Sulevi Riukulehto

THE CONCEPTS OF Luxury and Waste

IN AMERICAN RADICALISM, 1880–1929

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Sulevi Riukulehto

CHAPTER ONE

Methodological Decisions in Broad Outlines

Some Principles of Conceptual History

1.1. The Discourse of Luxury, Waste and Consumption in America

The aim of this study is to reveal the conceptions that American radicals had at the turn of the 20th century regarding luxury, waste and consumption. The main subject of interest lies particularly in the consumption of luxury goods. As a premise we assume that there already existed an old discourse of luxury through all of the 19th century, and that it was a succeeding part of the like discourse which had been going on in Europe, especially in England, and which had been stimulated by the writings of various European authors, Mandeville, for example, among the most well-known critics. The old discourse of luxury is, thus, traceable back to the old English discourse of the same in the 18th century. We also assume that a discourse of waste and consumption can be distinguished on both sides of the year 1900. The time span of our discussion will thus cover quite a long period, from 1880 to 1930.

In its characteristics the era of study is not completely autonomous from its larger context. In Europe it is the First World War that is often taken as the rupture, the "natural" border line between two cultures, life styles, habits of minds, or whatever. It is surely a kind of hedge, or a saddle, in the intellectual history of America also, but in our discussion it does not mean the end of an age. A much more factual rearrangement was induced in American life by the Great Depression of 1929. It meant a substantial change, if not a disappearance, of the conspicuously luxurious life styles of the millionaires, of banking capitalism, and of the cut throat competition and excessive speculation in bourses. Of course, the outcome was not as sudden an event as the mere crisis of Black Tuesday. The New Deal completed the quiet change that was commenced by progressives in the first decade of the century.

The other head of the time span may seem to be much more arbitrarily chosen. The new banking capitalism, or the Gilded Age, or the time of the robber barons, or whatever name is given the special era of the last quarter of the 19th century, is usually seen to begin from the Civil War or from the time of the Johnson Committee. The time span could have been restricted otherwise, it is true. One reason to our resolution is purely economical. It must be noted that we already have an era of about fifty years to analyze, quite a long time indeed. Here we have no purpose in ending our study still further back unless it be

inevitable for some specific reason. This means that traditional puritanian, Jacksonian, transcendental conceptions of luxury and waste will, at any rate, be referred to during the discussion.

The term "discourse" is here understood widely; it is taken to consist of all the various ways of expression, from ordinary literary products to paintings, sculptures and even deeds. Non-textual output is, of course, as possible a subject of research as any other, but the interpretation of this kind of source cannot be direct; it always requires some kind of textualization. This is the main principle. In this study the source material is, however, restricted into the circle of more conventional texts only. So, even if discourse is understood widely, we are approaching it through the traditional, textual sources.

Discourse is interpreted to be a deeper phenomenon than individual discussions are. In the latter, there are always questions and replies, being repeated again and again. The connection between discussing actors in each case have to be relatively close. But we do not request such a direct connection between the participants in the case of discourse. They do not need to know about the existence of each other, not even of the existence of the very discourse. So, in one discourse there can be many different discussions around the same item but there also can be a discourse with no specific, single discussion. If it is so, the ruptures, changes and continuance of concepts in discourse are to be distinguished from detailed connotations and from their (the concepts') relations to context. This kind of exposure surely demands a remarkably large basis of source material.

In the old American discourse of luxury, there are some characteristics which are quite easy to notice. It contained a clearly denouncing, even deprecatory attitude towards luxuries. This attitude can be seen, for example, in the transcendentalist's ideal of modesty. Henry David Thoreau with his ideas of cheap house-building is not a herald of a new economic way of thought but an adherent of this old ideal.[1] A humble modesty, not a costly profligacy, was already being attached into the ancient puritan scheme of life in the settlements of New England.

Waste is a vice, luxury is to be denounced. The critical stance is undoubtedly the prevalent attitude towards consumption before the Civil War. But then, right after the war, we meet a totally different spirit. In the texts of the Gilded Age we

1 Thoreau 1854, 40-45

suddenly find a new pecuniary culture governed by millionaires, ruled by big money; or this is how it seems to be, if we listen to the loudest narrators' claims at the turn of the century: the most appreciated people are the conspicuously consuming ones. Politics is corrupted by the almighty dollar; the very rich are living in the leisurely tiresome lap of luxury, playing leisure games and are even imitated by all others. How is it possible that the land of the modest Puritans had been changed into the land of displaying millionaires? At first, the ideal of modesty; then, the unquestionable admiration and the imitation of prosperous display; and finally, again, a condemnation of that. The old deprecatory discourse of luxury is first turning into the appreciatory or neutral discourse of consumption and then into that of waste. This study is an endeavor to unfold what, indeed, was criticized in this changed discourse of American radicals.

1.2. American Radicalism

In this first part of our study we are going to concentrate chiefly and specifically on the discourse of American radical authors. In order to succeed with this target, we first have to survey the meaning and the definitions of radicalism.

Radicalism is not a monolithic, uniform term. It is commonly associated with extremism. Anarchists, nihilists and communists with extreme opinions are easily taken to be radicals, as well as the numerous unconventionally oriented individuals, such as the hippies. In loose, everyday language the label is sometimes used even when referring to asocial persons, such as hooligans or juvenile delinquents. The word *extremism* has a certain accentuation that *radicalism* omits.[2] Extreme or *reactive* are labels that are usually attached to the groups at the extremities to imply a set of attitudes about the middle. According to this position, most people cannot be situated at the ends and they bestow labels upon others from the middle. However, people can change positions. But, is it really possible to call an opinion *extreme* if it becomes popular? Most Germans of the Third Reich could possibly be on the far right, but most of them could not be on the *extremely* right. Most people cannot be at the ends. *Radical* has

2 This kind of attitude has been taken in *Extremism in America*, 1995, 1-2. According to Ekirch, populists, socialists, and progressives were not extreme, or not as extreme as the conservative counterpart imagined. These groups were, however, often lumped together by their foes. Ekirch 1974, 39

different connotation. Most people can become radicals without weakening the meaning of the word. And they do not have to be situated at the ends.

In some studies of specifically American radicalism the term is bestowed upon socialistic movements only; and the practice is even argued to be the only literal and meaningful sense of the word. And further on, the historians of radical movements have often concentrated narrowly on the economic and political sectors of society.[3] These kinds of statements are, of course, quite easy to object to and to deny. No political direction can have a patent right to such labels that have no material substance of their own; and radicalism certainly does not. It is merely an overtone in ideas of whatever kind. We have no reason to restrict its competence area to the political left, for example. If a historian is studying only socialist movements, why not call them socialist?[4] It is a much more competent and stricter label for the explicit group at hand.

We cannot restrict radicalism to party politics either. Imagine a radical minister interpreting the Bible totally anew. Surely he is a *radical*. And we do face these kinds of preachers in the era of study; there are priests and ministers fired from their churches and others expelled from their homes just because of their unconventional ideas. We call them *radicals*.

On the other hand it is possible to limit the word just to the members of specific radical parties, which can be found here and there in history. Three observations need to be made in this connection. Firstly: had we chosen this way, our study would have been intellectual, no longer a conceptual history but the history of the political institutions that are named *radical parties*. Secondly: here we, again, remark that the label *radical* does not tell us anything about the direction of the purports of the actor. The name does not make a party radical, it gives no guarantee of the policies occupied. The same is true regarding other political labels too (like left, central and right). Political centrum can possibly be found somewhere outside of the Central Party. Finally: Americans at that time really used the term *radical* loosely. It was applied to communists, some democrats, populists, progressives, and so on. The idea of radical covered individuals and opinions from different directions. This is the attitude maintained in this study as well.

Thus, radicalism is not understood here as an independent being or entity

3 As an example: Kraditor 1981, 8-9

4 Edward Walter talks about *leftist radicalism* in his ***The Rise and Fall of Leftist Radicalism in America***, ie. there can be other types of radicalism as well. And, in fact, the other types were dominating at the turn of the century."...leftist radicalism was only marginally influential before the 1930s". Walter 1992, 17

with autonomous history or everlasting meaning, but solely as a means for historical analysis. Radicalism is a category in scrutiny. It has no specific, strictly limited content in itself. Being radical means a departure from the mainstream, the traditional, common attitudes. It can be more or less extreme, more or less indecent, communist or not, all of that is of no importance; but always a radical tends to make fundamental, thoroughgoing changes in existing views, traditions, institutions or conditions. Radicals are change-makers. As such they are disposed towards revolution. It is obvious that, thus defined, we will not meet one coherent and homogeneous wave of radicalism but a strongly varying cluster of opinions, the supporters of which are here called radicals regardless of what effect their efforts have or whether their tactics and means are mild or extreme.

Would it not, then, be possible simply to call these change-makers *liberals*? This has frequently been the usage in the works of the American historians and political scientists who have operated with source material similar to that used here.[5] They have often been reluctant to call change-makers radicals. Perhaps the mere label of radical in the subject of a study has been felt to be dangerous, somehow. It is, of course, possible to name the left wing critics liberals as well. But *liberal* also has another meaning, the meaning of unorthodox, non-conservative. In this meaning, all social critics are not *liberal* at all. Some of the radical preachers of social gospel, such as George Herron or Walter Rauschenbusch, anchored their theology carefully in canonized writings. They were not liberal in the ordinary theological usage of the word; even if their liberalism could be clearly seen in some other aspects of their thoughts. In the Gilded Age, men with a radical tendency preached almost the same doctrine under the most different names. One of them, Henry Demarest Lloyd, described himself as *a-socialist-anarchist-communist-individualist-collectivist-co-operative-aristocratic-democrat*.[6] And his undefinitive classification was nothing exceptional. As one historian has stated, categories such as *socialist* or *anarchist* may

5 In Rochester's terminology such socialists as U.B. Sinclair, W.E. Walling, B. Floyd and C. Beard are liberals, as well as Steffens or Veblen. Rochester 1977. On the other hand, Goldberg states that "'radical' defines a nature different in quality from the temporizing 'liberal' spirit". Being radical always includes a danger of losing something (one's life, repute, career etc.). Interestingly, in Goldberg's analysis the same authors (Lloyd, Veblen, Dreiser, LaFollette) are, again, radicals. Goldberg and Williams 1957, 1-17. Diggins makes use of the term *radical* much like we do. He defines the concept of left in Diggins 1992, 27-44

6 Wiebe 1983, 64. Same kind of story has been told about Steffens: he's a *Christian-Science-Utopian-Socialist-Democrat*. Horton 1974, 150

be of limited use in describing the American left at the turn of the century.[7]

Why, then, concentrate the project on radicalism? According to these principles of conceptual history that we maintain, two possible ways exist to unfold the contents of conceptions. Both the exponents of the mainstream and the unorthodox dissidents have to make use of concepts, and both are thus forced to reveal their conceptions on what they are supporting or on what they are opposing. When a change-maker demands improvements; when he declares his protests, he is obliged to describe profoundly his point of view. This is why the different protest movements of human life are convenient subjects for our purpose. It is the chosen alternative to restrict the source material at hand.

Here, radicalism does not mean any peculiar, distinctive relation to luxury, waste and consumption. It is a complex term, the content of which varies from one case to another. These people to whom we attach the label are not radical because of their views considering waste.

Radicalism, as we defined it above, can be found in every possible area of human life. We, however, focus our discussion on four different aspects of life. First we make a survey into the economic radicalism of the era of study. This serves as a due entry into the discourse as a whole, because the concepts now under discussion (waste, consumption, luxury) are *economical* in nature. We proceed to the arts and letters, including novelists and radical journalists. Then we take a look into the field of radicalism in religious and, finally, in political thought.

And now we have to state once again that there are, naturally, many other successful chances to define radicalism: this is surely not the only legitimate way and maybe this would not be the best one for the historian of radical institutions. This is not primarily a study of American radicalism, but a study of some aspects of the conceptual history of the chosen concepts of consumption.

Two remarkable reform movements rose in the economics of the turn of the century. The European *Historismus* first induced the foundation of the American Historical School in the form of the American Economic Association. It was rallied by Richard Ely, who is taken as its first exponent, and the first subject of our interest, in this study. The historical school remained ephemeral as an independent protest movement, but it had a great impact on another economic

7 Dietrich 1996, 3

school that occurred about the same time. Thorstein Veblen's institutional economics is the next object of our interest and the most important one, indeed, for Veblen concentrates specifically on our themes in his works. He created a new vocabulary that can be used as a measuring stick in our later discussion. The meaning, the reception, the further developments of his concepts are taken as a point of comparison for the study of the conceptions of other authors.

Novelists, dramatists, journalists and other writers are under survey in the third chapter. A socialistic novelist was not a scarce national resource in the USA during the turn of the century. Many of the most famous novelists were more or less confessional socialists, like the utopian Edward Bellamy or Social-Darwinian Jack London. And those who later checked their opinions regarding the labor movement, like Theodore Dreiser, still conserved their radical mind in other respects. Of all these socialistic authors the most illuminative one concerning the questions of luxury and waste is surely Upton Sinclair. For him it was a conscious choice to centre stories around the antagonism of the life styles between the rich and the poor.

But there also existed a strong literary protest tradition free of socialistic pathos. The muckraking journalist movement of 1902–1906, and especially its most eminent social critic, Lincoln Steffens, is a fine specimen of the radical tradition which originally counted more on progressivism and Georgism, and not so much on the writings of socialistic theory. The later turns of his life, however, made Steffens a communist. Steffens is another writer whom we lift up for closer discussion.

A notable part of American radicalism is religious in nature. At the end of the nineteenth century appeared various religious authors, theologians as well as laymen, to preach a new kind of message of social gospel. The Christian labor movement and Christian settlements have their roots in the same era too. The most radical left wing of the movement, including Father McGlynn, George D. Herron, Alexander Irvine, J. Stitt Wilson, Austin Adams, Algernon Crapsey, and Bouck White, were first cast out of their churches, but the social gospel movement was too strong to perish totally. Radicalism existed in the churches, as it did everywhere in the world. George Herron's ideas are taken up as a paradigmatic representation of this left wing social gospel in our fourth chapter. The picture is completed with Walter Rauschenbusch's milder but more systematic theology of social questions.

Finally, a deeper look is taken at the political radicalism in the USA in the fifth

chapter. Here we meet the problem of the all-inclusiveness of politics. The social religious work which was mentioned above, is at the same time political as well. In this connection the word "political" is to be understood narrowly. We use the term as referring to the formation of political parties, votes and other institutions of the kind. So, we take a look at Ignatius Donnelly's Populist critique of the 1880s and 1890s that brought on party formation in Kansas. We also take a look at socialists like Eugene Debs and Emma Goldman; but also at certain parts of the progressive movement, such as the technocratic movement of the twenties, exemplified by Herbert Croly. The idea of this choice lies in the discovery that the different critics that were interwoven by the People's Party were soon dispersed by the dawn of the new century, and the radical material of Donnelly's Populism developed in two directions, exemplified by socialists like Debs and radical progressives like Croly.

All the central authors mentioned above (Ely, Veblen, Sinclair, Steffens, Herron, Donnelly, Debs) were radicals according to the principles which we declared earlier. They tended to the making of a fundamental change in their world. The radicalism of anarchistic or Marxist socialism is not doubted. So, as an illustration, it was manifested in the Pittsburgh Proclamation (which consisted of the principles of the International Working People's Association) as follows: "What we would achieve is, therefore, plainly and simply, – 'First. Destruction of the existing class rule, by all means, i.e., by energetic, relentless, revolutionary, and international action."[8] But, the same kind of radical requirements were declared by non-anarchist authors, too; and even by those who were neither socialists nor alarmists. Veblen, for example, requires "a totally new order" in his memorandum of the soviets of technicians. And Richard Ely, although he must be taken as a relatively moderate, if not conservative, progressive, calls the securities of railway companies as "robbery" in his text books.[9] Another mitigating dissident, Walter Rauschenbusch, is not ashamed to admit being a revolutionary utopian. He proudly proclaims that the father of Jesus Christ does not sustain the maintenance of the capitalistic order. "God is against the capitalism, its methods, spirits and results."[10]

Of course, there are many other parts of human knowledge and of society

8 Quoted from Richard Ely 1886, 231, reprint edition; Ely has collected the principles or motives of various labor associations in the appendix of the same study. 233-273

9 Veblen 1921; Ely 1891, 225-226

10 Rauschenbusch 1917, 184; Rauschenbusch's vision of christianity against capitalism, see 1912, 311-323

which could have been taken into our discussion as chapters of their own. Such are the women's emancipation movement, temperance movement, and some radical representations of natural science and particularly the American sociology of Lester F. Ward and other critical social scientists of the time. In this regard there is no other specific reason for the chosen disposition but the simple economy of work. Naturally, social scientists' conceptions have been included in discussion, too, but not as categories of their own.

1.3. Concepts as Historical Phenomena The Conceptual History of *Begriffsgeschichte*

Conceptual history will serve as the main theoretical framework but it will not be the only self-legitimated branch of intellectual history made use of in this study. We are not trying to use the conceptual cluster of luxury, waste and consumption as a certain test-case for the tenability of the premises or provisos of the discipline. We do mostly operate with concepts, but this work could hardly be classified as pure conceptual history. The contextual details and backgrounds will deliberately be introduced to readers in order to make the worldly environment of the mere conceptions more understandable. For the European readers, American intellectual reality is a world of mystery. From this angle of vision, we could not go too far in contextualizing the studied ideas. The aim of long introductions to economical theories, to religious climates or political backgrounds is to make this study more readable, more easily approached. Accepting one theoretical direction does not mean denying all others. A historical study should not be the slave of any research tradition.

The possibility of conceptual history lies in the fact that a concept does have a history. The German school of *Begriffsgeschichte* has grasped this opportunity more systematically than any other school or tradition in history. Unlike philologists, historians are seldom interested in the regional or temporal variations in a single dialect; that could be a subject of deeper examination, but the historians of *Begriffsgeschichte* have succeeded in penetrating much further into the area of conceptual alteration. Conceptual history has not been interested in the changes in the pronunciation of words but the alteration of the vocabulary in whole.[11] This can be expressed – somewhat tautologically – by the fact that conceptual

11 Koselleck 1985, 74

historians have been interested in concepts. What are the words by which the members of various classes, minorities, social groups etc. have been talking about the one and the only concept? Why have they shifted their vocabulary? This means that both synchronic and diachronic alterations are to be taken into account at the same time, to make use of the Saussurian concepts of structural and temporal changes in language.

We would not do justice to philologists if we argued that they are interested only in dialectal alteration. They have, in fact, been just as interested in other kinds of changes in language, too, sociolectal alteration among others. But, it is the next step of the conceptual historians that leads us outside of the linguistic scope of research. From a historian's point of view the most interesting thing is often the outwardly arbitrary vogue which sometimes lifts some of the existing, everyday concepts up to broad social discourse.[12] And suddenly concepts are used in totally novel ways. They are given surprisingly polemic contents that are utterly remote from the logical operations which are usually studied in philosophy of language. These kinds of breaks or ruptures in language can be used as proofs of the contemporaneous change in social situation.

The basic idea of conceptual history is the fact that every concept reveals by its simple existence a certain part of the everyday reality from which it has originated. And the immediate context of each concept reveals even more. From this angle of vision a concept is not a definition-like answer to a question, but merely a question in itself, the interpretations of which are the received answers; that is, the conceptions of various individuals[13]. Thus a conceptual historian is interested in the conceptions of concept, not in the history of individual words (the etymology of words).

Conceptions are never restricted independently, by themselves. Their limitation or detachment from other conceptions can be done only from the outside. In order to classify the phenomena studied a researcher has to create new concepts whenever the need arises. The most famous conceptual historian, Reinhart Koselleck, calls them "categories". Categories are, thus, paradigmatic concepts or conceptions that are distinguished afterwards or that are brought from later times. They are tools by which the researcher is able to make comparisons and classifications.

Koselleck himself has investigated the shifts in the meanings of various "asym-

12 Koselleck 1985,79
13 Palonen 1988,304-305

metric counterconcepts" as he calls them, such as barbarian and Hellenic or Christian and pagan.[14] In this he emphasizes the significance of different restrictions (temporal, social, religious etc.). The apparently same word does not always mean the same thing. Each word has its own specific meaning and there is a particular horizon of expectations for each concept (considering the future) and a common space of experience (considering the past) that are shared by the rhetors. Between these limits we may expect to use concepts safely; everyone who has the same horizon of expectations and who shares a common store of experience understands words in the same way.

Another tradition of history which is yet to be taken into account in this connection is the English revisionist school of Quentin Skinner and J.G.A. Pocock. In the background of this school we find the famous ideas of R.G. Collingwood. He warned us against drawing parallels between the vocabulary used by authors of different epochs.[15] Both Plato and Hobbes talked about *republics*, while not meaning the same thing. The problem is commonly known but often omitted from discussion. Researchers are used to equating, all too easily, the concepts, outwardly alike, that are just remotely related in reality. And this is not a sin of historians only. Think about such concepts as *politician*, *underdeveloped country*, *unemployed* or *believer*, for example. A fine description of the problems considering the use of the Western vocabulary of *unemployment* in the Far East is offered by the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal in his scholarly work "Asian Drama".[16]

In the English tradition, the problem of language is approached from another direction than did the historians of German *Begriffsgeschichte*. Pocock and Skinner do not form certain *a priori* categories beforehand as Koselleck does. From this point of view it is easy to accept the strong emphasis on context and contemporaneous discourse. Of course, both traditions have much in common; both interpret concepts ultimately as questions. The concepts are not simple X=Y types of analytical definitions. First of all, a historian has to ask about the deeper contents of the concepts he meets in texts. He cannot take them for granted.

In this study we will make use of the methods of conceptual history in a

14 Koselleck 1985, 161-186
15 Collingwood 1987, 60-67
16 Myrdal 1970, 473-579

somewhat expanded form. The elementary research work will be done by means of conceptual operationing, i.e. by detailed analysis of the concepts in the source material. In the research report the results of this conceptual scrutiny are then attached to their wider contextual environment. Besides, some sections of the history of theories may occasionally be distinguished in this work. These are no specific exceptions from the accepted approaches but simply one way to illustrate the context of studied conceptions. In other words, they are also used as contextual environment. Thus the final study is situated somewhere in an in-between stage of conceptual and contextual approaching methods. Contexts are to be illuminated as a means for conceptual history which in itself is a means for the history of ideas.

