical Perspective of the Inherent Weakness of Materialism Scales

Belk and Richins approached the construction of their materialism scales in different ways. Some might argue that Richins' methods resulted in more valid and reliable scales. As she noted in her interview, she followed scale construction protocols.[1233] Yet although their scales might seem different, they suffer from inherent weaknesses produced by common underlying assumptions. These implicit or expressed assumptions include the following:

- People who are materialistic are trying to emulate others. Their consumption does not reflect their *true* identity, and thus, what is *appropriate* for them to consume. They are not satisfied with being who they truly are and mistake the consumption of goods as a means for providing a new, more satisfying, identity.
- Materialistic people value goods because they are status symbols and/or represent achievements.
- To own or want material goods for status, symbolic-achievement, or emulative purposes equates to 'bad' materialism (terminal materialism). It is presumed that goods do not build relationships, enhance life's experiences, or achieve self-actualization.
- Materialistic people do not use material goods for instrumental purposes. If they use material goods to achieve these *more meaningful* 'other ends'

[1233] Richins, Studying Materialism and the Creation of Richins' Materialism Scales.

(relationship, experiences, religion, self-actualization), the scales would be able to recognise this. Their consumption would then become sanctioned and equated to 'good' materialism (instrumental materialism).

- Asceticism, the opposite of materialism, leads to a more fulfilling, real life. Riches lead to an artificial life. People should live a simple life and not want more, because then they are not living genuinely. Thus, frugality is good and luxury is bad.
- People should be happy and satisfied with life as it is.
- If change is desired, it is best achieved through non-material means, as those things—relationships, religion, and experiences—are the true source of happiness and life satisfaction.
- The acquisition of possessions, or lack of desired possessions, leads to people's overall unhappiness and dissatisfaction.
- Happiness and life satisfaction mean the same thing to everyone and are experienced in similar ways.
- Materialism resides within the consumer. The social context does not matter.
- Consumer idiosyncrasies will not affect the results. The materialism scale statements will be interpreted in the same way by everyone.

These assumptions result in deep flaws in the current conceptualization of materialism. At the individual level, the prejudices have contributed to scales that limit rather than expand our understanding of consumer choices. Even

though Belk and Richins hinted, in their definitions, at the possibility of materialistic people using goods as a means to an end, that is, to accomplish more socially sanctioned life goals (relationships, self-actualization, etc), the scales do not allow a person to relate or compare her purchases or desire for goods to achieving these goals.[1234] Respondents could agree or disagree with Richins' statement, 'Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure',[1235] but they could not agree of disagree with the statement, 'Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure *because* it allows me to express myself', or, 'Buying things for *others* gives me a lot of pleasure', because they are never probed for these motives. Although Richins has recently attempted to capture this through constructing an additional scale—the Transformation Expectation Scale—this scale is still not integrated into the materialism scale statements. Answers given to whether people are consuming goods to transform themselves, their appearances, relationships, or for hedonistic or efficacy purposes, can be used to explain levels of materialism, yet it still does not address the underlying premise that holds materialism in negative regard.[1236] The additional scale also does not capture consumer idiosyncrasies that might inadvertently lead to high materialism scores, such as collectors, people who are poor, or people who have suffered from crime. People's individual desires for consuming goods are still captured in broad strokes. The possibility that materialistic people could have

[1234] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement," 307; Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism," 292.
[1235] Richins, "The Material Values Scale," 217–218.
[1236] Marsha L. Richins, "Materialism, Transformation Expectations, and Spending: Implications for Credit Use," *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 30, no. 2 (2011): 154–155.

ordinary relationships with some of their possessions and define and evaluate themselves with other means of life (i.e. leisure activities or a role in the family) is negated. They become blacklisted as obsessive, immoral consumers and their identities as friends or fathers, artists or collectors, hikers or chefs, are forgotten. Materialism studies, which have the potential to delve into people's multiplex relationship with physical things, fail on all accounts.

At the social level, the materialism scales disregard the bigger context. They ignore the normative motives that influence an individual's choice of goods, and the social contexts that give rise to global variances in the idea of materialistic consumption. Thus, they fail to understand what they are really evaluating. The scales, by being constructed on prevailing American perspectives of 'materialism', merely absorb the American colloquial use of the word. As this thesis has demonstrated, this means they are measuring people's adherence to moral judgements—judgments that denounce people whose consumerism challenges the social order or societal norms of *appropriate* levels of, or *appropriate* purposes for, consumption. And although one could argue this is what 'values' are about (i.e., 'beliefs about desirable end states or behaviors'), it is still very subjectively applied and does not 'transcend specific situations' as values are supposed to do.[1237] For example, socially sanctioned rituals, such as weddings, fall outside of materialistic consumption even though they speak to the same phenomena: an extravagant acquisition of goods. A

[1237] Richins and Dawson, "Measuring Material Values," 170.

business man who mimics what one would do for a wedding, such as renting a luxurious car for the day, and buying an Armani suit and Gucci shoes on credit, but who does so for the purposes of making an impression for a potentially lucrative business deal, would be called 'materialistic'.