1.4. Luxury, Waste, Consumption The Main Concepts under Analysis

Next we have to take a closer look at the main concepts of our study, or the concepts that we are going to make use of as our categories in this study. At least, we have to reveal the conventional significations of the vocabulary of consumption. Two concepts have been picked up from the multitude of words in the title of this study. This is not a definitive limitation. There could be other concepts, such like *consumption*, as well. The vocabulary of consumption will be broadly analyzed in American radical discourse. Thus, the place of *consumption* among our main concepts cannot be questioned. *Luxury* and *waste* are, however, the most crucial terms around which our discussion will revolve. Fortunately, we can lean on definitions already made by conceptual historians on this area.

Concerning luxury the work has successfully been made by Christopher Berry in his book "The Idea of Luxury". He has followed the development of *luxury* from antiquity to the nineteenth century. According to his reasoning, there must be, at the superficial level, a definitive connection between a good being a luxury and its being an object of desire.[17] A luxury is not deemed socially necessary. One can easily manage without it. It is an indulgence, an item not necessarily expensive. Even small, relatively uncostly things can be thought as

17 Berry 1994, 3

luxuries on personal level (like hiring a baby-sitter and going to the cinema).[18] A certain demarcation has also to be made regarding *conspicuous consumption*. The latter derives from spectacular reaction. Luxury is more subjective and independent from the audience.

In his work Berry has differentiated four basic categories of luxuries corresponding to four basic needs (sustenance, shelter, clothing, leisure). We agree that luxuries, though desired, are not a separate category; they are not a goal at which action is directed. But, the substantial conception of four basic needs is problematic from our point of view. It does not include the luxuries of sex, for example. Berry's categories are, however, one possible way of classifying. In this study we do not have any specific reason to further categorize the content of luxury.

John Sekora has analyzed the history of luxury, of the concept, and especially the discourse regarding luxury in eighteenth-century England. Nearly all moralists assumed that luxury was one of the direst forms of human vice.[19] Its manifestations could be seen everywhere.

According to Sekora the meaning of luxury has endured unchanged through the ages, from the Hebrews to modern times. Luxury is anything *unneeded*. Originally, luxury was interpreted as a sin. It was a sin committed by the woman, especially. For the the Hebrews, it was an active sin, a generic, cardinal sin, and a political crime as well. Finally, luxury was a national sin. It was a complex idea already for the Hebrews.[20]

The Greek view of luxury, then, forms another stage in the history of the concept. Sekora represents their conception as a secular and rational complement to the Hebrew view. Luxury was regarded as a violation of harmony, and the introduction of chaos into the cosmos. Luxury is an ever-present threat to the unity of the cosmos.[21] Christianity made a synthesis of these conceptions; it absorbed both the classical attack upon luxury, and made it the cause of the primal fall. In this study we shall find both conceptions emerging in American discourse at the turn of the 20th century.

18 Berry 1994, 40-42

19 Sekora 1977. A short list of the participants includes Mandeville, Addison, Steele, Defoe, Pope, Swift, Bolingbroke, Fielding, Chesterfield, Hume, Johnson, the Pitts, the Walpoles, Goldsmith, Gibbon, Ferguson, Steuart, Wesley and Adam Smith. Sekora's main interest is laid to the novelist Tobias Smollett. In this discourse the concept of luxury was resorted to several hundred times.

20 Sekora 1977, 5, 24-26

21 Sekora 1977, 29

Waste, as far as we know, has not been keenly scrutinized by conceptual historians. From this point of view, Richard Ely's definitions at the turn of the twentieth-century text books will prove to be considerable. In the conceptions of American conservationists, waste was attached to consumption as a possible counterpart of conservation, not of luxury. This interesting idea will be further studied in Chapter 2.

1.5. The Literature and Source Material in Outline

The framework of the source material in this volume is formed by the books and articles written by the authors studied. The material thus has a book form, and it can be obtained mostly from whatever site of research. As the primary sources we shall utilize the texts of Richard T. Ely, Thorstein B. Veblen, Upton B. Sinclair, Lincoln Steffens, George D. Herron, Ignatius Donnelly and Eugene V. Debs. An attempt has been made to include the whole production of each of these central authors, produced during the time span now under discussion. So, we have mostly excluded the novels that Sinclair has written after the panic of 1929, the famous "Lenny Budd" series, for example; but we have included the whole series of economical interpretations of institutions, written by the same author during the twenties. Only the texts that have been referred to in this volume are detailed in the list of literature, placed at the end of the book.

The complete works of Veblen and Donnelly are included, as well as those of Debs' works that can be obtained in book form. Politicians and ministers, like Debs and Herron, may naturally have a lot of unpublished texts, too, such as speeches and sermons that have been excluded as unavailable material. All in all, there are but three books which Debs himself has written. Besides these, we have a large collection of his articles, speeches and other contributions, and a recent collection of letters in three volumes. With Ely we have made a similar choice as with Sinclair: only the works of his critical period have been included. With regard to Steffens and Herron we have mostly made use of only the source material that was produced when they still lived in America. In fact, Herron's later works are not so interesting from our point of view, i.e. the books written after 1900. Nevertheless, they have been carefully studied, but ignored as secondary in this study.

As secondary sources, we shall have plenty of texts written by preceding and contemporaneous authors. Naturally most of them are not peculiarly radical at all, nor were they intended to be. They are useful, however, in that they represent the intellectual reality of the time. So the discussion of the radical economists is connected to and compared with such commonly appreciated professors of political economy as John Bates Clark and Irving Fisher, which also shows quite surprising connections to our subject. The same method is used regarding the sections on religion (Walter Rauschenbusch, Josiah Strong) and politics (Herbert Croly).

1.6. The Economical and Cultural Context of the Study

This sub-chapter aims at serving as a doorway into the context of the coming study. It contains a brief outline of some basic economic features of the era of study, such as the cumulation of big fortunes, the rise of the metropolis, the bureaucratization and the professionalization of business life, the monopolization of industry and the emergence of the first brand names; we also take a look at cultural phenomena, such as fashion, urban architecture, family life, arts and forms of entertainment. The aim of the coming section is to offer some material on the life in the Gilded Age and in the Progressive Era for the average reader before we enter into the next level of texts and ideas.

1.6.1. The Gilded Age

Originally the phrase "Gilded Age" was manifested in the title of a novel by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner. It was published in 1873. The term was afterwards adapted to symbolize the whole era that succeeded the Civil War; the era that helped some people to create enormous wealth while others had to lapse into misery. In this regard the authors of the novel saw the War of Secession as a turning point in American history.

> The eight years in America from 1860 to 1868 uprooted institutions that were centuries old, changed the politics of a people, transformed the social life of half the country, and wrought so pro-

> foundly upon the entire national character that the influence cannot be measured short of two or three generations. (Twain & Warner 1873, 129)

Historians have long accepted this interpretation though it originated from the pen of artists. The times were gilded only, not golden. Many scholars, like Henry Adams and E.L. Godkin, held the role of intelligence in a person's success in the modern world as a marginal element. The decisive factors were elsewhere, in pecuniary boldness. Historians have also recognized that the changes in the business world were associated with other historical developments. The deepest changes laid at the level of culture, but, altogether, American life met with such a process of shift that hardly any realm remained untouched by it. Historians have labeled this "cultural revolution" with many names. Alan Trachtenberg calls it the "incorporation of America", Robert Wiebe the "distended society", and so on.[22]

The uprooted institutions were many, but of those that replaced them, one went before the others. It was the new businessman, the self-made-man, who had risen "from nothingness to the stars". But peculiarly enough to rename the era, the ordinary self-made-man of the Gilded Age did not owe his millions to expertness in production, but to unscrupulousness in business life. This is how Twain and Warner picture the thoughts of one of their characters:

> He was not idle or lazy; he had energy and a disposition to carve his own way. But he was born into a time when all young men of his age caught the fever of speculation, and expected to get on in the world by the omission of some of the regular processes which have been appointed from of old. And examples were not wanting to encourage him. He saw people, all around him, poor yesterday, rich to day, who had come into such opulence by some means which they could not have classified among any of the regular occupations of life. A war would give such a fellow a career and a very likely fame. He might have been a 'railroad man', or a politician, or a land speculator, or one of those mysterious people who travel free on all railroads and steamboats, and are continually crossing and recrossing the Atlantic, driven day and night about nobody knows what, and make a great deal of money by so doing. (Twain & Warner 1873, 379-380)

22 Trachtenberg 1982; Wiebe 1983, Ch. 2

We have to remember that the "robber baron" picture of unscrupulous businessmen has also been rejected by many scholars.[23] The interpretation is too simple and all too convenient and it has appalled some later historians who have given the age such labels as the *Era of Excess*, *of Millionaires*, and *of Robber Barons* and the *Great Barbecue*. Whatever was the more profound sense of the *new businessman* he surely was a prime mover of the age.

During the next ten years this process of social fermentation had progressed rapidly, and in the first decades of our study the American economy was hovering in a transition point as industry was overtaking agriculture as the predominant element in economic growth. Between 1880 and 1900, the industrial product of America doubled. At the same time it overtook England in the 1890s. Statistics show this change conspicuously. Production of raw steel rose from nearly 68 tons in 1870 to 10,188 in 1900.[24] In 1920, for the first time in the republic's history, more than fifty percent of its population were urban.[25]

Industrialization obviously meant more wealth for everyone. Factories, railroads, and telegraph wires were the true engines of a better and more democratic future. They signalled enlightenment along with material wealth. This hopeful optimism was most successfully embodied in two great world expositions, in Philadelphia 1876 and in Chicago 1893.

Industrialization also offered grounds for the cumulation of big fortunes, many of which originated in the Civil War. And the new business leaders were often skilled in finance, in market manipulation, and in business organization. In 1840 there were but forty millionaires in the whole USA, but in 1910 there were more than that number sitting in the Senate of the country that was sometimes called a "Millionaires' club" in critical writings. And furthermore: in 1891 there were 120 fortunes bigger than ten million dollars and 4047 over one million.[26] Sometime during these years also began the new epoch, the Gilded Age. There were plenty of millionaires: Gustavus Swift and Philip D. Armour (in meat packing industry), Andrew Carnegie (steel), James B. Duke (tobacco), Cornelius Vanderbilt, E.H. Harriman, J. Gould, and James J. Hill (railway), Charles A. Pillsbury (milling), John D. Rockefeller (oil), Cyrus McGormick (reapers), to name but a few.

23 See Porter 1996, 1-18
24 *The Statistical History of the United States* 1965, 416-417; Kinnersley 1982, 4; Trachtenberg 1982, 52-53
25 *The Statistical History of The United States* 1965, 14; Carter 1977, 1
26 Mason 1981, 74

These were household names, and much better known in the press than contemporaneous labor leaders, such as Uriah Stephens, Ira Steward, or William Sylvis.[27] The Americans were startled by the enormous profits of these Wall Street kings. Josiah Strong, in his best-selling book, revealed that the annual income of Vanderbilt was estimated as $30 million and Gould had made $15 million already in 1880.[28] In addition, according to literature, the fortunes and profits of their proprietors got even bigger. Carnegie's holdings in iron and steel brought in almost half a billion dollars in 1901, Rockefeller's even more in oil and gas.[29]

The defenders of individualism – and the Horatio Alger myth, according to which, in America, anybody could make a million dollars and rise from rags to riches – argued that the only responsibility of big business was to continue to provide an expanding economy.[30] These "robber barons" standardized quality requirements, controlled distribution and eliminated competition. By the Great Depression of November, 1929, the old Horatio Alger myth had taken an entirely new aspect: everybody ought to be rich. And the way to become rich was no longer to work hard but to invest in stocks and bonds.[31] All this helped to inaugurate still another group of corporations: the Gilded Age is also the era of American labor unions.

There are two climaxes in the history of labor organizations by the First World War. First is the manifold agitation of the labor force in 1886, the year of "the great upheaval". In that year occurred the Knights of Labor's strike against the working conditions on Jay Gould's railroads in the Southwest, the height of agitation for an eight-hour working day, and the severe Haymarket Riot in Chicago. There were almost ten thousand strikes and lock-outs put into practice in the 1880s.[32] Another peak was to come in 1912, after Eugene Debs had organized the socialists as a political party and also succeeded in recruiting a mass of votes.

The monopolization of big business was one of the hottest topics throughout the Gilded Age. Theoretically, monopoly was finally outlawed by the Sherman Anti-Trust Act in 1890, but in reality the businessmen created a totally new level

27 Trachtenberg 1982, 80. Of the fortunes of Rockefeller, Carnegie, Morgan etc., see Cashman 1993, 30-72
28 Strong 1891, 148
29 Wiebe 1983, 18
30 DeWitt 1982, 19
31 Carter 1977, 158
32 Trachtenberg 1982, 71, 88-92

of monopoly power from 1870 to 1900. The businessman's remedy for economic problems was the pool, first in the form of rings then through trusts.[33] The first company with capital over one billion dollars (this happened in 1901), Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company, was finally forced to reorganize itself into the form of thirty separate firms in 1910.[34]

We can also see another kind of centralization of business in certain cities that linked to specific types of business-industrial development. For example, Tom Kinnersley lists cities like Chicago (which was related with meat packing), Milwaukee (brewing), Minneapolis (milling), New York City (banking and finance), Pittsburgh (iron and steel), and Toledo (natural gas). The new industrial state demanded millions of consumers with the ability to pay for all the products produced. The first steps towards mass culture were taken. From 1865 to 1900 advertising expenditures increased by ten. Famous, every-day trade marks were born: Kellogg's (dry cereal), Kodak (film) and Coca Cola.[35] The same is true regarding advertising slogans. "Yours for Health, Lydia E. Pinkham", "A skin you love to touch", "The pause that refreshes", "Reach for the Lucky instead of the sweet".[36] In their own time these slogans were as well-known as those of the most common name brands of our time.

All this is connected to the rise of big cities, the metropolis. The rural towns served as regional centers. The new metropolis reflected the change onto the national level, a new coordination of urban regions, creating a new network of consuming goods.[37] In a big city, a department store served its customers not only as the source of material goods but as an educational institution, too. It represented the world by organizing it as consumable objects and it also gave a model of an ideal standard home.[38]

Perhaps the most imitated element of the new urban life-style was fashion. From the Civil War up to the end of the century it was still the fashion of the rich. The image of the "leisure lady" had became the ideal of femininity during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. It decreed that the only woman's sphere allowed was the care of the home and its inhabitants. Unrelated activities and

33 Cashman 1993, 40, 44, 56
34 Alan Trachtenberg has paid attention to the very name of Standard Oil; it "typified the major trend in business towards integration, standardization, and central administration." Trachtenberg 1982, 86
35 Kinnersley 1982, 4-5
36 Hinckley 1982, 126
37 Trachtenberg 1982, 114-115
38 Trachtenberg 1982, 132

vocations would harm her womanhood.[39] It also meant the excessive care of their clothing, which was usually ornate and overdone. This is how a cultural historian presents women's dress of the 1900s.

> [M]ore formal dress was less functional, running to 'smallness'. Tight-laced corsets, tight kid gloves, and a wide-brimmed hat, a high choking collar, and a flaring skirt that swept the ground on all sides. Hair was always long, although frequently piled on top of the head or tortured into ringlets; wearing the hair 'up' was most popular with older women. (Kinnersley 1982, 12)

To this we may add ribbons, flowers, flounces, and ruffles that bedecked every outfit, and petticoats, crinolines, french heels and other painful features that constituted the decent dressing of rich women. That guaranteed her a waist of eighteen inches but it tortured her, too. The outfits themselves could contain as much as 100 yards of material, they could weigh up to fifteen, twenty pounds, and getting completely dressed with those chemise, pantaloons, corset, corset cover, petticoats and hoops took a one to two-hour effort by two people.[40] All those contrivances were adapted from the garments of the rich to the clothing of the middle class also, but in addition a new, more liberal generation of dressing emerged. The "New Woman" of the 1890s, "the Gibson girl", was a creation of artist Charles Dana Gibson in a series of drawings for *Life*-magazine.[41] She did not wear a corset but a shirtwaist blouse with a tailored suit or dark skirt. She was athletic, fun-loving and she ignored the extravagant Victorian etiquette. All the restrictions of the old decent dressing were not forgotten even by the twenties. Women were freed from corsets and other unnecessary features in their daily clothing but their full dress was still pressing. Only the most modern American women dared to entirely defy the old decent taste.[42]

The same kind of alteration cannot be seen in the customs of high-bred men. The man of the house was a captain in his domain. His wife called him "Mister", his children addressed him as "sir".[43] Usually the children of wealthy families saw their father just briefly at dinner or bedtime. Customary decentness also

39 Riley 1987, 68
40 Riley 1987, 71
41 Peterson 1982, 81
42 Carter 1977, 119
43 Peterson 1982, 83

regulated men's clothing. Naturally, regarding men's dress, the demand for the reformation of the body was not such a drastic one.

> For men, dress was more sensible, but often uncomfortable as well. When 'dressed up,' the 1900 man wore a dark woolen suit and a derby hat. The coat would have padded shoulders; the collar and cuffs would be stiffly laundered and the shirt held together at the bosom with studs. Dress shoes or boots and heavy socks completed the outfit, although the more affluent frequently complemented their dress with a gold-headed cane or an umbrella. Most everyone owned a pocket watch; sometimes it was an heirloom. Being the male status of the era, beards were still worn, but they were beginning to go out as the twentieth century dawned. (Kinnersley 1982, 12)

Urban culture also meant changes in sporting habits; spectator sports were rising in popularity. Golf, horse racing, polo, rowing, tennis and yachting were all popular, but dominated by the rich.[44] And such were they to be, rich men's games, until the twenties.[45] Basketball, just invented (1891), was a future form of sport, but college football and especially baseball were the kinds of spectator sport that were really to grow in favor.

The metropolis was now the new home of the average American. In the twenties, for the first time, the urban population outnumbered rural inhabitants. The big city did not expand itself mindlessly. Some attempts were made to segregate poverty from affluence. The downtown area was overtaken by railroad stations, courthouses, department stores, office buildings, and the huge mansions of the rich. The suburbs, then, were segregated by their function, or by the class and income level of their inhabitants.[46]

In architecture, the American functional skyscraper still had to rival with older styles. The look of the big city was eclectic, so the prevailing style was soon named "pictoresque eclecticism". Louis Sullivan and the other members of the Chicago School battled against this "chaos" and false, undemocratic, elite architecture as well. They tried to seek truly American solutions to the problems of urban architecture, but their functional solutions had also an air of beauty through

44 Kinnersley 1982, 14
45 Noverr & Ziewacz 1982, 114
46 Trachtenberg 1982, 117

size and display. All this is perfectly reflected in the world exposition of 1893 in Chicago.

Most buildings were, in fact, not designed by architects but by engineers.[47] The better hotels, such as the Plaza, the Savoy and the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City, the Lafayette in Philadelphia and the Palmer House in Chicago, were the most noticeable features in urban architecture. These were luxurious dwellings for paying customers; and places for showing off as well.

> What came to be accepted as the paradigmatic party of the Gilded Age was the fancy-dress ball given in New York in February, 1897, by Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Martin; for it, at the cost that the host and hostess were glad to estimate publicly as three hundred and seventy thousand dollars, the interior of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel was converted for an evening into a plausible replica of Versailles. August Belmont came in a suit of gold-inlaid armor valued at ten thousand dollars. The host, in a particularly nice piece of invidiousness, came as Louis XV, the king celebrated for having said, 'Après moi, le déluge'. (according to Brooks 1981, 13)

The dwellings of the elite families were as stunning as their parties. One example may suffice. The Vanderbilts possessed a summer home of seventy rooms, thirty three house servants and thirteen grooms. All this cost lots of money, five million dollars. But besides they had another one, it was a villa of only two million, but that was compensated for by the furniture, worth $9 million.[48]

The aim of all this expenditure was to impress. Tales of parties were repeated in newspapers and weekly magazines. In this study we will not take a deeper look into those stories. Some single events are to be mentioned only cursorily. The ostentatious lifestyles of the rich are documentated in literature quite voluminously. And indeed, that was the purpose of this showing off; to be noticed. Thus, there are tales of dinners on horseback; of banquets for pet dogs; of a hostess who attracted attention by seating a chimpanzee at her table; of parties at which cigars were ceremoniously lighted with flaming banknotes of large denominations, and so on.[49]

47 Trachtenberg 1982, 119
48 Wiebe 1983, 41
49 These examples are taken from Brooks 1981, 12-13

1.6.2. The Progressive Era

Originally, the name "Gilded Age" was used of the post Civil War era till the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. In modern history books it is usually ended in 1901. Sometimes it is extended to the First World War, but a new era is usually distinguished right after the turn of the century. The almost twenty-years period from the early 1900s to the cruel disillusionment of the First World War is commonly called the Progressive Era.[50] It was the time of liberalism, strong faith in rapid advancement in social, economic and political conditions of people.

A strong reform wave spread in society, promising considerable growth in the rate of development by uniting social reforms and the growth of productivity. From 1873 up to the Spanish-American War America had been in the grasp of chronic depression. Suddenly, people were inspired to undertake with courage reforms of any kind. The time of progress had come.

The lavish life styles of the extremely rich were waning. A new, more pragmatic – but not necessarily more rationalist – consumer behavior originated in a rising mass culture. The Progressive Era was the period when giant industrial corporations finally achieved their managerial and marketing revolutions: the motor car was mass-produced, mankind learned to fly, movies and radio broadcasting exploded the media; technocratic tendencies towards scientific government were proposed as well as the scientific management for the business enterprise. New engineering technology made possible the new style of American architecture. Women gained the vote and began to change their appearance and sexual mores decisively. The new era saw the appraisal of mass markets, postal advertisements, but it also saw the quiet depreciation and decrease of the leisure class. Everything was motivated by the longing for progress. The revolution was clearly seen in statistics. The value of American export rose from $1.49 million in 1900 to $2.5 billion in 1914, and to $8.6 billion immediately after the First World War (in 1920). Imports did not meet the same explosion, rising from $930 million in 1900 to nearly $2 billion in 1914.[51] Commercialization and industrialization brought changes in family function and roles, especially in the middle class. This had an exceptionally important impact on women.[52]

50 Sean Cashman has talked about the Era of Titans. Cashman 1988
51 *The Statistical History of the United States* 1965, 537
52 Danbom 1987, 18

The new immigration widened the market for manufactured goods, but most obvious was the impact in population. In 1900, the population of the continental USA. and its overseas possessions was 76,094,000, in 1910, 92,407,000. The first-generation immigrants accounted for about fourteen percent of the total population, they constituted about 25 percent of the labor force.[53] In 1909, the largest manufacturing companies were in food, textiles, primary metals, and engineering; in 1919, industries such as petroleum refining, motor vehicles, chemicals, and forest products had conspicuously risen beside the aforementioned.[54]

Both parties were declaring reform programs in the lead of Woodrow Wilson, William Taft, and Theodore Roosevelt.[55] The credibility of each has been doubtful: Who was serious, if any? And who was pretender? The progressive majority in the reform societies was formed by the successive, advancing, protestant, and urban sections of the nation. Usually, the targets of reforms were controversial. Trusts, millionaires, the power of money, social inequality and corruption were opposed by many. Even less unanimous attitude prevailed concerning the questions that were fought for. The public production of necessities was loudly supported as was the establishing of social programs, health programs, and the public control of railroad and insurance companies. Public primary elections, referendum, initiative, recall, and suffrage were the progressives' political slogans. Through all this, reformers sought to eliminate the corruption of the cities. Even a specific Progressive Party was established by Roosevelt, popularly known as the Bull Moose Party. Progressives were leaning to scientific, systematic work. Public opinion was used to legitimate power. It was to be the authoritative will of a democratic nation.[56]

The Bull Moose platform was a political program so radical that nothing of the kind had been launched in America since the Populist Revolt of 1892.[57] Among other things, Roosevelt wanted the direct elections of senators, the referendum and recall, the presidential primary, full public declaration of campaign expenditure, womens universal suffrage, regulation of business, protection for consumers etc. However, the program was not new: Roosevelt had spelled almost whole the program in three messages to Congress between 1907–08, and

53 *The Statistical History of the United States* 1965,7
54 *The Statistical History of the United States* 1965,411
55 The progressive achievements of each has been pointedly summed up in Hague 1996
56 Eisenach 1994,74
57 See more precisely in Cashman 1988, 112-113

the ideas had been widely supported. Woodrow Wilson won the election and began almost immediately to carry his rival's program into practice.

The belief in growth and progress was closely allied with the emergence of a new therapeutic ethos in the American moral climate.[58] It was time to replace "morality with morale". The new ethos was highly critical to late Victorian culture. It was preached by ministers, psychologists, and other therapeutic ideologies. One should guard one's health, one's physical as well as mental condition, beware of malnutrition, inactivity, pessimism etc. Healthy life and happiness could be obtained by "liberation through consumption".[59] The philosophy of pragmatism was put into practice by John Dewey.

As a part of the redefinition, the old periodicals, based mainly on subscription, gave place to cheap magazines of many kinds: a newsmagazine, a muckraking monthly, a woman's domestic journal, and businessman's weekly.[60] They were loaded with advertisements, public image making, and an oversupply to a stimulated demand. Monthly magazines had more than a hundred pages of advertisements per issue as early as the late 1890s.[61] They also published exposures, gossip, and essays of current interest. The great journalistic empires of William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer, and Frank Munsey arose.

Pretensions were commonly reclaimed between society and state. More federal control was claimed in order to stabilize social life. More democracy was called for, by the same token. From the general angle of vision, there is something exceptional, again, in this chain of occurrence. Americans believed in progress and advantageous development while the theoreticians of decadence were already preaching in Europe.

The following presentation of progressivism rests on Jürgen Kocka's interpretation of the movement. According to him there occurred changes in many different directions:

> 1. Changes in the business enterprises, concerns, and trusts.
> In spite of the anti-trust laws, especially transportation and banking sector concentrated and reorganized into the hands of gigantic business actors, the trusts and holding-companies that often had a strong monopoly power in their own field.

58 Lears 1983, 1-38
59 Lears 1983, 27
60 Wilson 1983, 39-64
61 Eisenach 1994, 15

2. Changes in the relations of possessions in big corporations.
The ownership and the surveillance of business differed when the direction of business enterprises moved into the hands of hired captains. At the same time the principles of scientific management gained appreciation; manual and non-manual work (white and blue collar) differed from each other. The technocratic theory was developed by Fredrick W. Taylor, Herbert Croly, and Fredrick C. Howe.

3. Changes in the art of workmanship.
The industrial way of life forced reform on the structures of higher learning. Specialization in university studies was not the ordinary way of qualification in the USA in such fields as business life, law, engineering or the medical professions. University law schools were finally founded in the 1890s, the public secondary school system was created, etc.

4. The development of labor associations.
The principle of collective organization won among the labor masses, too. The first labor union was the non-Marxist but still utopian Knights of Labor which had its peak in 1884–86. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) was founded in 1886. It accepted the principles of industrial capitalism and tended to ameliorate the economic and social position of the labor. The AFL grew to three million members before the First World War. Businessmen, too, established a union for their safety in 1895, the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM); the National Civic Federation was another, looser association for big business.

5. Changes in popular opinions.
Reform clubs and associations were established by ordinary people. Both big parties declared reform programs. The aims of the reforms were controversial. Many opposed the opulent and old-fashioned lifestyles of the rich, the awful power of trusts, social inequality, and political corruption. The old Populist program with its socialization of railroads, telegraphs, telephones and insurance companies, large social and health programs, as well as the old radical democratic slogans, "referendum, recall, initiatives, popular primaries and suffrage" were now commonly accepted.

Progressivism was not socialistic agitation. It floated in the tradition of the old American radicalism, and rather resembled Jeffersonian and Jacksonian traditions. Sometimes it also demonstrated nativism, hostility towards foreign immigrants and purported to Americanize aliens.

The contribution of social gospel was a change from relationship to God to relations among people. There were socially-oriented clergy, technocratic engineers, and pragmatic philosophers among the progressives, but also businessmen and, surprisingly, even big businessmen, who thought that they would be able to get rid of the old-fashioned, unproductive competition by the aid of government regulation.[62] Usually, however, the big corporations resisted progressive reforms because they were naturally afraid for their profits. Most of the progressives tended, like Frank Parsons, A. Lawrence Lowell, and Charles A. Beard, to enlarge American democracy. But then, the prudential improvements were also a means of stabilizing society against the still more radical reformists, most dangerous of whom were Debs' socialists. Many progressives saw the movement this way.[63] All in all, we could say that progressives, even the ones who liked to teach others by raking muck, were very different from each others. Most progressives, however, tended towards organized capitalism.

During all this, American women were becoming emancipated. Household machines freed middle-class women from the kitchen. And a new type of woman replaced also the Gibson girl, the ideal American girl. She was single now, a boyish figure with bobbed hair and mass-produced clothes. She was reluctant to recognize the old moral code of her parents. She was called a *flapper*.[64]
This short introduction may suffice as a key to the cultural climate of the studied time span. We shall now start the more essential survey into the concepts of expenditure from the sphere of the economical protest movements: i.e. the historical school in American economics and institutional economics.

62 Kocka 1980, 49; Ekirch 1974, 50-56
63 Croly 1909, 128
64 Cashman 1988, 237-240

CHAPTER TWO

The Protest Movements in Economics

Historical School and Institutionalism as Economic Radicalism

We usually associate economic radicalism with different collectivist forms of socialism, such as anarchism or the creation of the "industrial democracy". However, the time period we are interested in here offers a splendid occasion for a more unconventional interpretation. A biblical metaphor may find a place here: radicalism is like a breath of wind, elusive and free to move, but at the same time it is a power whose drawings can easily be identified. Two successive waves of criticism appeared in American economic theory at the end of the 19th century. They were, in fact, the first attempts at the construction of an economic theory that really endeavored to explain the curiosities of American economic life, like the success of millionaires or the power of big corporations and trusts. In these dissident schools we can also see a radical impact of American thought.

The first wave had been imported from Europe by the students who were concluding their studies in Germany. The great schism between inductive and deductive methods in economics reached its peak right at the moment in the debate of European scholars. The new rival school, German *Historismus*, challenged the traditional methods of classic economic theory everywhere in Europe, and the young Americans preferred the new inductive point of view.[65] With the students these new thoughts were transmitted to their home country. The American Historical School was born. It organized itself around the American Economic Association (1885). One of the central figures in this critical rally was Richard T. Ely, a notable economist at the University of Wisconsin. The life story of this historical school remained short-lived, but it heavily influenced the life work of Ely and another critical school yet to come, Thorstein Veblen's institutionalism.

It is undoubtedly precarious to view the American Historical School as a radicalist movement; it was definitely not. Unorthodox in methods and noisy in criticism it was, but there was scarcely anything radical in its doctrine. (Omitting Ely's incessant claim for public ownership and defense of labor unions.) Obviously, Ely is to be counted among the most influential progressives; he was one of the most cited authors of his time and a conspicuously influential commentator, especially on campuses.[66] The same is not true for Veblen's methodological critiques about ten years later. But Ely's significance in that school is big enough

65 Ely 1884, 45-46, 48, 62-63

66 Ely is one of Eisenach's most influential progressives in ***The Lost Promise of Progressivism***, Eisenach 1994; see also Filler 1996, 110

to enable us to take a closer look both at Ely's *Historismus* and Veblen's institutionalism.

Veblen was not the sole American economist interested in methodological questions in the nineties. Classic American economics had driven itself into its worst crisis thus far. This worked as a point of origin for a new economic protest movement, one part of which are Veblen's methodological essays. They were published as a series in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* at the turn of the 20th century (republished later in the first part of "The Place of Science in Modern Civilisation").

All in all, we can distinguish three founding fathers for institutionalist economics: Veblen, John R. Commons, and Wesley Clair Mitchell. These are the prime movers of the school, but there surely are other sources of influence too, as the works of John Dewey or Henry George, both of whom had a strong effect on all kinds of progressive reformists. If we are forced to draw a visible line of demarcation to some distinct event we may maintain, with David Seckler, that American institutionalism originated in 1898 with Veblen's article "Why Is Economics not an Evolutionary Science?".[67] However, the characteristics of this school are, as already noticed, traceable back to the Historical School of Ely. An eminent student of his, John R. Commons, heard of Veblen's thoughts and presently he was a passionate enthusiast for institutionalist visions. In Commons the old German *Historismus* is seen to be transmitted into the tenets of institutionalism. And this is why we have to explicate closer the works of Professor Ely as well. We shall begin with it.

As a part of progressive revolt of the early twentieth century, yet another movement appeared in American economic discourse. A group called conservationist economists (or shortly, conservationists) manifested ideas that seem to be totally above the scope of economic technological rationalism of the western culture. The revolt was an attempt to control private, corporate wealth for public ends in many ways. The conservation movement typified this spirit. Large areas of natural parks were constructed, programs for the regulation of water power, federal forests and oil were planned. In reality, conservationism began to influence in the founding of the first conservation programs of the natural resources.

In the historiography of conservationism the pages have usually been filled with long lists of different programs, societies, and projects. Conventionally the

67 Seckler 1975; Veblen 1898a

books have paid all too much attention to most recent conservation organizations, in many cases still vitally working ones. As the outcome we have standard history-like numbering of names, dates and places.[68] Conservationism has mostly been interpreted as a practical movement, no theorists have been studied. An older history book recognizes also the theorists, but the focus is, however, on numbering various federal programs in the Rooseveltian era.[69] Richard Ely is rarely mentioned among the leading conservationists. This far academic conservationism has almost been ignored because in America the movement originated among technical experts, not in universities, as was the case in Europe. Attention has, thus, not been directed to questions such as the meaning of conservationism, the motive of a single activist in the movement, and what his target was? Was there really some kind of ideal in existence for tenuring development at the turn of the century?

Conservationists had their philosophical ancestries already in the Romantic movement, or, as we should say in America, in the transcendentialism of the 1850s. Return back to nature, the mystifying of the natural and the ideals of simplicity and harmony form a certain part of the philosophy of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman. Thoreau is usually the transcendentialist specifically indexed as the forerunner of American conservationism. Certain engineers have sometimes been situated beside him by the historians of progressivism (Frederick Law Olmsted, George Perkins Marsh).

Of all these founding fathers, Thoreau is most well-known. He is remembered mostly in regard of his purport to isolate himself somewhat ascetically in the solitude of a tiny timber cottage by the lake Walden, with uncurtained windows, in complete accordance with nature, in order to live in sobriety. Thoreau, as other transcendentalists, is still hiding under the umbrella of the old puritan ideal of consumption.

Thoreau was a mystic and a prophet. His transcendentalism had only little impact in practice. The first conservation programs were written just half a century after the "Walden", in the progressive era, when the faith in infallible progress was at its highest. As a feature of this, engineers, technicians and various technical assistants were effectively striving after the power in every possible branch of knowledge, in architecture, in federal government, in economics etc. Exper-

68 E.g. *Voices from Environmental Movement* 1992 and Strong 1988
69 Hayes 1959

tise was also adored in conservation. That kind of specialist was Fredrick Olmsted. He was a maker of parks. His reputation, thus, mostly rests on the aesthetic appeal of the landscapes he designed.[70] He was not a writer or theorist like Thoreau, but an artist and a highly appreciated expert who created beautiful landscapes by hand. The first step from mysticism to engineering was taken.

Another specialist, George Marsh, was more like a theorist, again. In his thought we can see the transcendentalist influence of Thoreau. Marsh was an ecologist. He did not believe that men were part of nature, but rather that their power of destructiveness placed them apart from and above it. Animals could never be responsible for such sudden and absolute changes that were constantly induced by human beings.[71] Nature is to be conserved for its own sake. Humans are dangerous.

2.1. Waste and Conservation in Richard Ely's Works

2.1.1. Socialism and Luxury, the Era of the American Historical School

If we take a look at the main European authors in economics at the turn of the 20th century we find a few economists whose importance seems to be unquestionable in America as well. Among the most cited are at first Eugen van Böhm-Bawerk and Wilhelm Roscher, and later Stanley Jevons and, of course, the new prophet who unites both classical and marginalist traditions, Alfred Marshall. The influence of these European authors – and many other besides them; mainstreamers, marginalists, Marxists, or whatever – was spread by young students who visited Europe, and often completed their studies in German universities.[72] Of the American economists, Richard Ely was one of the most influential commentators of the late nineteeth century, on the campuses, at least.

Ely was among the first of these "German" economists. He did his Master's thesis in Europe. He then taught at Johns Hopkins University for eleven years (1881–1892). The German *Historismus*, the historical school of Schmoller and Roscher, obviously impressed him. The methods and structure that Ely utilized

70 Strong 1988, 26
71 Strong 1988, 35
72 In fact, American churchmen had discovered German universities earlier, well before the Civil War. See Eisenach 1994

in his works were adopted from Schmoller, and the principles of inductive methodology were explicitly declared in the first programs of the American Economic Association (AEA) which was founded in 1885. Ely himself thought this event as a revolutionary endeavor of epoch-making importance. It was a protest against Sumnerian laissez-faire economics and a support of the new inductive methods. All these facts are exposed in his early writings.[73]

The guiding principle of AEA was the belief that the state should be an "agency for positive assistance to achieve human progress". The flourishing time of the historical school in the AEA remained ephemeral as we already mentioned, but Ely himself preserved this point of view all his life. It can be seen surprisingly strong as late as in 1917. He then described the AEA as "a protest against that excessive cultivation of deduction and that narrow view of the scope of economics, which shut men's eyes to the economic significance of conservation. Furthermore this association in its statement of principles antagonized laissez-faire, which in its very essence is fatal to conservation."[74] The concept of "conservation" will rise as a central term in Ely's later studies. We will return to it in the next sub-chapter.

Deductive methods and the historical approach were the lessons of German *Historismus* that were adopted by the American historical school. Another yet was the emphasis on institutions and practices which were understood as developing in time and in society. The institutions were not aspects of eternity but changing factors. This principle is also maintained by Ely in his later writings.

In fact, the AEA also had an American predecessor in the works of Simon N. Patten and E.J. James, who had proposed to organize another association entitled the Society for the Study of National Economy.[75] This proposal never succeeded. Patten was later to become appreciated for his studies considering monopolies and trusts in America, and his influence on Richard Ely through these later contributions is obvious. Patten, however, partly remained in the deductive tradition of American economics. For him, consumption is a sector completely under the deductive laws that can be traced to humanity, or even to fauna. "The theory of consumption rests upon the laws of pleasure and pain, modified by the social environment in which men live..." And "for pleasure we

73 Ely 1884, 7-8
74 Ely 1917, 14-15
75 Ely 1917, 15

can substitute utility".[76] Patten often takes illustrations from biology trying to deduce economical conclusions even from the consumption of boa.

The late 19th century was also the very time when the old science of political economy was dispersing or converting into three future separate fields of research. American political science, economics and, in part, also sociology, were developing by the end of the century. The developing process is visibly revealed in the minutest care of definitions in almost all scholars' texts of the time. For instance, the substantial word *economy* was under survey. The most crucial terms considering economics were *wealth, value, capital, income, wage* and *money*, and, of course, there were plenty of others beside these. *Wealth* was taken, perhaps, as the primary one, owing its importance to such classics as Smith's "Wealth of Nations". On the other hand, concepts like *luxury, waste* or *consumption* did not usually occupy such a central place.

In the case of *wealth* the disagreement was usually connected to the scope and content of the word. What is the genesis of wealth? What kind of activities produce wealth? Does the concept cover all kinds of properties like stocks and money, or just fixed possessions, such as apartments, or nothing else but soil? Or should it include also some psychic capacities or propensities? Henry George listed dozens of differing definitions in his "The Science of Political Economy" (1897),[77] but based his own studies mostly on the physiocratic conception of soil as the premier source of wealth. But not without human actors: the true meaning of wealth is "value from production", the transmutation of labor into wealth in the exchange process; thus the land as soil, in reality, is to the political economist no wealth at all.[78] In the beginning of the following century the conceptions become established in use. Irving Fisher, for example, takes it as a matter of course that any occupation is able to produce wealth. Richard Ely is one of the most important figures in defining formulations for economic science.

"The Distribution of Wealth, a General Examination on Economics" serves as a good illustration of Ely's conception of economics. It is just as monumental a book as the very massive products of German *Historismus* were supposed to and used to be, and the content is represented emphasizing the historical con-

76 Patten 1889,vii,16
77 George 1897, 117-130. Originally this text book of George was posthumously published by his son, Henry George Jr. in the very year of the author's decease.
78 George 1897, 265, 276, 291

nections of phenomena. It is divided into five main divisions, which are termed "Books", and some of them were indeed later published in book form. So, Ely's volume of nearly three hundred pages, "Monopolies and Trusts" (1900) is originally just a part of Book I: The Fundamentals on the Existing Socio-Economic Order. The larger part of "Monopolies and Trusts" is dealing with the historical facts, etymology and meaning of monopoly, citing numerous examples from the texts of various economic scholars. This makes it "*Historismus*", but this also makes his books especially serviceable for our purpose: they are full of conceptual definitions and representations of their historical roots. Some names of his projects even sound like historical works, during this period of the historical school peculiarly so. In the 1880s Ely wrote a series of articles considering the history of socialistic persuasion. It covers the texts "French and German Socialism", "Recent American Socialism" and finally "The Labor Movement in America".[79] The last of these was based on the former lectures, but it was essentially more comprehensive. In large part, the texts are identical from word to word. Ely confesses in the preface that it could have been entitled "The History of Labor in the New World", but because of modesty he did not dare to call it so.

At first sight it cannot be understood by an objective reader of today that Ely really was attacked for socialism because of these works. In his book on the labor movement he consciously takes a distance from the movement proper. There is an observable breath of suspense in most parts of these books. Ely seems to deprecate the violent methods of the anarchists and he, a regular church-goer, clearly abandons their atheistic creed.[80] Ely was a deeply religious man himself, one of the main lay figures in the social gospel movement. But, as we will notice later, this was nothing curious among American left-wing authors. At first sight socialism really seems to be of some importance to Ely, or more precisely: according to him there is something in socialism that needs reparation; the closing chapter of "Recent American Socialism" is entitled "Remedies".

However, in this last section of "Labor Movement in America" Ely's sympathies begin to be revealed. As a remedy he recommends the legalization of labor unions. And thus he boldly enters into the suspicious area of the distribution of wealth. Ely sustains the critical attitude towards waste which has been presented loudly in the socialistic periodicals. However, he refers with abhorrence to the

79 Ely 1885; Ely 1886
80 Ely 1885, 35-46

vulgar war cries like "War to the palace, peace to the cottage, death to luxurious idleness!"[81] and denounces the acceptance by which some of those periodicals, "The Truth", for example, seems to sustain the assassination of members of the ruling classes. From Ely's angle of vision this is un-Christian, simple hatred, and it is definitely to be denounced. And, indeed, the ingenuity in nourishing hate in these journals is conspicuous. As an illustration we can pick up from Ely's book the following:

> A number of Truth published two years ago [Jan. 16, 1884] contained the bill of fare of a rich man's dinner, which laborers are adviced [sic!] to cut out and paste on their 'old tin coffee pot at home'. (Ely 1886, 266)

Ely also presents a list of headings under which the known labor periodicals have published accurate lists of rich men in the chief cities of the United States; there are headings like:

> DOLLARS.
> More men in the United States who have robbed us.
> The grand Larcenists of America.
> The People who have Legally Stolen the Unpaid Wages of the Workers.

The purpose of these and likely announcements is simply to excite hatred. Ely prefers not to tolerate this. But, then, as a personal and general opinion Ely points out that socialists' claims cannot be unjust simply because they are made by socialists. Besides he maintains their opinion of the vice of waste and luxury.

> A specific vice of our time, and one which political economists of all schools condemn, is extravagance and luxury. It is waste of economic powers, injuring those who indulge in it, and exciting envy and bitterness in the minds of those who are excluded. (Ely 1885, 71-72 and 1886, 317-318)

Ely presents his thoughts of luxury more punctually in "Outlines of Economics", published first in 1891. In this textbook luxury is defined simply as excessive consumption.[82] At the first hearing the definition may sound easy, but it is not. Ely makes a

81 Cited from Ely 1886, 256
82 Ely 1891, 230

careful investigation to define what determines whether consumption is excessive or not.