Reconceptualising 'materialism' as a social judgement, rather than an individual characteristic, explains why materialism scales suffer from socially desirable responding (SDR). SDR, the tendency of individuals to record answers that make themselves look better than they are, is gauged by measuring impression management biases (respondents are asked to rate whether they adhere to normative expectations).[1238] Glen Mick, in the mid-1990s, found significant SDR in Richins scale: respondents who had higher SDR scores reported lower materialism scores than those with lower SDR scores.[1239] In explaining the discrepancies between the lack of SDR Richins and Dawson originally reported, Richins suggested to Mick that his findings likely captured the nuances of the 1980s 'high-spending "me" decade' when 'the norms guiding the acceptability of materialism may have been quite different from the norms of the 1990s.'[1240] Although Belk's scales have not been tested for SDR, one merely has to be asked to respond to the statement, 'I don't know anyone whose spouse or

[1238] Douglas P. Crowne and David Marlowe, "A New Scale of Social Desirability Independent of Psychopathology," *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 24, no. 4 (1960): 350-351.
[1239] Mick, "Are Studies of Dark Side Variables Confounded by Socially Desirable Responding? The Case of Materialism," 111.
[1240] Ibid., 108.

steady date I would like to have as my own',[1241] to imagine how much SDR may be present. These are attributes people do not want to be recognised as having. In North America, we do not readily apply 'materialism' to ourselves, nor do we want to admit to beliefs or behaviours that could cause us to be described as 'materialistic'. The techniques that Richins and Dawson, and Fournier and Richins used in asking people to talk about *others*, which had consistent results, is added proof of its judgement value.[1242] Although SDR is often not considered in materialism studies, it has been shown to have important implications for the interpretation of study findings.[1243] Mick found that the reported relation between materialism and low self-esteem was nonsignificant once SDR was factored in: impression management had conflated the previous findings.[1244] Burroughs and Rindfleisch demonstrated that the significant relationship between SDR and materialism reflected a tension between value systems—the desire for individual material achievements versus religious and family expectations—that contributed to stress. This explained the correlation between lower well-being and materialism. [1245]

The other dynamic of the social context that most materialism studies have failed to understand is how their scales reflect and perpetuate the ideologies of

[1241] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 270.
[1242] Richins and Dawson, "A Consumer Values Orientation for Materialism and Its Measurement"; Fournier and Richins, "Some Theoretical and Popular Notions Concerning Materialism."
[1243] Richins, "The Material Values Scale," 210–211.
[1244] Mick, "Are Studies of Dark Side Variables Confounded by Socially Desirable Responding? The Case of Materialism," 112.
[1245] James E. Burroughs and Aric Rindfleisch, "Materialism and Well-Being: A Conflicting Values Perspective," *Journal of Consumer Research* 29, no. 3 (2002): 364.

the dominant class. One such ideological perspective is the admiration for asceticism. As Chapters 13 and 14 documented, this veneration resulted from the intellectual and religious elite who sought to control the effects of America's material prosperity and progress in order to protect their own status in society. It framed the simple, non-extravagant life as being the more appropriate and moral way to live. Richins' and Belk's scales absorbed this view. As a result, they assumed people *chose to* live the simple life, and glorified it as a more moral and ecologically-friendly way of life. If people wanted to change their lives it should be towards reducing, rather than increasing, material goods. Consequently, the wording of the scale statements meant that those worse off in life, who desired more, would appear more materialistic. For example, in Richins' scale, those in subsistence living mode would rate low on, 'I have all the things I really need to enjoy life' (reversed score), or high on, 'I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things'.[1246] The scales do not capture why people need things or if these things are necessary to them but presume that if people want more in life, it is a desire for unnecessary things. Likewise, these statements, which encapsulate the assumption that people should be happy and satisfied with their stations in life, does not consider if there are conditions in which people *should not* be happy or satisfied, for example, living in the slums. By romanticizing the simple life, we have overlooked how impoverished people are born into a simple life, not by choice, and are faced with the daily hardships

[1246] Richins, "The Material Values Scale, 210-211.

to provide even the basic necessities.[1247] In reality, the simple life can limit a person's ability to live a fulfilling life: it limits choices and constrains what can be consumed.

Asceticism, similar to materialism, suffers from a narrow understanding. For even in a life of asceticism, goods are still needed, and social status is still desired. Asceticism merely draws a line between goods that are *necessary* and deemed appropriate to consume, and goods that are *unnecessary* or luxuries and deemed inappropriate to consume. Asceticism is its own game of seeking social status. Yet recognition of this, and recognition of who defines these lines between necessity and non-necessity, is rarely thought about in materialism or asceticism studies. As the historical recount of 'materialism' has demonstrated, the definition of this line is important to consider: it speaks to higher levels of sociocultural, political and economic power struggles governing consumption and governing our mindsets about consumption. As Doug Holt once critiqued in his summation of the differences between high cultural capital (HCC) and low cultural capital (LCC) American consumers:

> It is a misnomer…to equate materialism with status seeking. Materialists are no more (or less) interested in prestige than HCC idealists…. [Consumer behaviour scholars] need to recognise that cultural elites are in a privileged position to pursue alternatives to materialism both because they typically are socialized in environments free of material scarcity and also because they reap prestige from idealist practices…. One can be extremely materialistic as measured by psychometric scales yet consume many fewer material resources than

[1247] Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," 270.