> The *excessive consumption* which constitutes luxury is therefore a consumption in excess of man's fundamental claims, which are in general, *first, the right to as full satisfaction of wants as can be accorded to all; second, the right to as free a development of his wants as can be enjoyed by all.* (Ely 1891, 232, his italics)

Ely takes up a proposition which has sometimes been presented in defence of luxurious waste; namely, that it provides occasions for the unemployed. But why not give useful employment? Why not produce needful goods?[83] Ely was convinced that waste always impoverishes. He attempts to prove it with a couple of illustrations.

> A lady will spend $500 for a dress, and excuse her extravagance on the plea, that it furnishes work for the poor. She overlooks the obvious fact that the same sum spent in clothing the aged and infirm would furnish an equal amount of employment. (Ely 1886, 317n)

The other examples are similar. We have to notice here, first of all, that luxury always associates itself with waste in Ely's texts. Thus luxury is to be condemned. Secondly, we have to remark that the reason of the condemnation is, in fact, a moral one and Ely thus seems to make his denunciation more as a Christian than as a leading economist writer, though he intends the opposite. His concept of luxury does not differ much from the Marxian concept as a vertical departure from the consumption level of the others. Naturally, the luxury could be seen otherwise, as well. Another profoundly Christian political scientist, Henry George, finds luxury in the cultivation of any one of our daily enjoyments.[84] Anybody can eat eggs or fish, but George's "luxurious idler" has on his table only new-laid eggs and fish which were swimming in the sea only twenty-four hours ago. And the idler can obtain his luxuries of the highest stratifications with his inherited money. In his final accusations Ely is no longer as distant from the studied socialists or from the coming muckraker journalists. The next citation mislead-

83 Ely 1891, 234

84 George 1879, 32. George also saw luxury as waste when he wrote about "useless luxury", see 1879, 46. He was also conscious of the distinction between necessities and luxuries, 1897, 82-83

ingly suggests Lincoln Steffens' revealing articles at the beginning of the 20th century.

> There is one administration for the poor, another for the rich, and still another, widely different, for the vast corporations. It is idle to deny this. Everybody knows it, and the laborers resent it bitterly. (Ely 1886, 326)

Administrative and economic injustice clearly troubled Ely all his life. In his early works he studied socialists, marginalists and single taxers, but the only answer was adapted from the preaching of social gospelers. There was surely inequality in administration as well as in the distribution of wealth. Ely knew all this misuse and felt that, somehow, it must have been wrong. But he could not see what to do with the problem. His decent conventionality hindered him from adapting the radical democratic or radical socialist tenets. Instead of some radical confessions Ely now directed his reasoning to a new part of the problem. Some people were very rich, others very poor. But if these were but exceptions? How about the great majority? And, are the many poor because the few are so rich?

Another political economist endeavoring to clarify the correlation of rich and poor was George. He identified the cultural and social relativity that involved all definitions considering richness and poverty. Notwithstanding this problematic situation, he argued for certain principles that enable us to say with scientific precision if a man is rich or poor. One who can command more service than he need render, is rich. On the contrary, one is poor, if he can command less service than he is willing to render.[85] Ely tried to solve the question by comparing the development in the concentration of wealth in the USA between 1886 and 1896.[86] He found out that there was a significant growth in the number of millionaires in America, but the very meaning of the millionaire class had been changed by the same token, because of inflation and the betterments in the living conditions of the people. Thus, no simple answers were given to his questions.

85 George 1897, 305-306
86 Ely 1903, 255-269

2.1.2. The Relation of Consumption and Destruction

It is often in elementary school books that the most careful formulations of terms can be found. Ely wrote a couple of textbooks that do not make an exception in this regard. Luxury is already minutely discussed above, and the concepts of consumption and waste are also to come under a more careful definition in these textbooks for the students of economics. In Ely's analysis, consumption does not present itself simply as the counterpart of production but is a complicated term that demands qualification. All in all, we can distinguish seven points in Ely's definition of consumption.[87]

- The difference between consumption of goods and destruction of matter. (In consumption man destroys matter as little as in production he produces it.)
- The difference between economic, purposeful consumption and a mere natural using off.
- The difference between consumption and destruction in general.
- The remark that the consumption of an item is not necessarily a better thing than its destruction. (It is morally better for a person to burn his property than to drink it.)
- The remark that consumption does not need to be a rapid process. (All products, in practice, are used up at last.)
- The difference between productive and final consumption.
- The impossibility of consuming future earnings.

Each one of these remarks is then treated in detail. Ely's examples are often amusing, but at the same time simple and illustrative. We direct our attention merely to those points which were clearly original in nature, or not commonly understood. First, we notice that, according to the list above Ely does not clearly connect consumption to utility. The difference between destruction and consumption does not lie in the pointless annihilation of a thing in one case, and its satisfying consumption in another. Destruction, it seems, can hardly be involved with growing utility; it always destroys or diminishes possible utilities. But in the case of consumption the connection is obscured by human moral choices. The following quotes will make this statement clear.

87 Ely 1891, 219-222

> Consumption does not include the passage of goods into their basic elements by the simple action of nature, such as rotting or dying. (Ely 1891, 219)

> Wood burned in a stove is consumed, because it satisfies wants; burned in conflagration, it is only destroyed. Moreover, a good may satisfy certain wants and still be destroyed, as when we warm a house by burning furniture [...] All processes which destroy or diminish possible utilities are destruction, not consumption. (220)

> It is undoubtedly better for a man to burn his furniture to warm his house than to sell it to buy drink, but economically the one is destruction and the other consumption. (ibid.)

Consumption always brings satisfaction, but it is subjective in nature. We have to remember all the time that economic interests are not our only interests, nor are they always in harmony with each other. This is why both consumption and destruction can satisfy needs; both can be felt as a useful event. And at the same time both can be detrimental to society as a whole and even to the individual himself. In scientific discourse all these different cases must be kept separate. Ely thus talks about consumption in general but also with various attributes. In his book we find such concepts as "harmful consumption" (p. 236), "excessive consumption" (p. 230) and "wasteful consumption" (p. 234).

Ely was unable to accept any reasonable justification for excessive consumption. The positive influence on employment, for example, did not work. According to Ely, excessive consumption is always imperatively wasteful. The only reason he could find for the "wasteful consumption" of luxuries was the simple fact of ownership.[88] Goods are consumed simply because they are owned. The explanation did not convince such a morally strong person as Ely. Besides it sounded naive. The same is true regarding the harmful consumption of intoxicating liquors and other narcotics. Prohibitionism was one of the main theses in the programs of social gospelers. But here Ely underlines his role as an eminent scholar of economic science; and this statement is made before the social Christian agitation had been started: "Whatever may be said for this [harmful] consumption from other standpoints, the economist must deprecate it."[89] As we know, Ely was a strong adherent of prohibitionism.

88 Ely 1891, 233
89 Ely 1891, 237

It is interesting to remark how Ely does not favor the use of the word *waste* in this narrow sphere of luxurious and harmful items. So, we meet this term (waste) in his "Elementary Principles of Economics" (1904 and 1917) in just two connections: only the chapters regarding the topics of luxuries and harmful consumption have been treated in their titles as waste.[90] Elsewhere he makes use of such expressions as *economy*, *spending*, and *expenditure*.

Ely is the prime representative of American *Historismus*. However, he did the greater part of his lifework later, when the period of historical methods in the American Economic Association was over. The debate around deductive methods died slowly (the association itself did not die yet); but Ely never surrendered. He kept the critical tune in his books and made use of the historical point of view all of his life. He was attacked in his university, Johns Hopkins, because, in his lectures, he frequently defended the right of workers to bargain and to strike. Finally this led him to withdraw from his post, but he never changed his methodological principles.

Most of his work Ely did at the University of Wisconsin, although he was still attacked for socialism. He was even investigated by the authorities for his connections with strikers and socialists, but he was absolved by the Board of Regents. However, in this regard his methodological choices and the interest in the labor movement are the only radicalism we can find in Ely's works that has something to do with socialism. For the first and the most Ely was a lay exponent of Christian radicalism of the 1890s. Waste, wealth, and consumption received differing degrees of attention from Ely during this Wisconsin time. The new century came with its new topics of discussion. In Wisconsin, an active group of ecologically oriented scholars discussed the conservation of the natural resources for the future generations, one more school of thought which had been initiated in Europe. Ely was not the prime mover in this discussion, but he presently found his place among the other "conservationists".

2.1.3. The First Conservationists

The first man labelled as conservationist in America was the geologist John Wesley Powell. He was the chief of a survey group with the task of the geologic

90 Ely and Wicker 1917, 120-122

mapping of the USA soil.[91] Powell, if anyone, was an expert. He made measurements and calculations in many states and recommended the establishment of special conservation programs. The first steps of conservation had been taken five decades after Walden, but the basis was now laid on the ground of hard facts, delineations and calculations, not of puritanism, the religious ideal of poorness or the simple value of nature. With Powell's report the interest in the tenure of natural resources also emerged into popular discourse of common men. What happens, if there is no gold left to be found? Or, if timber is definitely cut down? The ethical foundations of conservation suddenly drifted away. At any rate, Powell's survey inclined the popular way of thought towards conservationism. It produced scientific information about American mineral stock, as well. Now, specific federal programs were claimed to regulate the scarce resources revealed in the research project.

Gifford Pinchot was nominated the first chief forester by President Theodore Roosevelt. In 1908 these two men planned and called into session the first governmental meeting on conservation of natural resources (Governors' Conference on the Conservation of National Resources, May 13, 1908). The main purpose in this governmental crusade for nature was to get use of resources under the scientific management and regulation of the federal government.[92] As we can see, the project was reasoned with efficacy and propriety. It was an expression of the general ideals of expertism that were dispersed everywhere by the engineer movement (e.g. Taylor's scientific management) during the progressive era.

Pinchot identified the conservation movement with three principle goals: (1) to develop America's natural resources and make them for the present generation, (2) to prevent waste (from forest fires for example), and (3) to develop and reserve the country's natural resources "for the benefit of many, and not merely for the profit of a few".[93] The future ideals of conservation were still far ahead. As motives behind Pinchot's goals, we can find economic and technical advancement, technological rationalism in disguised form: wasting natural resources is economically and materially unwise on the long run. Resources are more useful, and for more people, if the federation regulates their use.

91 Strong 1988, 52-53
92 Strong, 1988, 61-62
93 Pinchot 1910, 43-46

The Pinchot committee also made the first predictions about the sufficiency of resources. According to his pessimistic estimations in 1910, timber would last only 30 years at the present cutting rate, and coal would be gone in two hundred years. These predictions are provocative, of course, but they worked well in raising discussion. We cannot find very high-minded principles in the motives of the conservation movement. Anyhow, Powell and Pinchot were pioneers on their area. They were not utopians or loners but specialists. They were not looked upon as radicals at all. They represented the federal government, the highest rationalism and progress in their actions. And still, their programs were an attempt to control private wealth for public ends. The conservation movement typified this spirit.

There emerged radical tendencies, too. A much more radical conservationist, John Muir, conflicted openly with Pinchot, his former collegue. Muir, Pinchot and Charles Sargent (who was the chairman of the commission) shared the conviction that a system of forest protection was sorely needed, but Muir sided with Sargent against Pinchot in reducing the use of timber immediately, by whatever means. He even favoured army protection for the forest reserves.[94]

2.1.4. Waste and Conservation as Counterconcepts

The first stages of the conservation movement were material and its connection to mystic-puritan transcendentalism was really discrete. Conservation was not yet guided along the principles of tenuring advancement. The conservation programs were stated in order to bring existing resources as perfectly used as possible. Pinchot talks in his program about prohibiting the waste of resources, but waste does not mean, in this connection, squandering induced by humans, but the unfortunate situation that a good is left economically unemployed. In this sense a fire in the wood, for example, is waste. Timber gets demolished and without any practical use. At the turn of the century the conservation movement was typified by a material approach, expertism and the quest for efficiency.[95] The power of technical knowledge can already be seen in the fact that these

94 Strong 1988, 98-99; Muir 1901
95 See e.g. Hayes 1959, 265

heralds of conservation, Pinchot and Powell, did not show interest in conceptualizing the phenomena in question. They did not analyze what was actually happening when an item was conserved, used, consumed or wasted. Pinchot started his work straight from conserving programs. In 1909, he supervised 149 national forests covering 193 million acres.[96] The conceptualizing was left to economists.

Academic conservationism differed strikingly from the direct policies drawn up by engineers. The unquestionable main character in American conservationism was Richard C. Van Hise. His book "Conservation in America" (1910) is a classic. Van Hise unhesitatingly introduces scientific circles as the main origin of the movement, such as the National Academy of Sciences, for example, and the impact of European universities, again.[97] He also mentions the Roosevelt commission and Gifford Pinchot's merits in it. Following Pinchot's example, he travels through all the natural resources, makes calculations about their appearence and future sufficiency. Viewed from the conceptual angle of vision, a more interesting economist is Richard Ely, a theorist profoundly in love with general definitions. As a textbook maker he sets down definitions of whatsoever economic phenomena in his large volumes of teaching. This makes it possible to use Ely's texts to exemplify the regular conceptions in the whole conservationist movement.

The main interests of the Wisconsin group of scholars were in the cessation of waste and the induction of progress. This was attempted in the reform spirit of the progressive movement. The group was called conservationist because of their crucial emphasis on conserving natural resources. The school had its roots in Europe but in Europe the formulation of conservation policies was more completely in the hands of economists. In America the discussion had sprung from the field of natural sciences; engineers, geologists and agriculturists had played important roles until Ely and Van Hise, two professors at the university of Wisconsin, took the lead.[98] Van Hise's role in this movement was central and it was through his works that the economists participated in the discussion. Both felt grievance for the soil, forests, minerals etc. And this feeling tended to spread

96 Filler 1996, 364
97 Van Hise 1910, 3-8
98 Leith 1917, 188

generally among the economists. So marginalists like J.B. Clark were discussing the conservation of national resources, too.[99]

Many of the conservationist authors worked at the University of Wisconsin. Ely collected their essays into book form and published them; he was the editor of the Citizen's Library of Economics, Politics and Sociology. In "The Foundations of National Prosperity" (1917), we can see many characteristics of war-time, the time of "preparedness". During the war it was necessary to guide people to conserve old, but still useful items and to recruit them for the needs of the army, navy and air-force. The conservation ideas that had formerly sounded vulgar, old-fashioned or utopian were suddenly in vogue among military leaders.

There is no exact opposite for the concept of waste. *Waste* does not mean simple consumption of things only; it consists of a further negative influence, so the exact counterconcept should cover not only the maintenance but also a further improvement and even justice in distribution. *Conservation* is Ely's (as well as other conservationists') proposal for this kind of counterconcept of waste. These two concepts, *waste* and *conservation*, are the most central terms in the discussion of national prosperity.

The largest part of the book, and Ely's section in whole, is, indeed, dedicated to the definition of these central concepts. He makes a difference between waste in production and waste in consumption. The former is defined as follows:

> By wasteful production we mean production which yields a total return to all the factors of production less than that which some other available employment of the same factors would yield at a particular time and place. (Ely 1917, 27)

To get the best possible product, all natural resources have to be classified according to their scarcity, abundance and exhaustability. This was attempted by Ralph H. Hess.[100] He divided the natural resources into six groups. Different resources are to be treated differently. This leads conservationists to emphasize future values. Ely also recognizes the needs of future generations when he adds that "conservation means a sacrifice of the present generation to the future generations, whenever it is carried far..."[101]

99 Clark 1914, 20-21
100 Hess 1917, 117
101 Ely 1917, 33

Thus, conservation as a single principle of action involves the equal importance of future wants and present wants. The conservationists are forerunners of this ecological point of view and consequently – somewhat broadly taken – of the present greens. Van Hise put this thesis of conservation very pointedly: "Conservation means the greatest good to the greatest number – and that for the longest time."[102] And Ely himself: "Every step forward in civilization means increased regard for the interests of the future."[103] Civilization means regard for the future, and waste in production is regardlessness of future needs.

Waste in consumption is defined as follows:

> We may divide waste in consumption into several categories, e.g. *absolute waste, waste plus* and *relative waste. Absolute waste* means simply destruction of economic goods without any appreciable return, as when good food is thrown into the garbage pail or when serviceable clothing is destroyed. [...] When consumption produces positive harm we have *waste plus* and this happens when an excessive amount of food is consumed, impairing intellectual activity and producing diseased conditions of the body. [...] *Relative waste* in consumption is disproportionate consumption. *That may be regarded as wasteful consumption which is disproportionate consumption with respect to the needs of the others.* (Ely 1917, 39-40, his italics)

The ethical level of conservation is here called into discussion. According to Ely it is the duty of every government to regulate competition both in production and in consumption and thus in part to prohibit waste.[104] One of his favorite illustrations is the case of timber, a commonly utilized example in the literature of the time. The American conception of private property is too expensive; it causes waste. Ely recommends a new system of public ownership for forests. Of course, he cannot recommend the direct socialization of soil, but, like George, he sees taxation as a good means of public ownership over a longer period.

Another conservationist, Thomas Carver, took up waste and conservation of human resources. For him conservation means the prevention of waste or destruction;[105] it does not mean keeping something out of use as we might pre-

102 C.R.Van Hise: *The Conservation of Natural Resources in the United States*, 379; cit. in Ely 1917, 37
103 Ely 1917, 39
104 Ely 1917, 42-43
105 Carver 1917, 276

sume. Conservation is almost the same thing as civilization, which is defined by Carver as "progressive elimination of waste in the expenditure of human energy".[106] To maximize conservation we should eliminate the sources of waste; and as such Carver distinguishes three origins in all. Waste is due to idleness (as in the cases of the unemployed, member of the leisure class, gourmand, pensioner, priest, or lawyer) to ignorance or to vice (as in the case of drunkenness). The first reason receives the largest attention.

Ely sees wealth as the primary cause in the formation of economic classes for two reasons. It is a mark of distinction and it fortifies one's personal power.[107] In this kind of argumentation we can identify the influence of Veblen's imitation theory of consumption that was explicated in "The Theory of the Leisure Class" in 1899. This is how Ely presents the people's conception of inherited wealth and life in leisure:

> Step by step the wealth-producing members of society have won for themselves social recognition, and to day we in America look with growing disfavor upon an inherited income without engaging in some 'useful' occupation. (Ely 1903, 75)

According to Ely, the Americans had imitated the leisurely life styles of the rich, but disfavor – the new social order – was growing. Ely surely knew Veblen's writings on this topic; he refers in this connection to Veblen's dichotomy between pecuniary and industrial occupations and their impact in class formation a few pages later.[108] But he disagrees with the black-and-white outcome of this reasoning: in reality we do not have simply good poor men and simply bad rich men.[109]

106 Carver 1917, 277
107 Ely 1903, 81-82
108 Ely 1903, 80
109 Ely 1903, 83-84

2.1.5. The Inheritants of Ely's Critique: Institutionalism as a Protest Movement

We have already mentioned Veblen, John R. Commons and Wesley Clair Mitchell as the three founding fathers of institutional economics. One landmark in the history of American institutionalism is surely Veblen's article "Why Is Economics not an Evolutionary Science?" (1898), the first in a critical series of writings in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. It was soon followed by others like "The Preconceptions of Economic Science I-III" (1899–1900), "Industrial and Pecuniary Employments" (1901) and "The Place of Science in Modern Civilisation" (1906). Veblen's contribution to institutional economics is unquestionable. We have, however, noticed that many characteristics of this school are traceable back to the pleas of Professor Ely and his historical school. Such are the emphasis on the significance of institutions and on the historical angle of vision.

John R. Commons is another of the main contributors in institutional economics. He, in fact, began his career as Ely's discipline a little bit earlier than Veblen. His first major treatise in economic theory "The Distribution of Wealth" was published in 1893 and it already contained the foundations of his future institutionalism, still in obscure form. Although plenty of sympathy for the marginal school of Jevons (and Clark in America, of course) can be seen in this work – even the very name of the book suggests the marginal school – it differs from Clark's contemporaneous work with precisely the same name.

In his "Distribution of Wealth" Commons also shares with Veblen the interest in the life of the very rich; but not in so conspicuous form. The book ends with lists of millionaires, monopolies and their fortunes.[110] Commons attaches our interests to the difficulties in defining the limits of distribution and exchange. He finds that the poor are more likely to consume in mere quantity, much more than the rich who take into account the improvements in quality and variety.[111] The fact was noticed by Veblen, too.

In the *Methodenstreit* Commons passed little by little from the inductive and qualitative analysis favoured by Ely to the methods of pure quantitative analysis and to statistics. Thus Commons dived into endless statistics whereas the other founding father, Mitchell, maintained and even underlined the significance of

110 Commons 1893, 253-256
111 Commons 1893, 12

qualitative analysis. In 1924 he asked if we had any evidence that quantitative analysis is to take over the tasks in which qualitative analysis had made headway.[112] And it was Mitchell, not Commons, who was working with statistics.

It was as late as 1934 that Commons wrote his main work on institutionalism. In this "Institutionalist Economics" he did not lean on Ely's economics but identified Veblen as one of the main founders in the institutional school and completely accepted his definition of the intangible value of property which was based on expected earning power only, literally at only pecuniary valuation, and not on the industrial valuation of production.[113] Immaterial wealth and immaterial assets are other terms of Commons that were adapted from Veblen.

2.1.6. Summary: The Definitions of Consumption in Ely's Works

Richard Ely's contributions to American economics covers the precarious period of change when the science of political economy was to disperse into separate social, political and economical sciences. At the same time that was a period of careful scientific definitions, as well. The terminology of expenditure was not analyzed as minutely as we could hope. Ely, however, was seeking to formulate lexical definitions for whatever phenomena, for the consumptive operations in economy, too. His minute definitions for waste (absolute waste, relative waste and waste plus) are unique.

He soon made some astute notes considering our expenditure. The satisfaction inflicted by consumption is always subjective in nature. And destruction can satisfy needs as well as consumption. This forced Ely to make a difference between social and individual utilities and detriments. In scientific discourse all these different cases must be carefully kept apart. Ely talks about consumption as a general term and with various attributes, such as harmful, excessive and wasteful consumption, all of which were objects of deprecation for Ely.

It is to be noticed that Ely denounces luxurism and waste as a Christian, not as a leading economic writer. Instead of cultivation or elaboration in daily expenditure he saw – like the socialists he was studying – luxury as a vertical

112 Mitchell 1925, 23
113 Commons 1934, 650

departure from the average consumption level. Ely legitimately states that there is no exact opposite for the concept of waste, for it does not mean only the simple consumption of things. In Ely's vocabulary it consists of a further negative influence, so the exact counterconcept should suggest not only the maintenance but also a further improvement of conditions and justice in distribution. Conservation is Ely's proposal for this kind of counterconcept of waste.

2.2. Conspicuous Waste in Thorstein Veblen's Works

2.2.1. The Originality of Veblen's Ideas

In methods and style of approach Ely's historical school had much in common with Veblen's institutional methodology. But where Ely's emphasis stood in historical discussion Veblen underlines the importance of institutions.

Thorstein Bunde Veblen was born in 1857 in Manitowok, Wisconsin. His parents were immigrants for whom a Norwegian, Lutheran upbringing formed the stable basis for life. The Veblens lived in a small Scandinavian community in which the mother tongue was Norse, the real fatherland Norway, and the only legitime ruler the king of Norway. Thorstein Veblen, too, spoke Norse until he entered Carleton College at the age of sixteen. The further details of his life have been magnificently narrated by Joseph Dorfman in his biographical volume "Thorstein Veblen and His America".[114] The Norwegian background is here taken up merely because it offers a satisfying explanation for Veblen's curious personal isolationism. He seems to have been almost a total outsider all of his life, not only during his studies but also in his research work, which he carried out in four American universities altogether. In the most recent studies the Dorfmanian "Veblen legend" has also been questioned. All social scientists do not agree with his interpretation. Perhaps Veblen was not that isolated if he was at all. According to his first wife, however, Veblen remained somewhat like a stranger even inside his own family.[115] What others thought of as advertising, Veblen discussed as sabotage; what commonly was taken as decent habits, he represented as conspicuous leisure and consumption; a walking stick was a

114 Dorfman 1947

115 Ellen R. Veblen to Eugene V. Debs, June 30, 1921. In *Letters of Eugene V. Debs*, 1990, vol. 3, 1919-1926, 234-235

weapon to him; a decorous dress an evidence of subserving status and humble stance. Veblen was able to interprete anew the world around him.

Veblen was one of the very first economists ever who obviously realized that economy really consists of two sectors, there always has to be both production and consumption in a running society. As we have seen, Richard Ely directed considerable attention to the definition of consumption and studied it minutely. The target of his research, however, stood in other fields of economy. The classic economic theory of Smith, Malthus and Ricardo distinguished productive and consumptive sectors, of course, but the latter was simply a question of pure classification for these theorists. The subject of their examination and observation did not lie in consumption, not even in production; classic economic analysis concentrated totally on the marginal area between these sectors, on the exchange and the distribution of goods and wealth. Production was taken to form an area where the goods were produced, and consumption another area where they were consumed. These were handled as fixed blocks, almost impossible to open.

The same was not true for the actions in the exchange process. The typical, basic questions of economics considered supply and demand and the balance of markets. This was the area where the real incidents seemed to happen. The seller and buyer met at markets, making their offers and taking their decisions according to the information they had. Both mainstream economics and its prime challenger at the end of the nineteenth century, the marginal school of Stanley Jevons – represented in America by Clark – both accentuated the significance of markets; both were interested in the very act of exchange.

Even if the mainstreamers were interested in wealth – such as Irving Fisher, one of the most beguiling scholars among Veblen's contemporaries in economics – they suffered from a shortage of concepts considering the phenomena of the consumption process. In "The Nature of Capital and Income" (1906), for example, Fisher's basic concepts are *property*, *wealth*, *price*, *income* and *utility*.[116] These are, in fact, his favourite concepts in most of his major works, namely in "The Rate of Interest" (1907) and "The Purchasing Power of Money" (1911, revised edition 1922).

116 Fisher 1906, 3-47

In the first-named volume of four hundred and twenty pages of luminous reasoning, Fisher refers to consumption about ten times; conventionally as the final sling in the chain of the life history of capital.[117] And he has no means to intrude inside the proper phenomena of consumption. For Fisher consumption remains just the closed box we referred to above. In his later works, it is still referred to simply as the end of production.[118] Only cursorily does he mention such things as the ambition to become rich at once and the connection between increasing luxury, excessive expenditure and the cyclical crises.[119]

The same lack of concepts regarding the consumption of wealth can be seen in the representations of the other stream of orthodox economics. Clark, in his marginalism, tends to attach all other economic phenomena to production – which too is a problematic definition – but makes a distinction with proper consumption; it must be an individualistic process.[120] Clark too, defines consumption as the counterpart of production. These two terms "constitute the whole economic process", "production and consumption exhaust the whole economy".[121] He denounces the consumption of luxuries quite directly when he makes clear his admiration of the Puritan Church ideals.[122] Clark did not have the same evolutionist ties that prevented Veblen from making such valuations.

Simon Patten is one of the authors who carefully repeat the theses of European economists. Patten, in his "Consumption of Wealth", leans on the old law of Say: "All that is produced will find consumers; if there is no obstacle in the way."[123] He also applies classical analysis to American millionaires. They have a right to their fortunes.[124] But Patten also saw the widening cultural gap between the social classes and made the first serious effort to understand "abundance" as a new economic reality. He wrote about special "American conditions" and the exceptional American identity that should be taken into account by political economists. He also lists human rights in the very spirit of progressivism.[125]

117 Fisher 1906, 152, 164-165
118 Fisher 1930, 454
119 Fisher 1922, 266-269. Fisher takes up this cluster of phenomena just because he refers to a French economist Clément Juglar. Fisher himself attempts to stay inside the narrowly economical meanings of words; he clearly tries to restrict the sociological sphere out of the economical one.
120 Clark 1899, 23
121 Clark 1899, 24
122 Clark 1887, 230-231
123 Patten 1889, v
124 Patten 1902, 75-76
125 See Trachtenberg 1982, 151-153

The greatest dissident in economic thought, Karl Marx, had already made an attempt to brake the ruling scheme. He had emphatically underlined the meaning of production. In his "The Capital" Marx even dared to enter inside the doors of factories, which was almost unheard of in economic analysis. The themes of the whole first part of "The Capital" differ from the classical point of view. How are objects produced? How can the value of an object on markets be traced back to the value of labor in production? And how is labor exhausted in production? Marx's central objects of interest are clearly production and usually capital markets.

There also exists a large Marxian tradition of consumption theory. In fact, it is not Marx's own theoretical creature even if it is founded on his differentiation between exchange value and use value, which was first manifested in "Misery of Philosophy" and repeated in the first part of "The Capital".[126] Of course, the same differentiation had already been made by numerous classic economists, Ricardo, Say, Sismondi etc.[127]

A well-known later form of this tradition is Wolfgang F. Haug's critique of aesthetics in consumable goods (e.g. *Warenästhetik und kapitalistische Massenkultur*, 1980). There the Marxian tradition comes nearest to the consumption sector; it analyzes the precise moment when an object meets the consumer. However, the very process of consumption of goods still remains unreached by this traditon as well as, actually, the process of production.

Consumption is quite illustrative as a word. It means that the good, the subject of use, is literally exhausted, *consumed*. When the process of consumption is over the good exists no longer. Food is destroyed in the moment of its use; clothing perishes more slowly and furniture more slowly still. This is noticed by Clark, but like Ely, he states that this exhaustion of the good is not the essential part of the process; the benefit that is induced by the consumption is.[128] The same semantic tone is present in the French word *consumation* (vs. *consommation*), and in many other languages as well. The Finnish word *kulutus*, for example, contains the same undertone of exhaustion, though Finnish belongs to the definitely different Fenno-Ugrian language family. Here we must

126 Marx 1971, 486-; Marx 1989, 63-73

127 It is commonly known, that there are wide theoretical differences between young Marx's works on the one hand and his later works on the other. The earlier were founded mostly on Ricardian conceptions while in "The Capital" Marx was consciously trying to break his ties to Ricardian theory. Here we have no purpose for further discussion on this item.

128 Clark 1907, 25n

have attained something characteristical of the phenomenon of consumption, something completely outside the scope of the classic theorists.

So, we have two sides in the economy, production and consumption; and we also have two kind of markets, markets for goods and markets for capital. There is, however, a surprising lack of writers who would direct their attention specifically to the consumption part of the economy; or, these authors begin to appear uncommonly late. Even the most recent studies of this area have had a tendency to remain as the analysis of exchange, perhaps because of the neoclassic and Marxian influence. We can find only a couple of exceptions among the classics of modern economics. Veblen is one of them with his "The Theory of the Leisure Class", and he is the only one who has identified himself as an economist. The others worth mentioning were the German sociologist Georg Simmel (*The Philosophy of Money*, 1900) and a notable critic of capitalism Werner Sombart (*Luxury and Capitalism*, 1913). Today both of them are big names in sociology, not in economics, but neither Simmel nor Sombart has attained his position for their works with luxury and consumption. However, Simmel expresses very competently the peculiar position which consumption holds in our life.

There is a long tradition of poverty studies both in Europe and America. We take a closer look at them when discussing the demands for social reform in the social gospel movement. But luxuries are not a white spot on the map of historical knowledge either. There are many well-known works considering the life styles of the rich, their jewels, castles and vehicles. Everywhere the nobility has conventionally formed the cultural sphere where things happened; the direction where we have had something really worth reporting. It has never been taken as a newsworthy curiosity if a poor man has starved to death. The news value is of another kind altogether, if a rich man has died from overeating. Veblen's work coincides with a social situation where one could narrate an infinity of stories of this kind of superfluity. He belonged to the era of Rockefeller, Morgan, Carnegie and the other robber barons. If Veblen had only reported details of these scenes he would not have been an exceptional thinker at all. But if we take a deeper look at his writings we will find that it is not the analysis of *luxury* that he is involved with. And he does not conventionally make use of this term (luxury) either.

In the "Leisure Class" the central phenomenon is *conspicuous consumption*;[129] such an expenditure, the aim of which is to attract positive attention and thus to attach appreciation and status to the conspicuous consumer. This kind of behavior does not consist of luxuries alone. Each and every social class is able to consume something special or in some special way to get appreciation. Even the most miserable one is able to be profligate with his expenditure; and everybody can overdraw his income.

Veblen's exceptional interest in luxury and opulence can already be seen in his series of articles in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* and in other scientific periodicals. An illustrating text is the amusing "An Economic Theory of Women's Dress", which was published in *Popular Science Monthly*, 1894. It was an attempt to explain the curious features of women's dress, the painful contrivances like corsets, French heels and crinolines for example, simply as a striving for status. According to his conclusions, in order to be beautiful a dress has to be an extremely expensive novelty and as uncomfortable as possible. It then serves as efficient evidence of the purchasing power of the master, who can be father, husband, or patron. Nobody voluntarily wears these kinds of clothes, but the almighty dollar is able to make them beautiful.

This kind of invasive attitude towards fashion was quite common in Veblen's age. As an illustration we may suggest an appreciated clergyman. According to the social gospel reformist, Walter Rauschenbusch, fashion is a series of arbitrary changes that are made for businessmen's interests to keep up the purchasing desires of women. The more the changes, the bigger the profit.[130] Rauschenbusch was convinced that no common sense can take the dress of upper-circle woman as a celebrated, respectful item.[131] He is much more judgmental in his notion than Veblen ever was in his article. We will later see that Rauschenbusch, with the left-wing social gospelers, deems the luxurious life altogether as immoral and sinful paganism.

The case of dress is a good illustration of Veblen's aspiration to make social appreciation or status a kind of super-value which overbears all other values in people's daily interactions. It did not matter if a thing was ugly, unnecessary or painful, if it only was so expensively displayed that it immediately suggested that its owner must be a wealthy man. To reach this effect consumption must be

129 Veblen 1899
130 Rauschenbusch 1912, 255
131 Rauschenbusch 1912, 302

visible. That is why a consumer is commonly employed in conspicuous waste.

In his first book Veblen unfolded the existence of this scheme in every imaginable part of the routine life style of his contemporaries. "The Theory of the Leisure Class" (1899) is an endless collection of observations on conspicuous consumption as a means of attaining status. His intellectual roots as well as his style of representation are in Spencerian evolutionism. So he cumulates mountains of examples from the most remote directions and brings all of them before the eyes of the reader to vindicate his theory, just as Spencer does in "The Principles of Sociology". But Veblen had a special theme of his own, the unbelievable urge of human beings to provide status through consumption. In his later writings this accentuation heightened as a powerful critique of capitalism.

There was already a living tradition for the radical economic critique in America. Henry George and Edward Bellamy had manifested the popular attacks on the capitalistic system in "Progress and Poverty" (1877) and "Looking Backward" (1888) and Jacob A. Riis had revealed the inhuman influences that the American system had among the very poorest people in his shocking book of exposure "How the Other Half Lives" (1890). George fused religious fervor with simplified Ricardian-physiocratian economic theory.[132] The result found more than two million readers by the end of the century. Veblen's "Leisure Class" was a natural widening of this critique to the world of extravagance but without the journalistic pathos of Riis and without definitely abandoning capitalism as Bellamy did. On the other hand, Veblen's critique differed from the Ricardian-socialistic one because it entirely omitted the rich–poor contradiction. Veblen was not worried about the poor.

There was still another American radical critique in the populistic politician Ignatius Donnelly. He was a greenbacker critic of railroads whose bid for a congressional seat narrowly failed in 1878, but who succeeded in reaching the state senatorship of Minnesota in 1890, standing as a candidate for vice-president of the United States in 1900. We will return to Donnelly's conceptions of luxury, waste and consumption minutely in a later chapter. In this connection, it is necessary to notice that Donnelly anticipated the Veblenian idea of conspicuous consumption a decade before "Leisure Class" in his anti-utopian novel "Cae

132 The fervor is at its highest in the conclusing chapters of *Progress and Poverty* when taxation is discussed with such phrases as "gates of pearl", "Prince of Peace", etc. George 1879, 212-213

sar's Column" (1891) which is to be mentioned abreast with Bellamy's "Looking Backward" as a possible source of Veblen's theory.

Bellamy's visions of the ideal state are peculiarly remarkable also because of his attitude towards happiness. Bellamy attributes it entirely to leisure and consumption; both consumption of services, such as religious emotions, and of the goods produced by the "industrial army". Bellamy seems to be disgusted by waste in all forms. His citizens do not waste time with distribution; they just produce and consume; and the more they consume the happier they are.[133]

In regard to all these critical works it is notable how, in all his criticism, Veblen maintains at least an ostensibly scientific, objective point of view; Veblen much more than anyone else. He is not a muckraker but a social scientist, or an economist as he promoted himself.

Another characteristical feature in Veblen's style is the fact that he manifested his economic critique with a vocabulary of his own. He talks about the "leisure class", "absentee ownership", "imbecile institutions", "predatory human nature", "invidious comparison", "capitalistic sabotage", "captains of finance, of industry, of erudity, or, of whatever", "common man", "canons of tastes", "idle curiosity", "instinct of workmanship", "merits of borrowing", "vested interests", "new order", "parental bent", "patriotic devotion", "peaceable savagery", "peace by neglect" etc. etc. There must be hundreds of this kind of terms in his texts. Only a few of them were coined by Veblen. Some are now more or less part of everyday language (like "conspicuous consumption"), but, anyway, at the end of the 19th century they made Veblen one of the most difficult economic theorists in America. The students who followed him were easy to identify on campus because of their ways of expression; they talked "Veblenese" with specific terminology and easily differentiated idioms.

Unfortunately Veblen often makes use of his original terminology without specifying the meanings of individual terms. In his instinctive psychology such terms as instinct, aptitude, aspiration, drive, bent, devotion, tropism and propensity blend with each other. It is often difficult to see the various contents of the words, for Veblen does not define them carefully enough, or he does not define them at all. The same is also true with the concepts of luxury and conspicuous consumption. Generally the rule seems to be that conspicuous waste is the prime concept, which consists of conspicuous consumption and leisure and

133 Bellamy 1888, on distribution Chs. IX and X, on religion Ch. XXVI

probably of some other singular concepts such as conspicuous sparing and philanthropy. Synonymous with the main category of conspicuous waste, Veblen sometimes seems to make use of the originally French word 'ostentation' but this is not the usual situation. Though it may sound unbelievable after all the blame that Veblen's theory has faced, he, in reality, seems to prefer words whose semantic content does not consist of pejorative connotations.

We have no reason to seek antagonistic incentives like revenge, greediness or avidity in Veblen's motives. He repeats numerous times that he has no aim to depreciate or to praise the lifestyles of the rich or any other phenomena which he is analyzing. We have to believe him. His terminology sounds often normative, but where can we find terms totally free of values? Normally the normativism, and the depreciation especially, is in the eye of the reader. It is not easy to accept as useful the habits and manners that carry the name of *conspicuous waste*. We have to remember that Veblen was studying phenomena that scarcely anybody had been scientifically interested in before him. He was obliged to utilize certain concepts and he decided to produce them himself.

Veblen's impact on American economics was clear; new subjects, new concepts, new points of views. In Europe he was soon noted as one of the most original American social theorists. However, in his own country, the mainstreamers of the first decades after "Leisure Class" do not usually refer to him by name, even if they are discussing notably Veblenian subjects. But then, there is the new school of institutionalists for whom Veblen is one of the most cited authorities. So, Mitchell and Commons did concentrate on notably Veblenian items in their works and quote him diligently. They also share Veblen's interest in the consumption of goods and the expenditure of money.

Mitchell draws our attention to the difference in people's skills in making money and spending it.[134] The ability to spend is much less elaborated; nobody is specialized in any particular part of the spending process; we have no peculiar units to measure and compare expenditure in households. According to Mitchell the art of spending money has not advanced technically as fast as that of making money. Mitchell understands the process of spending money as a complex phenomenon with many connections to different institutions, habits and conventions. He repeats these remarks in his main work, "Business Cy-

134 Mitchell 1912, 3-19; also the following articles Mitchell 1916; 1922

cles".[135] Consumption, however, does not play a central role in this pioneer work of the theory of cycles. The difference from John B. Clark's and Irving Fisher's conceptions of consumption is visible, in any case.

2.2.2. Conspicuous Leisure

Veblen started his analysis of *conspicuous waste* from its more ancient and seldom recognized part, *conspicuous leisure*. In Veblen's vocabulary leisure is a parallel phenomenon of *conspicuous consumption*; it means the kind of abstention from labor and futile spending of time that serves as honorable evidence for the actor. According to Veblen, leisure is such an efficient proof of wealth that it soon gives rise to a peculiar, non-laboring group of people, the leisure class.[136] This is a non-productive upper class of priests, warriers, athletes, medicine men, and rulers, for example. None of them is completely idle. They are employed in a special group of tasks, such as hunting, devout observances, sport and in later communities in different social duties. These "exploits" are open to none but the members of the leisure class.

The word "leisure class" was not coined by Veblen. It appears frequently in the novels of the Gilded Age, and it can be found even in Marxist socialist speeches. Howells' socialist agitator preaches against leisure class in "A Hazard of New Fortunes".[137] The leisure class is connected both to primitive and civilized communities.

According to Veblen, too, there existed a leisure class in modern America. It was the opulent class of the American millionaires, the later "robber barons" and other enormously rich. They had a society of their own with an elaborated, minute order of breeding and with an array of unproductive duties, unquestionably important duties which were not measured in productivity. And, surely, he was right. According to Daniel T. Rodgers, conspicuous leisure was everywhere the identifying mark of the aristocrat.[138] Veblen defines and illustrates the possibilities of honorable leisure in modern society as follows:

135 Mitchell 1913, 163-167
136 Veblen 1899, 39-43
137 Howells 1890, 381
138 Rodgers 1978, 15

> But leisure in the narrower sense, as distinct from exploit and from any ostensibly productive employment of effort on objects which are of no intrinsic use, does not commonly leave a material product. The criteria of a past performance of leisure therefore commonly take the form of 'immaterial' goods. Such immaterial evidences of past leisure are quasi-scholarly or quasi-artistic accomplishments and a knowledge of processes and incidents which do not conduce directly to the furtherance of human life. So, for instance, in our time there is the knowledge of dead languages and the occult sciences; of correct spelling; of syntax and prosody; of the various forms of domestic music and other household art; of the latest proprieties of dress, furniture, and equipage; of games, sports and fancy-bred animals, such as dogs and race-horses. (Veblen 1899, 44-45)

These abilities or branches of learning are serviceable mostly as evidence of an unproductive expenditure of time; e.g. as proofs of abstention from labor. Later Veblen endlessly lists further evidence, a good deal of which is material; so there are immaterial marks of leisure, like manners, breeding, polite usage, decorum and the learning in ceremonial observances generally; and material marks, like badges of honor, medals, flags and heraldry. These are substantial symbols of mastery, of status, and nobody can disapprove of, or ignore them. It would only show one's lack of success.

Erudition in some exotic field, such as the dead languages, labels a man, of course, with a cultural air. In the Gilded Age the very word "culture" still implied leisure. It occupied energies that did not go into the making of a living.[139] Culture was something high or elitist; nowadays, on the contrary, culture is whatsoever way of life of society, group, or subgroup. We talk about the culture of labor, juvenile culture, and so on.

We can demonstrate the difference between classical and Veblenian conceptions of labor supply by the following, simple figures.[140] On the horizontal axis we have the weekly working time; the maximum of labor on offer weekly (168 hours). On the vertical axis we can read the obtainable wage. It is commonly thought that people aspire to higher level of income (wages).

139 Trachtenberg 1982, 142-143

140 The author has studied the Veblenian theory of consumption in Riukulehto: *Sabotaasia ja kerskakulutusta*, JYY, Jyväskylä 1994. On the labor supply curve pp. 58-61

The classical view of labor supply is presented in Figure I. People are assumed to supply more of their labor on markets the bigger the wage that they are offered. The Veblenian version of the labor supply curve can be seen in Figure II. The curve is convexed backward. There is a certain point, a certain level of income, after which people are reluctant to give up their leisure time even if the wage grew. They prefer leisure to money. Their need for money is satisfied and now they need time for recreation and for the consumption of goods.