> those who profess to be idealist, as the status condensed in a single pair of Nikes worn by poor African-American urban teens attests.[1248]

These perspectives call into question what we are really measuring. Although Richins' scales may achieve reliable Cronbach coefficients, Cronbach coefficients only confirm that the constructs in each scale are measuring the same thing—i.e. similar attitudes, values, etc. It does not confirm whether these values, attitudes, or behaviours are the appropriate way to think about materialism, nor do they make apparent the underlying norms or societal prejudices. Moreover, by using population samples composed of Americans, Richins and Dawson did not test whether the validity of their scales and cronbachs would hold across cultures. When a team of scholars, Irvine Clarke and Kathleen Micken, applied Richin's materialism scales to prominently Catholic populations in France, Mexico, and Australia, they achieved much lower Cronbach coefficients, (alpha = .61 to .73).[1249] Another group of academics, Nancy Wong, Aric Rindfleisch, and James Burroughs, tested Richins' materialism scale in the United States, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, and Korea, and found that the Comparative Fit Index, which measures how well the actual data fits with the hypothesized model, was only .57, in comparison to Richins' Comparative Fit Index of .85 to .92 for an American-only population.[1250]

[1248] Douglas B. Holt, "Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?," *Journal of Consumer Research* 25, no. 1 (1998): 20.
[1249] Irvine Clarke III and Kathleen S. Micken, "An Exploratory Cross-Cultural Analysis of the Values of Materialism," *Journal of International Consumer Marketing* 14, no. 4 (May 8, 2002): 87.
[1250] Nancy Wong, Aric Rindfleisch, and James E. Burroughs, "Do Reverse-worded Items Confound Measures in Cross-cultural Consumer Research? The Case of the Material Values Scale," *Journal of Consumer Research* 30, no. 1 (2003): 76–77.

Comparative Fit Indexes, to be reliable, should be above 0.90. To correct for the unreliability produced by confusing statements, they adjusted Richins' scale, phrasing the questions in interrogative formats (i.e. 'How would you feel if you owned nicer things? [Much happier…Not any happier]'), (refer to Appendix H for Wong et al's scales).[1251] This raised the Comparative Fit Index to .83, yet did little to address the sociocultural specificities residing behind 'materialism'.[1252] Indeed, Wong et al. found that the oppositional tension between materialism and anti-materialist that exists in North American does not exist in the East Asian cultures. The Buddhist foundation focuses on bridging the gap between materialism and anti-materialism, resulting in materialism being *positively* correlated to life satisfaction in Thailand ($r = .48$, $p < .01$).[1253] Ger and Belk likewise demonstrated the cultural nuances that lead to disagreement about what constitutes materialistic goods, and also found that certain behaviours did not equate to the same trait.[1254] A behaviour, such as, 'I am less likely than most people to lock things up', might be labelled as 'possessiveness' in Western countries and 'nongenerosity' in another country. Statements such as, 'I don't like to have anyone in my home when I'm not there', could be influenced by the safety and community behaviour of where one lives. Behaviours cannot logically be grouped together without understanding the driving forces or societal and cultural context.

[1251] Ibid., 87–88.
[1252] Ibid., 77.
[1253] Ibid., 80, 86.
[1254] Ger and Belk, "Cross-Cultural Differences in Materialism," 67.

These multiple flaws point ultimately to an inconsistency in the literature: materialism, as we define and measure it does not fit with the wider consumer behaviour research on the reasons consumers value and consume goods. In materialism studies, consumption is often narrowly focused on status symbols. Yet scholars from across disciplines have demonstrated a breadth of reasons for consuming goods.[1255] Belk and Richins themselves are contributors to this literature, both writing seminal articles featured in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, including Belk's 1988 article, "Possessions and the Extended Self", and Richins' 1994 article, "Valuing Things: The Private and Public Meanings of Possessions".[1256] However, many consumer behaviour scholars continue to publish articles that reduce consumption into the narrow construct of materialism by disassociating goods from their social context. They ignore the power the use of goods and judgements surrounding goods have in creating, maintaining, and breaking apart social inequities and distinctions. They ignore how 'materialism' fits into an overarching discourse of delegitimization and power struggles.

[1255] Mary Douglas, *The World of Goods : Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978); Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis, MO: Telos, 1981); A. Fuat Firat, "Rethinking Consumption," *Consumption Markets & Culture* 3, no. 4 (1999): 283–95.
[1256] Belk, "Possessions and the Extended Self"; Marsha L. Richins, "Valuing Things: The Public and Private Meanings of Possessions," *Journal of Consumer Research* 21, no. 3 (December 1, 1994): 504–21.