Figure I

The labor supply curve according to classic economists

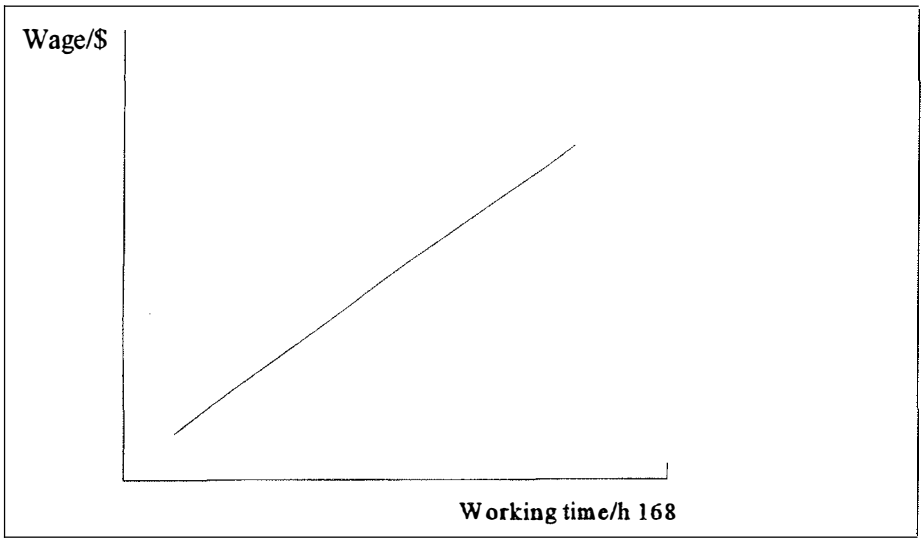
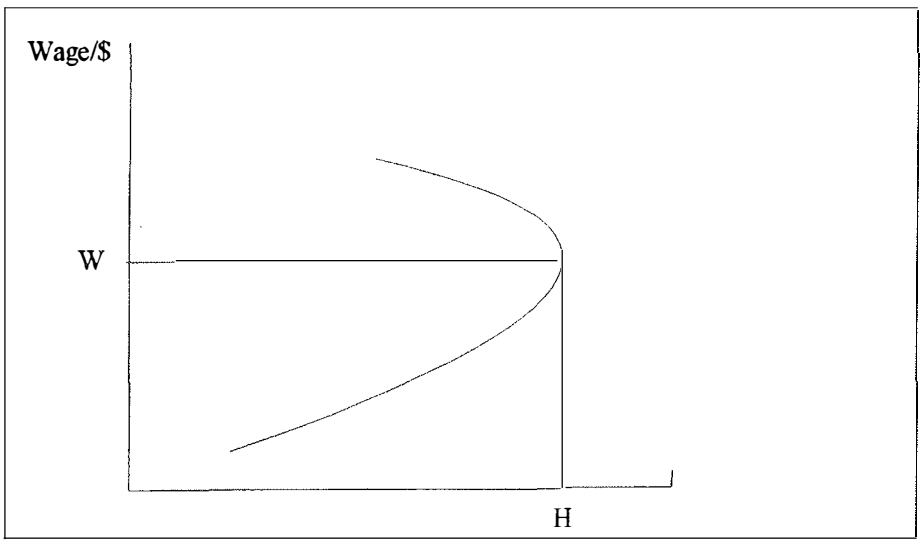


Figure II

Veblen's view of labor supply curve



Veblen also distinguished different groups of people regarding to their level of consumption. He called them classes, but again he does not employ these terms systematically.[141] Sometimes he prefers the Marxist class concepts. The rich and leisurely people on the backward part of the labor supply curve form the primary leisure class already mentioned above. These men simply consume goods and services, but they consume only the best grades by themselves. Then there is a class which produces, and another which consumes goods for the leisure class (*vicarious, secondary leisure class*). Again, Veblen talks about a *spurious leisure class*, a middle class, which has an enormous desire to acquire the conspicuous leisure-class standard of living, a standard all too high to reach; men who are doomed to debt and bankruptcy.

2.2.3. Conspicuous Consumption

Conspicuous leisure was, above all, a form of waste which was in vogue mostly among primitive cultures. But in modern civilizations, such as that of the industrial USA, another form of ostentation was more convenient, conspicuous consumption. In order to receive appreciation, one must but consume a plethora of articles, rare articles, costly articles, and visible articles. Veblen connects conspicuous consumption also to the philanthropy of private wealth. The universities bearing the names of their donors provided the philanthropist with good repute. Veblen surely had certain examples in his mind. The great private universities emerged between the late 1860s and the early 1890s.[142] All these went for the examples of conspicuous consumption found in Veblen's writings. But the theme of wasteful expenditure was a hot topic for the works of another human scientist, too.

At the end of the nineteenth century the pioneer and leading authority of American anthropology, Franz Boas, was publishing his first interpretations of the economic rituals among the North-Western Indian tribes in his contribution to the "Report of the U.S. National Museum for 1895". The most important of his articles on this subject was "The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of

141 Riukulehto 1994, 65-69

142 Cornell, Johns Hopkins, Vanderbilt, Stanford Universities, the Carnegie Institute for Technology, and the University of Chicago; Trachtenberg 1982, 145

the Kwakiutl Indians".[143] Thanks to this article, the Kwakiutls were soon to grow in favor especially because of their social ceremony called *potlatch*.

In potlatch an Indian has invited all his friends and neighbors to a great ceremonious festival in which he apparently squanders all the accumulated results of long years of his labor. Many presents are given, delicious, luxurious meals are offered. The aim of all this waste is to outdo each other in social emulation. According to Boas, the objectives of the institution of potlatch are, on the one hand, to pay old debts and, on the other, to invest the accumulated wealth so that the greatest benefit will accrue from them to himself and his children.[144] The potlatch is credited to his reputation. Boas' contemporaneous examinations among the Indians and Veblen's interpretations of institutions had much in common. Throughout his career Boas was inspired by the chance of anthropology to help people understand the deepness of their own culture.[145] Veblen was doing exactly that with Boas' studies.

In modern, Western, urban society people had abundant new room for conspicuous display. Consumption is most easily seen in big cities where people live near each other. Everyone is – even unwillingly – obliged to observe his neighbours when they are living in blocks of flats. And Veblen argues that everybody's self-respect depends on the appreciation granted by others; this acceptance is easily obtained by an infinite cumulation of goods.[146] Here, again, social appreciation is made a super-value.

The master himself does not consume but the very best qualities and grades of goods; and besides, the richest gentlemen do not have enough time to spend on the consumption of all the material goods they can afford. They have to employ a special group of people to spend for them. Veblen calls it the vicarious, secondary, or derivative leisure class.[147] This gives rise to the elaborate specialization of consumption which can be seen in the habits of expenditure in the upper classes.

> The quasi-peaceable gentleman of leisure, then, not only consumes of the staff of life beyond the minimum required for subsistence and physical efficiency, but his consumption also undergoes a spe-

143 Boas 1895
144 Boas 1899, 106
145 Boas 1928, 11-17
146 Veblen 1898b, 90-91
147 Veblen 1899, 59-60

> cialisation as regards the quality of the goods consumed. He consumes freely and the best, in food, drink, narcotics, shelter, services, ornaments, apparel, weapons and accoutrements, amusements, amulets, and idols or divinities. [...] Since the consumption of these more excellent goods is an evidence of wealth, it becomes honorific; and conversely, the failure to consume in due quantity and quality becomes a mark of inferiority and demerit. (Veblen 1899, 73-74)

Here we have the Veblenian basic mechanism of conspicuous consumption: everyone has to consume as much as possible to maintain the appreciation of his neighbors. If someone decides to purchase a newer car, for example, everyone has to imitate him. Every single decision to expand the sphere of consumption has a tendency to develop itself as a new "pecuniary canon of taste" which, then, is to be followed. It is a question of status, of social position and valuation. This is a new explanation for consumption, usually not noticed by Veblen's contemporaries. Pecuniary valuation, among other problems of social amelioration, was then to rise as an item of vital concern in American sociology.

Richard Ely could find but one reason for the "wasteful consumption" of luxuries: the fact of ownership.[148] Goods are consumed simply because they are owned. The explanation does not convince, furthermore it sounds naive, as Ely himself remarks.

> There is no more reason why a millionaire should consume all the wealth he controls than there is why a philosopher or an artist should withhold from society the satisfactions afforded by his genius. (Ely 1891, 233)

Now Veblen had offered another reason. All of us make comparisons to other people, but nobody likes to compare himself with the inferior consumers on lower levels nor with the enormously rich, high above one's own level on the scale of pecuniary strength and social appreciation. The comparison is regularly made with the nearly-equals, those just above one's own standard of living. During the first decades of the following century all of the most eminent American sociologists, such as Sumner, Albion Small, C.H. Cooley and E.A. Ross, were to adapt such imitation theories. Cooley, for example, spends about 65 pages of

148 Ely 1891, 233

his "Social Process" on the problem of pecuniary valuation in order to accept finally the Veblenian conception of "pecuniary canons of taste".[149]

> [T]he progress of market valuation, as a rule, is a translation into pecuniary terms of values which have already become, in some measure, a social institution. (Cooley 1918, 338, his italics)

The success of imitation theories among sociologists can often be traced to French sociology. Tarde's "Les lois de l'imitation" was referred to as a paradigmatic theory of social behavior.[150] Cooley, like Veblen, emphasized that the pecuniary values were not the sole but a specialized type of values, but they certainly had a special position in some social processes. The example of the rich may be imperative, no matter what it demands. "If drink, child labor, prostitution, and corrupt politics are part of the institution [pecuniary valuation], they will be demanded upon the market as urgently as anything else."[151] Ross' term for these acts to be imitated is "the radiant points of conventionality".[152] The same idea was still accepted during the 1920s in the works of William Ogburn and Walter Lippman, for example.[153] And the most Veblenian of all sociologists was Robert Lynd, the critic of the irrational American consumer. In 1929, the year Veblen died and the great depression began, Lynd preached with his wife, Helen, the thoroughly Veblenian doctrine of irrationalism in their "Middletown". According to Lynds' analysis, the pecuniary culture had now spread throughout the whole society.[154]

Another feature receiving much notice in Veblen's analysis is the fact that the habits of consumption are rigid mainly in a downward direction. Long before Ogburn, Veblen thus draws our attention to the slowness of this imitation process, as well as of all other cultural processes.

> It takes time for any change to permeate the mass and change the habitual attitude of the people; and especially it takes time to change the habits of those classes that are socially more remote from the radiant body. The process is slower where the mobility of the popu-

149 Cooley 1918, Chs. XXV-XXVIII
150 Giddings 1896, 400-401
151 Cooley 1918, 315-316
152 The laws of imitation in society can be found in Ross' *Social Psychology*, Chs. IX-XI
153 Lippman 1922, 120-121
154 Fox 1983, 101-141

> lation is less or where the intervals between several classes are wider and more abrupt. (Veblen 1899, 104)

As we know the idea is exactly what we may read in Ogburn's "Social Change" (1922).[155] However, the idea of the cultural lag is already explicitly defined and broadly described by Veblen in the "Leisure Class".

Consumption and leisure, both are themes to which Veblen returns in all his books. He seems to find illustrative examples everywhere: higher learning, sport, art, gambling, orthography, war; the list is infinite. We have already taken up one of his favorites, women's dress. It is only natural that the marks of conspicuous waste appear first in what is nearest to one's person. But, according to Veblen, modernization has also spread the area of consumption to new fields that have conventionally been free of pecuniary standards. Finally, pecuniary repute is (not the only but) the guiding norm of taste in the prevalent sense of beauty, of right and of worth. Thus various futile fancy-bred animals like pigeons, parrots and other cage birds, Angora cats and fast horses are more "beautiful" than any useful domestic animals, say barnyard fowl, hogs, cattle or ordinary cats.[156]

Veblen found psychological ground for his conspicuous waste in the prevalent conceptions of instinct psychology (instinctionism or purposivism). In "Introduction to Social Psychology" William McDougall defined the human being as a teleological, purposeful animal; and the units inducing the purposefulness were just instincts.[157] Social scientists soon accepted the new approach but they could not agree on the number of instincts. The leading theorist, McDougall, distinguished nine instincts altogether, F.W. Taussig four. Veblen discussed his own conceptions in "The Instinct of Workmanship" which was published in 1914; the book that Veblen himself regarded as his best.[158] There exists no consensus considering his classification of instincts, or aptitudes, propensities, bents, drives, or whatever name Veblen likes to utilize. Usually his instincts are classified under three main concepts. The first was workmanship; it pushes man to purposeful action and makes him abhor futility. The others were predatory instinct and the parental bent.

155 Ogburn 1922, 200-201
156 Veblen 1899, 139-144
157 Persons 1975, 273-274
158 Veblen 1914, 24-32

2.2.4. The Normativism of Veblen's Analysis

In "The Theory of the Leisure Class" Veblen's systematic evolutionism gives him no ground to judge or release those actors whose aim it is to boast. Probably Veblen, in his core, felt that somehow conspicuous waste had to be "wrong". Veblen showed that the leisure class had exalted laziness as a virtue; they spent money to show they had money to spend. These ways of interaction were abhorrent to traditional American habits of thought, to the tradition of the Puritans, Jacksonians, transcendentalists and, ultimately, to Populists and social gospelers. A man has to labor, and thriftiness is a virtue. The next citation is an extract from a study of American social thought. It may serve as an illustration of the typical way of interpretation of Veblen's texts.

> Veblen's message was clear: if 'natural selection' produced this odious group of parasites, then society must seize control of the evolution, and direct it to more equitable and productive purposes. (Altschuler 1982, 103)

This was also the characteristic reception of his theory at the turn of the century. In fact, Veblen never articulated the "message". He never allowed his feelings about his subjects to emerge directly in his writings. Therefore it is possible to argue whether they emerge at all and whether they even exist. The Veblen readers have naturally recognized all this.[159] Had he some suspicions of the falsehood of conspicuous waste, he was, at the same time, completely conscious of the invidious fact that his Social-Darwinian philosophy of economics did not legitimate these feelings. Indeed, his contemporaries were much more eager to condemn luxurious life as a matter of course.[160] In his writings Veblen makes use of the most typical evolutionist vocabulary when he discusses the principles of evolution. All the conventional phrases (struggle for existence, natural selection, selection of the fittest etc.) can be found from the next citation, for instance. At the same time it captures the main lines of his evolutionism.

159 Hook 1983, 180

160 Such were social critics Bellamy and George as we will notice later, but also more moderate scholars like Franklin Giddings. Giddings 1896, 397

> The life of man in society, just like the life of other species is a struggle for existence, and therefore it is a process of selective adaptation. The evolution of social structure has been a process of natural selection of institutions. The progress of which has been and is being made in human institutions and in human character may be set down, broadly, to a natural selection of the fittest habits of thought and to a process of enforced adaptation of individuals to an environment which has progressively changed with the growth of the community and with the changing institutions under which men have lived. Institutions are not only themselves the result of a selective and adaptive process which saves the prevailing or dominant types of spiritual attitude and aptitudes; they are at the same time special methods of life and of human relations, and are therefore in their turn efficient factors of selection. (Veblen 1899, 188)

Conspicuous waste is a product of cultural evolution like anything else; it cannot be right or wrong, it just is. This thesis is consistently repeated in "The Theory of the Leisure Class". The biting undertone is, maybe, easily to be felt in Veblen's texts, but it is not possible to draw it from his theoretical premises. A simple will to scorn the rich does not sound reasonable either. But, is it possible that this undertone could primarily be traceable to his laconic basic attitude towards life? I am quite convinced it is; Veblen does not point a derisive finger at luxury especially. Cynical wit is a deliberate style of expression, typical to Veblen, independent of the theme at hands. It does not matter if people live in luxury, or if they waste their wealth. In Veblen's analysis, a more essential point is, whether the appreciation they obtain derives from industrial or from pecuniary occupations. In reality, what Veblen taught was the fact that one should not criticize consumption according to its visible marks. But if pecuniary appreciation rises to a leading position as an imperative canon of taste it is detrimental to society as a whole.

Later Veblen seems to fall into deeper pessimism when he begins to talk about imbecile institutions; the pecuniary canons of taste surely belong to this category. In his last book, "Absentee Ownership" (1923), Veblen has clearly grown in pessimism; he sees no more hope in the "soviets of technicians" or in the "New Order" as he did in his article series in *The Dial* in 1918–1919.[161]

161 Veblen 1923, 18-19, 27, 30-31, 37, 404. The series of articles was published as *Engineers and the Price System*, Veblen 1921

2.2.5. Summary: Luxury and Conspicuous Waste in Veblen's Works

Veblen's institutional economics of consumption is, indeed, a remarkable first attempt to unfold the mysteries of consumption. His theories offer a general explanation for the whole phenomenon of expenditure. First, it explains the incentive to consume when it makes the social appreciation a super-value which overbears all other motives. Veblen links this social emulation to his general conceptions of instinctive psychology (e.g. aptitude for play, predatory instinct, invidious comparison). This also explains why consumption is always a visible act, a conspicuous act; it has to be, we cannot emulate in privacy.

Secondly, Veblen also makes an attempt to unfold the mechanisms of this consumption process: the canons of tastes spread through imitation from the top to the bottom of the society with a certain cultural lag; the imitation takes time. And everybody compares himself with the next one above on the social hierarchy of consumption. Veblen takes into account both the consumption of material goods and of immaterial services (vicarious leisure). This also implies the tendency towards leisure (the backwardness of the labor supply curve).

Thirdly, Veblen prudently tries to apply his theory when he schemes class concepts deriving from consumption: there is a group of upper classes, the leisure class, the vicarious leisure class and the spurious leisure class, which merely consume or purport to consume goods; then there is a group of productive classes, engineers for instance, who mainly produce these.

Veblen does not direct his discussion directly to waste or luxury but he attains them through his own concept of conspicuous consumption. In fact, it is a concept which opens itself from a different direction; conspicuous waste (or consumption or leisure) does not necessarily mean a luxurious life. The main problematics lie in the questions of repute and status. All people waste, consume and remain idle to get appreciation; it does not matter if they are rich or poor. Veblen's systematic evolutionism gives him no ground to judge or release those actors whose aim it is to boast. Veblen, however, makes such a stylistic choice that it is not difficult to anticipate readers' reactions after the facts have been manifested. We next take a look at these reactions.

CHAPTER THREE

Radicalism in Arts and Letters

Luxury and Leisure in American Literature

Apart from all of Veblen's presumptive normativism we will meet the real fanatical attitude towards the luxurious and wealthy walks of life in another direction. In men of letters, novelists, journalists of the muckraking era, and in other artists, we often face the true antagonists of luxury, and even of money, in the years now under analysis.

Of course, Veblen himself was and always has been blamed rigorously because of his depreciative expressions. In spite of the famous Veblenian wit, with some normative pathos in some of his texts, the conclusion is wrong. Unlike Donnelly, Veblen underlines frequently and in many ways the objective aims of his analysis. He is just an observer, not a silent one but not a jeering propagandist either. He scarcely argues for conspicuous waste nor against it, he just reports the social facts of his environment as they met him. The presumed deprecation is usually in the eye of the reader, interwoven with the connotations of the words. The limit is obscure but Veblen never takes the final step to normativism. He stays on the orthodox basis of Social Darwinism: if the struggle for life and the natural selection have produced the "imbecile institutions", such as conspicuous consumption or conspicuous leisure, so what? What could we do? There is no other direction where we could look for other norms or institutions. Veblen is a real cynic in his coherent hopelessness. We are doomed to live under this scheme of the world, but, perhaps the very fact makes it possible to even laugh at the reality.

It is not a surprise the Veblen-readers have easily taken the next step ignored by Veblen. "Leisure Class" was read as if it was some kind of cry for justice. Veblen has never been among the most quoted authors of the social sciences, especially so in contemporary America, but some remarks of his influence can be seen here and there, for example in the works of the radical artists at the beginning of the 20th century. The famous muckraking socialist writer, Upton Sinclair, will soon serve as a good illustration. But first some glimpses onto the general field of literature, and onto radical writers especially, from 1880 to 1930.

If we take a look at American literature at the end of the 19th century it is remarkable how people seem to be extremely interested in manners and behavior. From the early days of Twain's and Warner's "Gilded Age", through the whole era of William Dean Howells, Henry James and many others up to F. Scott Fitzgerald's epoch-closing "The Great Gatsby" there seems to be a general ten-

dency to picture – one way or another – the luxurious life of the monied classes. Artists favored scenes of leisure, of griefless ease amidst comfortable surroundings. In these books, the heroes and heroines tend to shut themselves off in small social groups that are founded on the basis of uniform levels of income. In these groups they elaborate differentiations of costume, behavior and all the endless nomenclature of their daily utensils. They enjoy sunshine, traveling, and rich interiors. The target of every move seems to be "keeping up with the Joneses" or alternatively distinguishing themselves from all who are not members of their exclusive group.

In its simplest form – but usually not artistically in the most pleasing – the scheme of the novels goes like Sinclair represents it in his "Money Writes!". In the beginning the people are living in small social groups, observing each other. The most desirable groups are those who have the most money. These seem to develop the most fastidious manners and are the fussiest about details. The plots are contrived around such happenings as "climbing" (e.g. trying to get out of one's initial group) and "disgrace" (e.g. falling from it). In the most conservative, old-fashion form both are felt to be unpleasant situations; the truly dignified behavior is to stay in the state of life to which God has called one.

Exceptions appeared, of course. But even the critics include the same milieu in their novels. Twain's and Warner's "Gilded Age" (1873) and Howells' "A Hazard of New Fortunes" (1890) go for good illustrations of the literary world of those days. Henry James' famous masterpieces – such as "What Maisie Knew" or "A Portrait of a Woman" – can be seen as a kind of crystallization in this literal tendency. In fact, we could take up almost any of James' books and would still stay within the narrow scope of luxury and decent manners. But, also an early anticipation of the critique of mass culture has been heard in James' novels, as early as three decades before the new consuming scheme was born in America.[162]

Characteristically, James has often been lifted up by the historians of the Gilded Age to exemplify the liberal critic in American literature. Now, however, we are going to concentrate our study on the more radical writers of the age. The muckraking era of the turn of the century offers a nice opportunity in this regard. During this short period of exposure there was an imperative demand for all kinds of revelations considering human life in its variations.

What kind of literal world did the muckraking men come from? A historian of

162 Agnew 1983, 78

progressivism, Louis Filler, draws a coherent connection between them and the Populists of the 1890s.[163] "The American dilemma", he says, "as public wealth grew and became more available, was that most had to look on helplessly as some among them went far ahead in wealth and emoluments." The postwar prosperity was too much for the other half, the "progressivism of that time". This bitterness manifested itself in claims for city reforms, in labor-capitalist projects for bettering relations, in farmer alliances, and in the search for panaceas.[164] From the luxury point of view the actual era of progressivism was a relatively easy time for businessmen, thanks to the prosperity that spread through the economy. Muckrakers wiped out some of the patent abuses, theft accounting, and conspiracy, but the main stress, in their revelations, was put on social investigation. The early muckraking writing of the 1890s much more often focused the economic malpractices of businessmen. So, the borderline between the Gilded and the Progressive Era seems, once again, to be fading away.

The very rich, too, did get their shot. The "Gilded Age" and "A Hazard of New Fortunes" were but a slight, anticipating scratch in the surface of this literal vogue. Clearly, Howells and Twain have the same kind of precarious criticism in a large part of their books. Howells' "The Rise of Silas Lapham" (1885) is the story of a simple farmer who gets in trouble with his sudden success and all the pouring money which sets certain requirements on him. Lapham seeks acceptance in society but his lack of cultivation finally ruins his rise. In "Indian Summer" (1886) Howells depicts a rich man traveling across Europe and spending money. Much the same, but more strictly, is contrived in the other end of our time span. Booth Tarkington's "The Plutocrat" (1927) is a story of a fat American traveling to Europe, bragging and scattering his dollars about.

Howells was, of course, first and foremost a literary critic who tried to produce American literature oriented towards social questions. His effect in American literature is much like George Brandes' influence in Europe. Howells' view of social behavior closely resembles the one presented in Veblen's theories. It was Howells who introduced Veblen to Americans in his review in *Literature*. And he gave all his acceptance to Veblen's ideas.

163 Filler 1996,76
164 Filler 1996,82,91

> The 'pecuniary standard of living' is really the only standard and the 'pecuniary canons of taste' are finally the only canons; for if the costly things are not always beautiful, all beautiful things which are cheap must be rejected because they are not costly. (Howells 1899)

In "A Hazard" we meet this society. A millionaire who cannot help getting rich, middle class ladies who strive to stand out among their neighbors, and an embittered socialist who refuses to accept wages from the monopolist.[165]

Again, the same world can be found in the writings of Ignatius Donnelly, a Populist politician, bankrupt land speculator and a greenbacker critic of railroads whose most famous contribution to American literature we have already referred to in the previous chapter. In the anti-utopian "Caesar's Column" (1891), Donnelly depicts a "megalopolis run by plutocrats mad with power and profit".[166] In addition to his populist speeches, his novels were also more propagating than anything Howells ever wrote.

It is a fact worth noticing that in American literature escapist mass entertainment grew in favor at an early stage. It is a waste of time to seek world-famous titles among the best selling books of the times. Besides Winston Churchill's popular novels Crane's "Red Badge of Courage", Norris' "The Pit", Sinclair's "The Jungle", three books by Edith Wharton, and five by Sinclair Lewis there are no other famous novels reaching the top ten. Instead of present-day classics, the lists are charged with various romantic stories of the "wild west", or the upper classes. It was the paperback fiction that represented the majority's taste in urban America.[167] The total sales of Zane Gray's books are over 40 million copies. Even the names of the novels are revealing. So, we have another of Donnelly's books entitled "The Golden Bottle", "The Golden Ladder" by Rupert Hughes, or "The Golden Bed" by Wallace Irwing and "The Blazed Trail" by Stewart E. White. These were books of leisure, stories of people with a notably high standard of living. Of course, this was not the real world of the readers. Many of the books were romantic entertainment for ordinary people in the midst of their daily humdrum. This tendency for mass entertaining was a typically American phenomenon that was to conquer Europe only after several decades.

165 For these details see Howells 1890, 285-287,513
166 The cited definition is from Altschuler 1982,84-85
167 Hackett 1967,91-140. In slightly different basis,Frank L. Mott results in different sales. See also Mott 1960, 311-313, 323-326

It would not be fair to accuse all American authors or even the already-mentioned novels of a lack of critical insight. Not at all; Twain's and Warner's "Gilded Age" was a genius warning of the hazards of big money. There was also a heightening criticism which was to be known as social realism. The social realists of the 1890s had taken Émile Zola's principles as their guiding rules. "Germinal" was published in 1885 and it was noticed everywhere. The first of the American realists was Stephen Crane with his "Maggie – a Girl of the Streets" (1893). In this modest book he concretely declared that the real life in the cities of the USA was surely not a leisure game for the common people. The book was a sensation. Prostitution was still a taboo among the middle classes.

Then Frank Norris appeared with his "The Octopus" (1901). It was the story of a big railway corporation robbing sharecroppers and farmers on the prairie. At the beginning of this century, Jack London, David Graham Phillips, Theodore Dreiser, and Edith Wharton continued the battle. The moral pathos grew little by little. Dreiser's "The Financier" was published the same year that the political success of the progressive movement was hottest, in 1912. It was a powerful critique of a society ruled by money. The financier pictured by Dreiser was notably uniform with Veblen's captains of industry.

The last writers in this set, Wharton, Lewis, and Fitzgerald, wrote in a world notably different from Twain's and Howells'. The Gilded Age had gone. It perished with the Spanish War. However, Lewis populated his best-selling stories with the new *parvenus*, the class of businessmen, or upper middle class, like the Babbits (1922). And the scheme of consumption is, again, imitative. George Babbit has to get a car with a hood, for all others have one. He strives to take part, and he is also supposed to take part, with the higher societies of his city. On the other hand it is definitely impossible to mix with the common people.

Edith Wharton positioned her characters in the sweet "Age of Innocence", as she named the morally restricting age at the end of the 19th century. Wharton showed that the rich of the Gilded Age were not necessarily extremely happy. They tended towards an air of innocence but stayed unemancipated merely because the decent canons of behavior did not allow them to take new liberties. And how could one emancipate a woman who does not even consider herself as living in a dungeon? In her books we also find really rich and socially prominent people who are idle, and drink and gamble. She also reveals that a young leisure-class girl can be morally as ruined as Crane's "Maggie", while seeking to

enhance her charms with fashionable clothes. We can easily see that the discourse of luxury and waste was thoroughly spread in American literature. The ultimate exposure of the rich was, however, made by a muckraking novelist, Upton Sinclair.

3.1. The Era of Muckraking

One salient feature at the turn of 20th century America is the remarkable position of journalists among the spiritual leaders of the nation. Many of the most shining thinkers were simply newspaper men and numerous others had started their careers as such. Mark Twain, Theodore Dreiser, and Stephen Crane, for example, all were reporters, as well as H.L. Mencken and Jacob A. Riis. And often even those who did not actually classify themselves as journalists had tried their abilities in their own periodicals, like Veblen and John Dewey in *The Dial* and Sinclair in a monthly magazine with an unimaginable name, *Upton Sinclair's*.

The appraisal of a new kind of journalism, *muckraking*, is a conspicuous phenomenon. If we try to find the first muckraker in America we have to go as far back as to the eighteenth century. Anne Royall (1769–1854) has sometimes been called as the "grandma' of muckrakers". In December 1831, she set down a landmark in American journalism with a new, muckraking publication, *Paul Pry*. It ran until November 19, 1836.[168] Another grandparent, or a prototype, of the progressive muckraker could be William Lyon Mackenzie who rebelled in Canada.[169] More often the roots of muckraking have been found among European social critics in literature, such as Charles Dickens and, in America, Harriet Beecher Stowe. This kind of muckraking continued with Helen Hunter Jackson's books on 1880s.[170]

But, if investigative journalism had something of a sixty-years tradition in America, what was new about muckraking at the turn of the century? It was the new character of journalism, the rise of mass-circulation periodicals. Magazines of quality were expensive until the technical advantages in printing and photography enabled them to rival with newspapers.[171] And the titles of the new,

168 Filler 1996, 42-49
169 Filler 1996, 50-60
170 See Filler 1996, 113-114
171 According to Fitzpatrick, in the 1880s *Harper's Weekly* and *Century* cost thirty-five cents. In the summer of 1895, *McClure's* price had been dropped to ten cents a copy. Fitzpatrick 1994a, 8-10

cheaper magazines tell that they were designed for the common man (*Everybody's, Cosmopolitan*).

Where did the muckrakers come from? A line of connections can be drawn between the journalists and Populists. The Populists had already popularized political and – especially – economic questions of dispute in the silver debate.[172] This offered a certain ground for future muckrakerism, too. There already existed a steady tradition of popularizing economic problems in American political discourse.

The real muckraking era was the first decade of our century. At its shortest, the era has been limited between the period 1902–1906, from the first print of Steffens' article "Tweed Days in St.Louis" in *McClure's Magazine* to President Roosevelt's speech heard by the members of the Senate, House, Supreme Court, Cabinet, and foreign delegations on April 14, 1906. In that speech the President denounced muckraking. According to Steffens' autobiography, Roosevelt revealed, behind closed doors, that the mudslingers he had in mind were Phillips and Sinclair, not Steffens.[173] Steffens, however, made a charge against Roosevelt: "Well, Mr. President, you have put an end to all these journalistic investigations that have made you."[174] In reality, he had not. Usually, the era has been interpreted as beginning in the 1890s, and extending up to somewhere around 1915.[175] We will expand its duration far beyond the First World War, up to the crash of 1929. As we shall see with Sinclair and his series of economical interpretation, some of the most visible reformers only began their muck writings in the 1920s. It would not be wise to ignore this. Still, the post-war muckraking was undoubtedly waning in nature. Most progressive sounds died away when the war was declared. This does not mean that muckrakerism was dead, it was waning.

Now, the everyday usage of the word *muckraking* may be delusive. The original muckraking followed the highest traditions of American journalism. Today, it is often used when some other phrase, such as *yellow journalism* or *sensationalism*, would be far more appropriate. The term *muckraking* was originally used by John Bunyan in "Pilgrim's Progress" to refer to those who never see anything but the negative side of life. The modern use, then, stems from the

172 See Chapter 5.2.4
173 Phillips never again published anything nonfiction. Miraldi 1990, 27
174 Horton 1974, 53-54
175 It has also been spanned between 1900 and 1920, Miraldi 1990, 28; between 1890 and 1912, Fitzpatrick 1994b, 117, for example

above-mentioned speech of Theodore Roosevelt.[176] According to a historian of muckrakerism, the new journalism had two reputations: a significant exposure without fear or favor, on one side, and a malicious rumor-mongering, on the other.[177] Muckrakers were both storytellers and social analysts.

Of course, there were some vanguard journalists in America who were ahead of their time in this respect. They were laying the ground for the guiding principles of later muckrakers, the belief that publicity could solve problems by creating an intelligent public opinion.[178] Ida M. Tarbell's "The History of the Standard Oil Company" was surely one of those anticipating books which helped to inaugurate the muckraker movement, but it was not published in book form until 1904. Some socially-oriented preachers, the most famous of which was undoubtedly Josiah Strong, started their struggle against poverty in the 1880s. Unitarian minister Jonathan Baxter Harrison represented his first-hand investigations in a New England mill town and raised alarm with his "Certain Dangerous Tendencies in American Life" as early as 1880. But the real muckraking forerunner was a Danish immigrant to whom we have already referred to, Jacob A. Riis with his shocking revelation "How the Other Half Lives".[179] It was an astonishing survey into the slums of the cities; down to the jungle that did not exist in the world of the better classes. It was published in 1890.

Riis had landed in New York only twenty years earlier. He tells his story in detail in his book of reminiscences "The Making of an American". His first entry into the newspaper business was made in 1873 and five years later he had established his position as a police reporter for the *New York Tribune*. In his work, Riis had to face the dark sides of the young city, a world that he had never known about before. He also met some preachers of social gospel, Strong and Alfred T. White, both of whom made a strong influence on him with their ethically obligating program.[180] Soon Riis became a full-time reform journalist. His most famous work, "How the Other Half Lives", was first published in *Scribner's Magazine* as a nineteen-page illustrated capsule version in 1889; and in December next year in book form, too, because of its enormous success.[181]

176 Fitzpatrick 1994b, 117
177 Filler 1996, 249
178 This is how Riis states it in his biography. Riis 1901, 62
179 Riis 1890
180 Riis 1901, 160
181 Riis 1901, 193-

Riis was never interested in money. He had no ambition to become rich.[182] The themes in his writings always lay in the dark, bowery side of the slums, never in palaces or cathedrals. Riis was a real muckraker man; his articles were revealing glances of the sub-worlds of New York, furnished with brilliant photographs which Riis had taken in his work as a police reporter. He was one of the first photographers of social conditions. And there was surely plenty of this kind of material in New York to report. In America the gross social welfare expenditures including education were only 2.4 percent of the GNP in 1890 and the succeeding decades of reform brought on no peculiar amelioration regarding the conditions of the poor. It has been estimated that the total share of public and private aid of the GNP was 0.45% in 1913 and 0.73% still in 1929. There were no signs of any welfare state in this respect until the late 1960s.[183]

"How the Other Half Lives" was a source of inspiration for the whole generation of progressives. It helped to settle the Salvation Army down in the United States, and it was a source of motivation when Jane Addams built her Hull House in Chicago. Theodore Roosevelt introduced Riis as a "fellow-man who came nearest being the ideal American citizen".[184] He was exactly that also for the number one muckraking man, Lincoln Steffens. Steffens' article "Tweed Days in St. Louis" was published in October, 1902, in *McClure's Magazine*, which was already a popular paper with many talented writers such as Ray Stannard Baker and Ida Tarbell, the author of "The History of the Standard Oil Company". They stood for the burning issues of the day and they were listened to, chiefly because of their elaborate style. Muckraking provided Steffens with great personal reward. As the recognized leader of the movement, he became more than a popular journalist; he was a national celebrity with even a cigar label named after him. His articles, speeches, even his travels were of popular interest.[185] His articles were exiting because they were real. Steffens had the facts. In part, his articles were so well received because he, like his audience, spoke the language of Christian politics. He wanted to convince his audience and he did not want to make mere guesswork. The same cannot be said of all the writers. Later we shall not get engrossed in those misleadings. So, with a good reason, a few words concerning the darker side of muckrakerism.

182 Riis 1901, 86
183 Patterson 1981, 28
184 See introduction to *The Making of an American*, Riis 1901
185 Palermo 1978, 67

Colonel William d'Alton Mann was a hero of the Civil War. In New York, he began to publish a notorious paper called *Town Topics*. In fact, Mann's main source of revenue was not copyrights but blackmail. He received donors for not to write something. Another miserable act was seen when two muckrakers, Cardenio Flournoy King, the author of "The Light of Four Candles" (1908), and Thomas Lawson, known of his "Frenzied Finance", were fighting each others. King tried to write Lawson inside the prison walls with obviously light evidence and was finally himself sentenced to fourteen years of prison. Tens of thousands of new subscribers a month surely served as an efficient incentive to give deliberate misinformation. For a couple of years the American people showed that more than any other thing in the world, they wanted to read about how they were being robbed. Gustavus Myers' "History of the Great American Fortunes" (1909–1910) may well be the most influential of those deliberately or innocently misleading exposés. Myers investigated the excesses of capitalism, but readers soon sensed that there was something wrong with the text. All the magnates could not be that bad. The book had been written with a certain tendency towards imaginary wrongs. Myers could hardly find a publisher. And his other books have been written in the same spirit. Myers seems to be a maniac or a hypochondriac in his attitude towards the world.[186] Everywhere he looked, he saw scandals.

There surely existed misleading authors among the muckrakers. Myers may have drawn impatient, anxious or even tendentious conclusions. Certainly, this is not the whole truth. No muckraker was definitely just nor definitely ill-natured. Both parts can be seen in the writings of Mann, or Myers, as well as in the works of our subject, Lincoln Steffens.

3.2. The Deprecation of Luxury in the Novels of Upton Sinclair

Upton Sinclair was born in 1878 in Baltimore, Maryland. In spite of his Episcopalian and conservative background, he was to become one of the most alert social critics in America. If there are industrious writers in the world, Sinclair undoubtedly is one of them. The time span of this study covers the first three

186 On Myers and delusive muckraking, see Filler 1996, 333-347

decades of our century. Sinclair wrote about forty serious books during those years. Most of them are novels, like his final break-through work, "The Jungle" (1905), a shocking labor description of the life in the industrial slaughter-houses of Chicago; but then we also have thick social pamphlets and a whole series of writing, the social essays in economic interpretation which consists of six large volumes, begun in 1919 with "The Profits of Religion" and concluded ten years later with "Money Writes!". This makes him a superb example of a radical writer at the beginning of our century, an author who produced both serious fiction and socially weighted studies in art, journalism, education, and so forth. There was also a two year episode of hack writing in Sinclair's life. He dictated adventure stories and war literature at an unbelievable rate of 8000 words per day, including Sundays, under the pseudonyms Lieutenant Frederick Garrison, U.S.A. and Ensign Clarke Fitch, U.S.N.[187] These texts are excluded from our discussion.

3.2.1. The Power of Mammon in Sinclair's Novels

Without a doubt, Upton Sinclair is one of the most eminent American writers immediately after the Gilded Age. There is one favourite theme in Sinclair's novels, already visible in "The Jungle". It is the contrast of the social classes; there are characters from both worlds, the rich and the poor, and the plot is contrived to carry the reader from one to the other. It is a conscious choice for Sinclair, a vocation, as we may learn from his book of reminiscenses (1932). This theme can be found in each and every one of Sinclair's books after "The Jungle" and many times it can be seen right from the cover page of the book. Titles like "The Captain of Industry", "The Money-changers" or, say, "The King Coal" immediately suggest the wealthy life and the lap of luxury in an opulent world.

"The Jungle" chiefly covered what was going on at the lower end of the social scale. Although there was an heir to a millionaire in the book, living in his granite house, boasting and wasting the endless wealth of his father, the strictest interest was directed to laboring men, the conditions in and by the slaughter and packing houses of Chicago. In another of his early books, "The Metropolis" (1908), Sinclair takes a look at the opposite end of the scale. Most of all, he seeks answers to two questions. The first one: "Who spent the money wrung

187 Sinclair 1932, 71

from the wage-slaves of the Stockyards?", is a theme conspicuously omitted by Veblen, who was not worried about the wage-slaves at all. But the other: "What did they spend it for?", carries the reader to the leisure-class world.[188] The book was planned to be the first part of a trilogy of the men in the "Metropolis of Mammon" and the sequel was published in 1909. "The Money-changers" was its name and it told the story of the 1907 panic in New York City. In this book Sinclair made use of real incidents and real life details. In the "Brass Check" Sinclair reveals some backgrounds of the villain in Metropolis, Dan Waterman.

> The veil of fiction was thin, and it was meant to be. Every one who knew the great Metropolis of Mammon would recognize Pierpont Morgan, the elder, and would know that the picture was true both in detail and in spirit. (Sinclair 1920, 120)

The theme of luxurious waste is central in "The Captain of Industry" (1906), the fictional biography of a young millionaire who finally dies in his unscrupulous greediness; and again the same theme, the critique of the boasting life styles of the upper classes, occurs in "The King Coal" (1915), when the relatives of the coal magnates celebrate in their private train during the coal strike. The hero of this book is the future king of the coal business himself, a young idealist who does sociological experiments on his vacation by going to work in the Colorado coal mines as a miner. The book had a fictive plot but its context was real: the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company strike in Ludlow, 1913–1914.

"The Millennium" (1924) was originally a play in three acts but Sinclair re-edited it into the form of a novel. It tells us the destiny of seven fabulously rich, but totally futile, persons of good breeding in a suddenly deserted world.

Whatever novel we take, the dilemma of luxurious waste is before our eyes. When Jesus Christ steps down from the altarpiece of St. Bartholomeon's church in the novel, "They Call Me Carpenter", (1922) he suddenly finds himself amidst rich film stars, producers and financiers. Especially the second part of Sinclair's most mature novel, "Oil!" (1927), a story of the oil business, criticizes the ostentious lifestyles of the magnates in their imaginary parties. Again, the heroical narrator in the novel is an heir for whom all the wealth is accumulated.

Sinclair's interest in the luxurious walk of life does not end with the Great Depression of 1929. So, the first fictive work of the thirties, "No Pasaran!" (1932),

188 Sinclair 1920, 74

follows the adventures of a rich young man during the war in Spain. The world has been changed through the First World War, the drastic economic crisis and Soviet Russia but Sinclair seems to remain the same.

3.2.2. The Ideal of the Industrial Republic

There is always a strong air of moral teaching in Sinclair's novels but it is taken to the extreme when he turns to non-fiction. Besides his numerous serious novels he also wrote more scholarly convincing texts. Seven social essays on economic interpretation, four autobiographical volumes, one of them considering the era here under discussion, two collections of letters, three volumes on the care of health, and a book about telepathic experiments which he ran with his wife (Sinclair was always obviously interested in ESP). This library of seventeen non-fiction volumes makes him an eligible object of our critical research work. There is no doubt about the existence of a particular, American discourse of luxury and waste if authors entitle their books "The Mammonart" or "The Profits of Religion" as Sinclair does with his theories on art and religion.