Chapter Sixteen

Reflections on 'Materialism': Moral Judgements, Plays for Power, and Modes of Delegitimizing Discourse

The etymology of 'materialism' uncovered the 'truths' that influence the academic literature and that we often blindly accept. It brought to consciousness how and why these 'truths' were created, demonstrated the importance of context, and revealed 'materialism's' social purpose. These findings show that 'materialism' is not a consumer value or trait so much as a mode of discursive power. Through this analysis, three important facets of 'materialism' came to the fore.

First is that 'materialism' embodies moral judgements. The etymology added conclusive evidence to Holt's and Schudson's claims about the bias classification of materialistic consumption by documenting how 'materialism' has been associated with disparaged behaviours and demoralizing consequences for centuries.[1257] It repositioned 'materialism' from being inherent in the consumer to being externally imposed by others. Viewed as such, the importance of the social and normative context comes to the fore. The Judeo-Christian and American-based ideals in which the materialism scales are steeped, explain why researchers incur difficulties in applying the scales globally.

[1257]Holt, "Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?; Schudson, "Delectable Materialism".

Examining the judgemental nature of 'materialism' furthermore allows for the recognition of how groups fight back against discursive power. The judged, to salvage reputations or self-esteem, refuted the judgements through either sanctioning behaviours (stressing the acceptable or virtuous aspects), deflecting accusations towards other groups, or vindicating actions (criticising the accusations or clarifying intentions). These reactions help to explain why many of the materialism scales fall prey to social desirable responses. As this author discovered in interviews with South African luxury consumers, if respondents recognise the intentions behind the scale questions, they will vindicate, deflect, or attempt to sanction their behaviour, causing them to downplay their true response or to not admit to morally questionable behaviours.[1258]

Second, as the Foucauldian discourse analysis reveals, are power dynamics inherent in the social context, which underlie the rhetoric and use of 'materialism'. Across history, we witnessed how the external context influenced the discourse: it framed the meanings and consequences attributed to 'materialism', the persons it applied to, the mechanisms of control, the associated ideas that were silenced or encouraged, and the intensity of its application. Disruptive changes in society often led to openings in truth and value systems, which endangered the social hierarchy. Threatened by capital losses (i.e. cultural, social, symbolic, or economic), and status deprivation, the

[1258]Steinfield,"Consumer Types versus Stereotypes".

elite often tried to quash contentious views or behaviours. At other times, contending groups broke through the elite's stronghold, and redefined values and truth systems. Within these plays for power, 'materialism' was volleyed. It was used as a mechanism of disciplinary control: its moral nature was readily employed and manipulated to dissuade certain behaviours. What became classified as 'materialistic' depended on the interests being mobilised versus demobilised, and importantly, the ability of the social group to have their views legitimized.

This points to the third facet: 'materialism' is a delegitimizing epithet. Since its birth it was debased and imbued with pejorative connotations. Over the years, scholars, preachers, authors, and politicians, shifted its meanings and applied new associations, but rarely broke free from its negativity. Given that it was a heuristic for moral corruption, most groups wielded the epithet, and used it to delegitimize other groups or actions: they used it productively to either defend their interests or to assimilate others in order to protect their interests.

A Theory of Delegitimizing Discourse

This concept of delegitimizing discourse has been exemplified through the case of 'materialism', yet it has the potential to be extended to other demoralizing words that we often apply to social groups. As such, it is instructive to explore what lies behind the conceived concept of delegitimizing discourse.

At its core, as the birth of 'materialism' demonstrated, the word in question must be bound to negative interpretations and hold an association to moral corruptibility. It requires actors that have a level of legitimacy to use it to have its meaning accepted and to gain recognition and dissemination. Once established, delegitimizing discourse can be employed: to defend against perceive threats to social order, debasing them and undermining the contending group's moral or social authority; or to assimilate and shape the behaviour of social groups so that they support desired value and truth systems. The moral taintedness of delegitimizing epithets means that groups will refrain from behaviour that might warrant their application; yet it also means that groups will likely react to being delegitimized. In return, the responses—sanctioning, deflecting, and vindicating—can potentially affect not only meanings, but also directionality. This discursive mode of power has the potential to help the elite stay in power (as America's anti-communistic mantras illustrated), but it might also be wielded against them, leading to their downfall (as the example of the Unitarian church demonstrated). Critical to this idea is thus a recognition of the actors, context, and what interests are being advanced versus derailed.

Concepts in consumer behaviour that delegitimizing discourse might apply to include traits such as vanity,[1259] greed, envy or possessiveness,[1260] behaviours such as ostentatiousness or conspicuous consumption,[1261] issues around environmental waste,[1262] corruption,[1263] or other social deviant behaviours. Likewise, it could be instructive in explaining social contestations that might occur along social stratifying markers, including race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnicity, or generational lines. This theory can shed light on these areas as it encourages discursive power to be studied from the top-down *and* bottom-up. It allows the context, the voices and the situation of multiple social groups to be considered.

Conclusion

I started this thesis from the premise that the Renaissance and Enlightenment's truth systems were distant enough for readers to reflect upon and recognise the social purpose behind allegations of 'materialism'. By tracing the history of the pejorative use of the term from the Renaissance to America, I affirmed how it has continued to be a morally biased concept informed by a set of interests. I uncovered the 'truths' we tell about 'materialism', documenting how these 'truths' originated, contributed to the delegitimize of social groups, and how

[1259] Durvasula et al.
[1260] Belk, "Acquisitiveness and Possessiveness: Criticisms and Issues".
[1261] (O'Cass & McEwen),
[1262] (Kaiser et al),
[1263] (Mitchell),

they have shaped our current conceptualization and measurements of materialism.

This extensive analysis was done with the hope that scholars might reconsider 'materialism', or in the least, be aware of the discursive power that resides in its usage, and what interests they are protecting or subverting through their continued studies. It is time that we break free from a reductionist view, and appreciate the multiple-complexities of 'materialism', not only as a word but also as a signifier of our relationship with the material world.

Appendixes

Appendix A: Ward and Wackman's Materialism Scales (1971)[1264]

Items measured using a 5-point Likert Scale (Disagree… Agree).

1 – It is genuinely true that money can buy happiness
2 - People judge one another by what they possess
3 - The most important criterion in choosing a job is the earnings
4 - My greatest dream in life is to possess something expensive

Appendix B: Moschis and Churchill's Materialism Scales (1978)[1265]

Items measured using a 5-point Likert Scale (Disagree… Agree).

1 - It is really true that money can buy happiness
2 - My dream in life is to be able to own expensive things
3 - People judge others by the things they own
4 - I buy some things that I secretly hope will impress other people
5 - Money is the most important thing to consider in choosing a job
6 - I think others judge me as a person by the kinds of products and brands I use

[1264] Scott Ward and Daniel Wackman, "Family and Media Influences on Adolescent Consumer Learning," *American Behavioral Scientist* 14, no. 3 (1971): 415–27; Scales taken from: Sezgin Acikalin, Ekrem Gul, and Kazim Develioglu, "Conspicuous Consumption Patterns of Turkish Youth: Case of Cellular Phones," *Young Consumers* 10, no. 3 (August 28, 2009): 204.
[1265] George P. Moschis and Gilbert A. Churchill Jr., "Consumer Socialization: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis," *Journal of Marketing Research* 15, no. 4 (1978): 599–609; Scales taken from: William O. Bearden, *Handbook of Marketing Scales : Multi-Item Measures for Marketing and Consumer Behavior Research* (Newbury Park ; London: Sage, 1993), 115.

Appendix C: Belk's Materialism Scales (1984, 1985)[1266]

Items grouped by subscale, measured using a 5-point Likert Scale (Disagree... Agree).

(R) denotes a reverse scaled item.

Possessiveness subscale

1. Renting or leasing a car is more appealing to me than owning one (R)
2. I tend to hang on to things I should probably throw out
3. I get very upset if something is stolen from me, even if it has little monetary value
4. I don't get particularly upset when I lose things (R)
5. I am less likely than most people to lock things up (R)
6. I would rather buy something I need than borrow it from someone else
7. I worry about people taking my possessions
8. When I travel I like to take a lot of photographs
9. I never discard old pictures or snapshots

Nongenerosity subscale

1. I enjoy having guests stay in my home (R)
2. I enjoy sharing what I have (R)
3. I don't like to lend things, even to good friends
4. It makes sense to buy a lawnmower with a neighbor and share it (R)
5. I don't mind giving rides to those who don't have a car (R)
6. I don't like to have anyone in my home when I'm not there
7. I enjoy donating things to charities (R)

[1266] Russell W. Belk, "Three Scales to Measure Constructs Related to Materialism: Reliability, Validity, and Relationships to Measures of Happiness," in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research*, ed. Thomas C. Kinnear, vol. 11 (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1984), 292; Russell W. Belk, "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," *Journal of Consumer Research* 12, no. 3 (1985): 270.

Envy subscale

1. I am bothered when I see people who buy anything they want
2. I don't know anyone whose spouse or steady date I would like to have as my own (R)
3. When friends do better than me in competition it usually makes me happy for them (R)
4. People who are very wealthy often feel they are too good to talk to average people
5. There are certain people I would like to trade places with
6. When friends have things I cannot afford it bothers me
7. I don't seem to get what is coming to me
8. When Hollywood stars or prominent politicians have things stolen from them I really feel sorry for them (R)

Appendix D: Ger and Belk's Materialism Scales (1996) [1267]

Items grouped by subscale, measured using a 5-point Likert Scale ((Disagree... Agree)

(R) denotes a reverse scaled item. (Mod) denotes a Modified item. (New) denotes a New item.

Factor loadings are indicated in parentheses.

New nongenerosity subscale

1. I enjoy donating things for charity. (R,Mod) (0.60)
2. I enjoy sharing what I have. (R) (0.57)
3. I do not enjoy donating things to the needy. (New) (0.49)
4. I don't like to lend things, even to good friends. (0.46)
5. When friends do better than me in competition it usually makes me feel happy for them.(R)(0.46)
6. I enjoy having people I like stay in my home. (R, Mod) (0.45)
7. When friends have things I cannot afford it bothers me. (0.42)
8. I worry about people taking my possessions. (0,42)
9. I don't mind giving rides to those who don't have a car. (R) (0.40)

New possessiveness subscale

1. I get very upset if something is stolen from me, even if it has little monetary value. (0.59)
2. I don't like to have anyone in my home when l'm not there. (0.50)
3. I don't get particularly upset when I lose things. (R) (0.46)
4. I am less likely than most people to lock things up. (R) (0.45)

[1267] Güliz Ger and Russell W. Belk, "Cross-Cultural Differences in Materialism," *Journal of Economic Psychology* 17, no. 1 (February 1996): 65.

New envy subscale

1. I don't seem to get what is coming to me. (0.67)
2. People who are very wealthy often feel they are too good to talk to average people. (0.50)
3. If I have to choose between buying something for myself versus for someone I love, I would prefer buying for myself. (New) (0.49)
4. I am bothered when I see people who buy anything they want. (0.46)
5. There are certain people I would like to trade places with. (0.40)

Preservation subscale

1. I like to collect things (New) (0.67)
2. I have a lot of souvenirs (New) (0.60)
3. I tend to hang on to things I should probably throw out, (0.58)

Appendix E: Richins' Materialism Value Scales for 18, 15, 9, 6, and 3 items (1992, 2004)[1268]

Note: The 18-item scale is Richins and Dawson's (1992) original scale

Items in the Materialism Value Scale arranged by Subscales, measured using either a 5-point or 7-point Likert scale (Disagree... Agree):

Numbers in parentheses after each item indicate the alternative scale versions to which the item belongs; (R) denotes a reverse scaled item.

Success

1. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes. (15, 9, 6, 3)
2. Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions. (15)
3. I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success. (15) (R)
4. The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life. (15, 9, 6)
5. I like to own things that impress people. (15, 9)
6. I don't pay much attention to the material objects other people own. (R)

Centrality

7. I usually buy only the things I need. (R)
8. I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned. (15, 9) (R)
9. The things I own aren't all that important to me. (15) (R)
10. I enjoy spending money on things that aren't practical.
11. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure. (15, 9, 6)
12. I like a lot of luxury in my life. (15, 9, 6, 3)
13. I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know. (15) (R)

[1268] Marsha L. Richins, "The Material Values Scale: Measurement Properties and Development of a Short Form," *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, no. 1 (2004): 217–218.

Happiness

14. I have all the things I really need to enjoy life. (15) (R)
15. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have. (15, 9, 6)
16. I wouldn't be any happier if I owned nicer things. (15) (R)
17. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things. (15, 9, 6, 3)
18. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like. (15, 9)

Appendix F: Dawson’s Statements added to Belk’s (1984)

Materialism Scale (1988)

(Dawson, 1988: 479)

Items measured using a 5-point Likert scale (Strong Disagree... Strongly Agree).

(R) denotes a reverse scaled item.

Items Dawson added to Belk's Envy subscale

1. I sometimes feel as if I am too aware of what other people have.
2. I hope that I will someday be as successful as other people at work
3. Life would probably be more enjoyable if I could afford some of the things my friends can.

Item's Dawson added to Belk's Possessiveness subscale

1. Compared to most people, I have invested more effort in securing my residence against theft.
2. I seldom forget to take a camera with me when I go on vacation.
3. I would prefer to borrow a book from a library or a friend than buy it. (R)

Item's Dawson added to Belk's Nongenerosity subscale

1. I am reluctant to lend books to my friends.
2. All things considered, I think I am more generous than most people I know. (R)
3. I'm not really concerned what happens to my things after I'm gone. (R)
4. I worry that if I lend books to others, I will forget about them.

Appendix G: Richins' Preliminary Materialism Scale (1987)

Items measured using a 7-point Likert scale (Disagree... Agree).

(R) denotes a reverse scaled item.

1. It is important to me to have really nice things
2. I would like to be rich enough to buy anything I want
3. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things
4. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I would like
5. People place too much emphasis on material things. (R)
6. It's really true that money can buy happiness
7. The things I own give me a great deal of pleasure (Note: this was excluded from final scale due to an eigenvalue less than 1, indicating that other factors accounted for more of the variance than this item)

Appendix H: Wong et al's Interrogative Question Format Scales (2003) [1269]

Note: Items 2, 5, 7, 9, 12, and 14 are reverse-worded in the Likert format of Richins' Materialism Values Scale (Richins and Dawson, 1992)

1. How do you feel about people who own expensive homes, car, and clothes? [Do not admire…Greatly Admire]
2. How do you shop? [Buy anything I might want…Buy only what I need]
3. How do you feel about owning things that impress people? [Makes me uncomfortable…Makes me feel great]
4. How do you feel about acquiring material possessions as an achievement in life? [Not important…Very important]
5. How do you approach your life in terms of your possessions (i.e., buying and owning things)? [More is better…Simple is better]
6. Would your life be any better if you owned certain things that you don't have? [Not any better…Much better]
7. Do you think the amount of material objects people own show how successful they are? [Very Much…Not at all]
8. How would you feel if you could afford to buy more things? [Not any happier…Much happier]
9. How would you feel if you owned nicer things? [Much happier…Not any happier]
10. What do the things you own say about how well you are doing in life? [Very little…A great deal]
11. How do you feel about spending money on things that aren't practical? [Do not enjoy…Really enjoy]
12. Do you feel that you have all the things you really need to enjoy life? [Need more…Have all I need]
13. How much pleasure do you get from buying things? [Very little…A great deal]
14. How do you feel about the things you own? [Very important…Not all that important]
15. How do you feel about having a lot of luxury in your life? [Do not enjoy…Really enjoy]

[1269] Nancy Wong, Aric Rindfleisch, and James E. Burroughs, "Do Reverse-worded Items Confound Measures in Cross-cultural Consumer Research? The Case of the Material Values Scale," *Journal of Consumer Research* 30, no. 1 (2003): 87–88.

Appendix I: Articles on Measuring Materialism and the Scales Used

Author	Year	Title	Materialism Scale Used	Cronbach Coefficients	Measured	Results
Wallendorf & Arnould	1988	"My Favorite Things": A Cross-Cultural Inquiry into Object Attachment, Possessiveness, and Social Linkages	Belk (1985) - Possessiveness subscale	Not Reported	Possessiveness of 'favourite things' amongst Nigeriens	Low cross cultural validity of scale; Interviews concluded that Possessiveness, as per Belk's measures, was not expressed by Nigeriens; Possessiveness is not a universal trait
O'Guinn & Faber	1989	Compulsive Buying : A Phenomenological Exploration	Belk , 1985 (slightly adapted)	Possessiveness = .61; Envy = .72; Non-Generosity = .63; Summed Scale = .71	Materialism traits as motivators of compulsive buying	Compulsive buyers scored higher on materialism than other consumers ($F = 36.20$; $df = 1.578$; $p < 0.001$); Envy and non-generosity are the drivers of materialism for compulsive buyers
Netemeyer, Burton & Lichtenstein	1995	Trait Aspects of Vanity: Measurement and Relevance to Consumer Behavior	Richins & Dawson's (1992) 6-item 'Symbol of Success' subscale & 7-item 'Acquisition Centrality' subscale	Not Reported	Materialism's 'symbol of success' measurement and its corrections to vanity	Conspicuous Consumption and Materialism could be behavioural manifestations of vanity. Vanity based on a concern for achievement was positively correlated with possessions as a symbol of success ($r = .36$) and acquisition centrality ($r = .26$) ($p < .01$)
Mick	1996	Are Studies of Dark Side Variables Confounded by Socially Desirable Responding? The Case of Materialism	Richins & Dawson's (1992) 18-item scale	Summed Scale = .88	Presence of socially desirable responding in materialism scale responses	Social Desirable Responding invalidates findings of materialism. When SDR is controlled, previous findings that found significant correlations between materialism and neuroticism ($r = .19$, $p < .01$) and self-actualization ($r = -.27$, $p < .001$) were no longer significant.
Rindfleisch, Burroughs & Denton	1997	Family Structure, Materialism, and Compulsive Consumption	Richins & Dawson's (1992) 18-item scale	Summed Scale = .87	Materialism in young adults and its relation to family stability levels	Higher levels of materialism existed in young adults from disruptive families, than those from intact families (disrupted $x = 3.00$, intact $x = 2.71$; $t = -3.49$, $p < .001$). The presence of materialism was postulated to be a product of reduced love and affection: higher levels of materialism reflect a young adults use of goods as surrogates for absent parents (p 321)

Appendix I: Articles on Measuring Materialism and the Scales Used (continued)

Author	Year	Title	Materialism Scale Used	Cronbach Coefficients	Measured	Results
Lastovicka, Bettencourt, Hughner & Kuntze	1999	Lifestyle of the Tight and Frugal: Theory and Measurement.	Richins & Dawson's (1992) 18-item scale	Not Reported	Correlation of frugality to materialism	Higher frugality scores correlated to lower materialism scores ($r = -.26$; $p < .05$)
Burroughs & Rindfleisch	2002	Materialism and Well-Being: A Conflicting Values Perspective	Richins & Dawson's (1992) 18-item scale	Summed Scale = .84	Materialism's relation to community values (family, religion) and a sense of well-being	Materialism leads to lower satisfaction with life because of psychological tension (stress) caused by the conflict between individual versus community, family, and religious values. Materialism is negatively correlated with community values ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$), family values ($r = -.19$, $p < .001$), religious values ($r = -.22$, $p < .001$). Community-orientated values, such as benevolence, conformity, and universalism were located opposite materialism (on a multi-dimensional graph).
Wong, Rindfleisch & Burroughs	2003	Do Reverse-Worded Items Confound Measures In Cross-Cultural Consumer Research? The Case of The Material Values Scale.	Adapted Richins & Dawson's (1992) 18-item scale; formatted the scale into interrogative questions	Summed scales: Thailand = .49; Japan = .68; Singapore = .72, Korea = .82; USA = .83	Materialism in East Asian countries and correlations to life satisfaction	Reverse-worded questions resulted in low reliabilities due to cultural nuances; a new scale was developed, reliability improved; Life satisfaction was positively correlated to materialism in Thailand. Materialism differed in East Asia from North America due to underlying ideologies (ex; Judeo-Christian vs. Buddhism).
Shrum, Burroughs & Rindfleisch	2005	Television's Cultivation of Material Values	Richins (2004) 15-item Materialism Value Scale	Summed scales = .92	Materialism's relation to active television viewing and the pleasure derived from effortful attention (i.e. need for cognition (NFC))	Television exerts an effect on materialistic orientations at the time of viewing, as the effect television has is moderated by active viewing and the desire to pay attention (NFC); Materialism is positively correlated to watching television ($\beta = .37$), and is significantly stronger for those who watch TV actively ($\beta = .51$) than for those who do not ($\beta = .24$), and stronger for those with a high NFC ($\beta = .38$) than those with a low NFC ($\beta = .25$) ($p < .001$)

Appendix I: Articles on Measuring Materialism and the Scales Used (continued)

Author	Year	Title	Materialism Scale Used	Cronbach Coefficients	Measured	Results
Chaplin & John	2007	Growing up in a Material World: Age Differences in Materialism in Children and Adolescents	N/A - Used Collages	N/A	Age differences of materialism in children	Materialism (measured by having more goods than experiential items on a collage) varies with age and is a product of self-esteem. Materialism increases from middle childhood to early adolescence and declines from early to late adolescence, which reflects changes in self-esteem. High self-esteem lowers levels of materialism.
Mogilner & Aaker,	2009	"The Time vs. Money Effect": Shifting Product Attitudes and Decisions through Personal Connection	Richins & Dawson's (1992) 18-item scale	Summed scales = .91	Materialistic orientations of money versus time & affects on attitudes towards products	Consumers attitudes towards goods can easily shift depending on the attribute they are primed to think about (i.e. time vs. money). The effects of these shifts are related to the consumer's materialistic orientation. Consumers high on materialism reported more favourable attitudes towards their cars when primed to think about money versus time; consumers low on materialism reported more favourable attitudes towards their cars when primed to think about time versus money.
						There was no significant correlation between levels of materialism and favourable/unfavourable attitudes towards cars based on actual time or money spent.
Nicolao, Irwin & Goodman	2009	Happiness for Sale: Do Experiential Purchases Make Consumers Happier than Material Purchases?	Richins (2004) 9-item Materialism Value Scale	Summed scales = .84	Materialists levels of happiness and unhappiness for material versus experiential purchases	There was not a main effect of materialism with happiness levels for material or experiential purchases: people high in materialism were not happier with positive material vs. experiential purchases, nor were they unhappier with negative material vs. experiential purchases. Differences between their reactions were non-significant.
						Experiential purchases were found to produce more happiness if there was positive outcomes, and more unhappiness if there was negative outcomes, compared to material purchases.

Appendix I: Articles on Measuring Materialism and the Scales Used (continued)

Author	Year	Title	Materialism Scale Used	Cronbach Coefficients	Measured	Results
Rindfleisch, Burroughs & Wong	2009	The Safety of Objects: Materialism, Existential Insecurity, and Brand Connection	Richins (2004) 9-item Materialism Value Scale	Summed scales = .90	Materialist consumer's relationship with brands as influenced by existential insecurity (a fear that arises when made aware of one's mortality)	Materialism leads to strong brand affiliations when existential insecurity is high; there is no effect of materialism on brand affiliations if existential insecurity is low; materialism is not significantly related to brand loyalty
Richins	2013	When Wanting Is Better than Having: Materialism, Transformation Expectations, and Product-Evoked Emotions in the Purchase Process	Richins (2004) 15-item Materialism Value Scale	Summed scales = .88	Materialistic consumers' hedonic expectations and emotions of happiness	Consumers high in materialism experience hedonic elevation because they believe the purchase will transform their lives significantly; lower levels of satisfaction are a result of the post-purchase hedonic decline. Consumers low in materialism did not hold this patterns.
Pieters	2014	Bidirectional Dynamics of Materialism and Loneliness: Not Just a Vicious Cycle	Richins and Dawson 18-item Materialism Value Scale	Cronbach not reported; composite test-retest reliabilities of summed scales = .934	Directionality of relationship between materialism and loneliness: used a latent growth model to account for which growth curve (materialism vs loneliness) stimulates the other growth curve	Materialism fosters social isolation which in turn reinforces materialism, however, loneliness also fosters materialism, and contributes more to materialism than vis-a-versa. The two subscales—acquisitions as happiness, and possession-defined success—contributed to this cycle; the sub-scale of acquisition centrality led to decreases in loneliness over time
Richins & Chaplin	2015	Material Parenting: How the Use of Goods in Parenting Fosters Materialism in the Next Generation	Richins (2004) 9-item Materialism Value Scale	Summed scales = .88	Materialism levels and their interaction with parental warmth, parental rejection, the use of material goods to reward/punish children	Youth who lacked parental warmth and were rejected have higher levels of insecurity, which result in higher levels of materialism in adulthood; parents who use material goods to reward/punish induce higher levels of materialism in their children