The first of Sinclair's non-fiction books was "The Industrial Republic", written in 1907 in Helican Hall Colony in Englewood, New Jersey, which was a kind of collective home, founded by this young idealist. The unbelievable success of "The Jungle" had made it possible for the dream to come true.[189] "The Industrial Republic" was a prophecy of socialism in America. Sinclair never reprinted this book, probably he was later a little bit ashamed because of some embarrassing facts which appear mostly in the concluding part of this book, such as the anticipation of William Randolf Hearst, a democratic newspaperman, as the first radical president of the USA,[190] as early as the immediate future. We are not interested in Sinclair's unfulfilled prophecies. We are going to use the book in order to reveal his intellectual connections. In fact, as far as Hearst is concerned, apologies are not needed. Hearst was a kind of figure head in the progressive movement of the time, and Sinclair was not alone when looking to him as the messiah of America. Herbert Croly pictures Hearst as the most popular progres-

189 Helican Hall was an effort at cooperative living, not a socialist colony, though the opposite was rumoured. After the conflagration of Helican Hall, Sinclair also lived with his son, David, in two other utopian experiments, in single-tax colonies of Alabama and Delaware. Yoder 1975, 46,52

190 See Sinclair 1932, 185

sive, but then denounces his radicalism as "simply an unscrupulous expression of the radical element in the Jeffersonian tradition"[191]. Steffens' valuation is quite similar.[192]

The first part of Sinclair's book, "The Coming Crisis", was more successful. After a long historical discussion Sinclair pointed out that at the beginning of the 20th century there was an industrial society in the USA, instead of an agricultural; and the struggle which everyone was witnessing was that between capital and labor. It was a struggle, not for land, but for profits. And it was precisely the failure of these profits that would lead to the collapse of the old industrial system.[193]

Thus far the analysis is very much reminiscent of orthodox Marxism. But, surprisingly enough, Sinclair makes his references elsewhere. He leans to the evolutionism of Spencer.[194] So we have again an American author inspired by Social Darwinism. The idea of evolution really seems to have been one of the most effective roots of intellectual life during the Gilded Age.[195] We are not commonly used to hearing Spencerian arguments in order to establish Marxist doctrine. Sinclair quotes Herbert Spencer's famous definition of evolution as a process whereby many similar and simple things become dissimilar parts of a complex whole. From this point of view, the evolution of industrial society is the same process as the evolution of the political institutions of France, for example. If the first care of a man is to protect his life, the next is to accumulate wealth.[196] The industrial republic is to Sinclair mainly an organization for the production of wealth. Its members are organized on a basis of equality; they elect representatives to govern the organization; and they share equally in all its advantages.[197]

Of course, Sinclair is a child of his time, and thus under Spencerian influence. The essential backings – besides Marx – binding Sinclair in his conceptions are the American utopian and critical tradition of George, Bellamy and Donnelly. To them, happiness is identified with consumption and leisure; more wealth and pleasure signify more happiness. The same formula lies behind Sinclair's indus-

191 Croly 1909, 144, 163-167
192 Steffens 1936, 226-227, 285-286
193 Sinclair 1907, 12
194 Sinclair 1907, 27
195 This is the crucial thesis in Richard Hofstadter's classical study: *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, 1959
196 Sinclair 1907, 30
197 Sinclair 1907, 37-38

trial welfare. In fact, the figures of "The Jungle" were reflecting the same dream of easy success, the gospel of wealth, and the evolutionary concept of the strug gle for existence which is also accepted by Sinclair. The problem thus far, it seems, has been the unequal distribution of the wealth (ie. the happiness). And later Sinclair represents his Helican Hall Colony in this regard as a kind of ideal plan for the future.[198]

But let's get back to the beginning of the analysis. "[I]n America, all started even. Some, who were frugal and diligent – and others, who were cunning and unscrupulous – grew rich."[199] And then, to paraphrase Sinclair's run of thoughts: machinery came in and the pace grew faster. The rich were on top and stayed there; and they would stay there until some day when this machine would reach completion. This means that "the captains of industry" would stop making profits and then they would rise into their "watchtowers".[200] In fact, Sinclair goes on, industrial competition has already done its work in American society. Nobody knows how to use its machinery, and until a new kind of use has been found, American national life must remain at a stand-still, stagnation must take the place of progress.

Sinclair could see two developments observable in American society. The concentration of wealth in one portion of society and a spiritual change with a protest against increasing economic pressure. Both are connected with people's ability to cope with their central vices at both ends of the pyramid, the monster machine of competition, luxury, debauchery and cynicism at the top, prostitution, suicide, insanity and crime at the bottom. Sinclair's deterrant alternative is reminiscent of Donnelly's hopeless world in "Caesar's Column". Political corruption spreads, business practice becomes more ruthless. You have to cut your neighbor's throat, otherwise the neighbor will cut yours. At the same time, the number of suicides and the insanity rate grows. In this alternative, economic conditions are abhorrent. Prices are never lowered – for "the poor consumer is a non-union man" – but the cost of living rises.[201]

The links to Marxists, Social Darwinians, Bellamites and Populists have already been established. Regarding Sinclair's conception of consumption and waste, there is still one more link. The leisure-class, the modern machine indus-

198 Sinclair 1907, 259
199 Sinclair 1907, 41
200 Sinclair 1907, 42-43
201 Sinclair 1907, 103-108

try, the captains of industry, the corrupt politics, the new order, the conspicuous consumption and the imbecile institutions, all are there in Sinclair's book. We could hardly find a more Veblenian analysis. Sinclair also makes immediate references to Veblen twice in this book. First, among Mackaye and Reeve as a thinker who has entered into socialism along his own routes.[202] And a few pages later Sinclair refers to *conspicuous consumption* when he represents the impossibility of social ostentation in his industrial republic of the future.

3.2.3. The Profits of Religion

The failure of Sinclair's main theses in "Industrial Republic" was so obvious that it was more than ten years until his next attempt to raise up as a socialist writer of a non-fiction book. In defense of Sinclair's failure, one has to remember the general enthusiasm of 1908 for the labor movement.[203] The world was not the same when "The Profits of Religion: An Essay in Economic Interpretation" was published in 1918.[204] Sinclair had left the Socialist Party, beginning his own magazine because socialist publications were not willing to publish his defense of American policy.[205] The new book aimed to be a study of the supernatural from a new point of view – as a source of income and a shield of privilege. The book was the first in a future series of volumes, an economic interpretation of culture.

If a book like "The Profits of Religion" was to be written anywhere, it had to be in America. Here we can find a collection of the most surprising churches in the world. Sinclair describes some of the most curious cults. There are, of course, Mormons with their new revelation, there are ghastly sects which cultivate religious hysteria like the Holy Rollers, Holy Jumpers, and other sects of the Shakers.[206] From our angle of vision, the most important thing in Sinclair's study is naturally the enormous power of wealth.

202 Sinclair 1907, 223
203 As an illustration, see Debs 1908, 116-117
204 Sinclair 1918
205 Yoder 1975, 62
206 Sinclair enjoys exaggerating with such curious sects as the Spirit Fruit Colony of Jacob Beilhardt, The Christian Scientists and Theosophists of many brands, the Newthot Church and the Koreshanities. And, indeed, many of these churches are to be wondered of. The last named, for example, had a millionaire prophet called Mazdaznan who taught his followers to live without food. Sinclair 1918, 252-253

To begin with, we have to correct certain possible presumptions concerning Sinclair's relation to religion. If anybody next supposes to face revelations charged with Marxist atheism, he has entirely missed the point. Sinclair was an independent socialist who everywhere propagated his cause. His political creed was a kind of Christian socialism that was preached by true believers and it was possibly more akin to the position of the liberal humanists of 19th-century England than to revolutionary socialism.[207] In his literature, the ideological part was much more important; in this his works have been compared with George Bernard Shaw's books.[208] Sinclair was a believer. He did the muckraking, not against the Christians, but for the democracy. He had always believed in democratic processes.

The title immediately suggests old money power. We may hear a moral warning and the connotation of an opulent actor, a conspiracy behind sacerdotal philanthropy. It is not the gain, the attainments or the usefulness which are under analysis, but profits, economic profits. This is surely a warning and an exposure, too. Someone is making profit with religion, and such speculation with man's holiest needs must be denounced. We may easily see more than a glimpse of the Veblenian leisure class behind this scheme:

> In every human society there has been one class which has done the hard and exhaustive work and the other, much smaller class which has done the directing. To belong to this latter class is to work also but with the head instead of the hands; it is also to enjoy the good things of life; it is to have the leisure to cultivate the mind, to give laws and moral codes, to shape fashions and tastes, to be revered and regarded – to have Power. The most obvious method is by the sword but it is by the agency of superstition that the race can be subjected to systems of exploitation for hundreds and thousands of years. The ancient empires were all priestly empires. (Sinclair 1918, 31)

This is the archaeology of religion as a source of income but Sinclair's next aim is to show that the churches of today are not so dissimilar to this. He represents them one by one. The first one is "the Church of Good Society", the Episcopalian Church of Sinclair's childhood, the Church in which he was teaching Sun-

207 Mookerjee 1988, 29
208 Mookerjee 1988, 47

day school at the age of fifteen. In spite of all his sympathies, he has to admit that his spiritual home is a real "sepulchre of corruption".[209] The Episcopalian Church is not an exception in this regard. "The churches of the Metropolis of Mammon function all the same way." In this connection he cites well-known religious names and terms as follows:

> The man who really lived, the carpenter's son, they take out and crucify all over again, [...] they nail him to a jeweled cross with cruel nails of gold. (Sinclair 1918, 98)

> [...] there will march before us a long line of the clerical retainers of Privilege, on their way to the New Golgotha to crucify the carpenter's son: the Rector of the Money Trust, the Preacher of the Coal Trust, the Priest of the Traction Trust, the Archbishop of Tammany, the Chaplain of the Millionaires' Club, the Pastor of Pennsylvania Railroad, the Religious Editor of the New Haven, the Sunday-School superintendent of Standard Oil. We shall try the weight of their jewelled sledges – books, sermons, news-paper interviews, after-dinner speeches – wherewith they pound their golden nails of sophistry into the bleeding hands of the proletarian Christ. (Sinclair 1918, 99)

Echos can be easily heard of William Jennings Bryan's voice in the presidential elections of 1896. "You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold!" was his slogan. We will return to the teachings of churches and to the schism of what is the essential teaching of Jesus and the Bible considering the accumulation of wealth in a later chapter. The comfortless conclusions of Sinclair may suffice here. "To whatever part of the world you travel, to whatever page of history you turn, you find the endowed and established clergy using the word of God in defense of whatever form of slave-driving is profitable." (Sinclair 1918, 170) According to Sinclair, the clerical way of reading the Bible is to collect up all the verses, sometimes tertiary only, which are economically profitable for the purpose of money power and the leisure class. And if the Bible texts work against the interests of money power, as in the holy commandment (six days shalt thou labor and do all that thou hast to do), "then the herd of theologists step into the picture with their word explanations". As an illustration Sinclair takes the efforts

209 Sinclair 1918, 94

of the Jesuits to escape from the dilemma of lending at interest. The Bible tells us not to take interest at all but in our modern commercial system "the money lenders are the masters of the world".[210]

No God is guiding the churches in Sinclair's world. "The business man puts up the money to build the church, he puts up the money to keep it going, and the first rule is, he "runs" the thing too."[211] A Methodist priest, James Roscoe Day, with his volume "The Raid on Prosperity", is one of Sinclair's examples of theologians in the service of businessmen. And surely Day goes for an example of an extreme evolutionist point of view. He has an instant, intuitive recognition of the intellectual and moral excellence of the plutocracy. "God has made the rich of this world to serve Him [...] He has shown them a way to have this world's goods and to be rich towards God [...]"[212] This is a theological reflection of the Spencerian-Sumnerian Social Darwinism in the USA.

Like many American socialists, Sinclair loudly maintains himself to be a Christian, too. But his Jesus is a proletarian rebel, and especially his brother, "the bitterly class-conscious" author of a biblical epistle, James, is that. Sinclair traces this proletarian strain in Christianity back to a time long before Jesus; and he seems to give it a central role as the main feature that distinguishes the Hebrew writings from the other holy scriptures.[213] But, what makes the factual difference? How does the proletarian rebellion show itself in the Bible? Sinclair's view is clear. "It is the furious denunciation of exploiters, and of luxury and wantonness, the vices of the rich." Here we have the last step in the deprecation of the conspicuous consumption. The denunciation is made in Sinclair's pamphlets in the name of Jesus.

The fading into the present tense makes Sinclair even more interesting. The stunning parallels between Jesus, James and proletarian rebels are followed by comparisons with socialist and anarchist agitators of today. Sinclair cites a selection of the texts of Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, "Big Bill" Haywood, Eugene V. Debs, and brother James, St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose and St. Basil to show how difficult it is to distinguish them from each other after a slight rhetorical uniformation.[214] It is, indeed.

210 Sinclair 1918, 174
211 Sinclair 1918, 202
212 Cited from Sinclair 1918, 206
213 Sinclair 1918, 284
214 Sinclair 1918, 287-290

In conclusion we may summarize the Sinclairian conception of luxury in one sentence: the proletarian Jesus has condemned and ignored the luxurious life as a vice of the rich, but Christian churches have denied their mission. The message of Sinclair's book is not the whole truth. At the beginning of the century, there were certainly some radical clergymen as well, who dared to preach for laborers and the poor, such as Father McGlynn, Alexander Irvine, J. Stitt Wilson, Austin Adams, Algernon Crapsey, Bouck White, and, of course, George D. Herron, the preacher who had helped young Upton Sinclair in his pecuniary problems and who certainly had a constructive influence on the very notions of Sinclair that we have just reviewed. He is the one we shall study more carefully in a later chapter. We have to remark that there was radicalism inside the walls of the churches, too. The conclusions and theses of radical clergymen were much like Sinclair's in "The Profits of Religion".

3.2.4. Morality Prostituted by Money

The next volume in Sinclair's series was "The Brass Check, a Study of American Journalism" (1920). Traditionally a brass check has meant a ticket to a brothel, and it is as a symbol of prostitution that it serves in the name of Sinclair's book, too. The title is certainly not an appreciation of American journalism. For the most part, "The Brass Check" is like a book of reminiscences, a collection of Sinclair's own experiences with the press during his career of twenty years as a writer. Especially the first part of the book, "Evidence", consists of a strong autobiographical charge. Here we are not interested in biographical details but the attitudes of the author towards luxury and the rich. And in this respect we again meet a perfectly developed deprecatory point of view in Sinclair.

> The thesis of this book is that our newspapers do not represent public interests but private interests; they do not represent humanity but property; they value a man, not because he is great, or good, or wise, or useful, but because he is wealthy, or of service to vested wealth. (Sinclair 1920, 125)

Sinclair draws quite an amusing picture of a society in which men's reputations depend upon property – and nothing else but property, he underlines. As the

illustration of this scheme of pecuniary valuation we may read a story of a well-known person who existed in the USA. He had done four things which had been widely heralded. He was born; he had conducted a farm; he was married; and he had inherited sixty-five million dollars. What is the foundation of his good repute? "Three of these things are not unusual", remarks Sinclair cynically.[215]

It is a fact of common notoriety that there was no easier means of repute in America so serviceable as the power of money in the Gilded Age. Richard Hofstadter and Robert Heilbroner, for example, have pointed out the special situation of America in this respect. There were no noble classes as in Europe, no *la noblesse de pur sang*. The easiest way to attain fame, the most simple way of showing off was ostentation by a ravishing expenditure of money.[216] It required, of course, some kind of rules for the decent consumption of goods, because everything does not serve as evidence of good taste. According to Sinclair these standards were purely pecuniary. As an example he writes:

> In a society whose standards are pecuniary, that is to say, whose members are esteemed in proportion to the amount of their worldly possessions, the average woman is forced into a mercenary attitude toward love and marriage. In weighing the various men who offer themselves, she will generally have to balance the money against love; and the more corrupt the society becomes – that is to say, the greater the economic inequality – the more mercenary will become the attitude of women, the more they will weigh money in the balance, and the less they will weigh love. (Sinclair 1920, 90)

Veblen wrote much about the pecuniary standards of life as well as the pecuniary status of women.[217] He was full of venomous wit, but he did not claim and argue against the system as did the books of Sinclair. Bellamy, too, introduced the connection between money and marriage in American society. The solutions offered in his ideal utopia were a specific woman general-in-chief and feminine *imperium in imperia*.[218] In Sinclair's books the women's sphere often serves as a moral indicator of society. In his novels ("The Metropolis") Sinclair described mothers who married off their daughters ("or practically sold" them)

215 Sinclair 1920, 125
216 Heilbroner 1972
217 See esp. Veblen 1894, 65-67; 1899, Ch. VII; 1899b, 50-64
218 Bellamy 1888, Ch. XXV

to what they called "eligible" men – the men who could support the daughters in luxury.[219] From his point of view, this was a specific vice of capitalism, especially characteristic of the rich. Their life styles were morally weak, the lap of luxury was the substantial source of debauchery, prostitution, drunkenness and other diseases of capitalism. But nobody dared say this.

> They are the 'society'; they are the people who own the world and for whom the world exists, and in every newspaper-office there is a definite understanding that so long as these people keep out of the law-courts, there shall be published no uncomplimentary news concerning them. (Sinclair 1920, 71)

> [...] if people are squandering the blood and tears of the poor in luxury and wantonness, it does not seem to me such a great virtue that they avoid referring to the fact. (Sinclair 1920, 78)

First we have to note the attitude to luxury. There was nothing heroical, no supreme virtue in being rich. The rich were immoral and hypocritical pretenders. There was one truth for a man of wealth, another for the poor. Next we have to notice the role that journalists play in this order. They seem to accept the privileges that money has brought. The press was enslaved by those who had the most money. Such an attack against the press was not unheard of. Donnelly's critique was identical thirty years earlier.[220] But there had been a noticeable era of muckrakers and progressives after the Populist agitation.

Sinclair must have enjoyed that interesting episode of muckraking. During these years vigilant newspapers and magazines, like *McClure's*, wrote about the waste of money, about graft and corruption, and Americans wanted to read about these. In several years the writers could make thousands of dollars and the publishers made millions. It was not uncommon to get one hundred thousand new subscribers a month. We will discuss the period with more detail in a later chapter, exemplified then by one of the most famous muckraking men, Lincoln Steffens. But muckraking was just a momentary episode; the era ended suddenly with a speech of President Roosevelt. Afterwards Sinclair was almost a loner in this field. Most of the old blatant reformers had become "the tired radicals", they had liberalized

219 Sinclair 1920, 91
220 Donnelly 1890, 28

their radicalism.[221] Of course, an exception confirms, again, the rule: some had become even more radical; Steffens converted to communism in the 20s and drew a strict border line between liberal and radical thought.

After the First World War there was the yellow press instead of the muckraking newspapers. According to Sinclair, it had become impossible to publish anything injurious to "Big Business". American journals formed an "Associated Press", "the most sinister monopoly in America" which "prostituted the minds". In the yellow press Sinclair saw the ultimate example of the prostitution of the truth. No wonder he was ashamed to have named Hearst as savior of the USA. One form of prostitution was advertising. Let us end this section of our study with the colorful words of Sinclair:

> To say that they [the victims of advertisements] are bound as captives to the chariot-wheels of Mammon is not to indulge in loose metaphor, but to describe precisely their condition. They are bound in body, mind and soul to vulgarity, banality, avarice and fraud. (Sinclair 1920, 298)

3.2.5. Plutocratic Culture

Sinclair's economic interpretation of American society went on with a bi-partite study of education. "The Goose-step, A Study of American Education" was published in 1923 and its sequel, "The Goslings, A Study of the American Schools", in 1924. Veblen had already discussed the corruption of the universities in his "Higher Learning in America" but it was a mild exposure compared to "The Goose-step".[222] Sinclair represents the American school system as an evil conspiracy, the ultimate meaning of which is to maintain and reproduce the plutocratic quest for power. He refers to the famous report of the Pujo Committee of 1913.[223] According to it there are "interlocking directorates" which control education. School boards are occupied by three large banking companies, J.P. Morgan and Company, the First National Bank, and the National City Bank. Sinclair's tendentious style in its purest is comparable to Lincoln Steffens' best muckraking in the *McClure's*.

221 Of the liberalization of the radical reformists see Rochester 1977. Rochester has called the change of mind disillusionment.
222 Veblen 1918
223 Sinclair 1923, 19-20

In his books Sinclair wanders from one university to another and everywhere he finds the same conspiratorial tendency. Page after page he lists the names of powerful members in big business, the same names repeat themselves frequently on the boards of universities. A sole person is powerless before this. "Men die, but the plutocracy is immortal."[224] Besides, the rich are weak, self-regarding and vicious. Sinclair is severe in his judgements.

> The plutocratic class has never been able to learn anything at any time in human history. (Sinclair 1923, 235)

> Our educational system today is in the hands of its last organized enemy, which is class greed and selfishness based upon economic privilege. (Sinclair 1923, 478)

In Sinclair's thoughts the situation in schools – public and private schools, primary, grammar and high schools – was analogous. Everywhere the "same Black Hand of Southern California controls our board of education".[225] The promotion is granted through favoritism. Study plans must be subjected to censorship. "The schools must please the business men, otherwise they will not vote bonds to keep our schools going", Sinclair cites a school teacher in his book[226]. This is exactly the same thing that Veblen pointed out in his "Higher Learning in America". In this respect the subtitle of Veblen's book is all-revealing: "A Study of the Control of Universities by the Business Men". His biographer, Joseph Dorfman, tells us that the original name was even more striking: "An Examination into the Total Deprivacy". Sinclair hardly denounced these subtitles as exaggerations.

Finally there is the closing two-volume study in Sinclair's socio-economic series. The first, "Mammonart" (1925), deals with world literature and the second, "Money Writes!" (1927), specifically with American literature, again seen from the economic point of view. These conclude the series of writings, begun in 1919 with "The Profits of Religion".

"Mammonart" forms a three-hundred-and-seventy-page introduction into American literature. It differs from all the other books in the series in that it does not

224 Sinclair 1923, 21
225 Sinclair 1924, 22; 44
226 Sinclair 1924, 46

deal primarily with American social phenomena. In spite of the name, it is a survey into the prime movers of world literature, not of art. We will not face the first American authors until the last pages of the book. The Veblenian leisure class can be found on almost every other page of this tendentious book. One by one, the master pieces of world literature are revealed by Sinclair as plain propaganda, either full of empty leisure-class entertainment or of real class-conscious vision. So Sinclair sees the works of Aristophanes and Virgil, as well as of Samuel Richardson, Jane Austen or Samuel Coleridge, as simple propaganda for the leisure-class regard to wealth. Naturally the ultimate "hype" of this scheme of life is to be found in the pieces of the Italian masters of *quattrocento*, in Boccaccio, Dante and Raphael. On the other hand, the most eminent objects of admiration are, not surprisingly, Charles Dickens, Émile Zola, and – among the Americans – Frank Norris.

"Money Writes!" is, naturally, an altered version of an ancient formula: *Money talks!*. It is one expression of the competitive struggle, the pecuniary emulation that has many forms in English language, such as *get the stuff, the almighty dollar, do others or they will do you, dog eat dog*, and *each for himself*. Sinclair describes the present power of money through the scientific concept of tropism. Jacques Loeb, a remarkable scientist in his time, had a famous thesis that all life is chemical reactions, and these reactions are called tropisms. In "Money Writes!" Sinclair paralleled social reactions to these.

> These are the 'mob emotions' we are used to hearing about. Some millionaire pours a drop of tincture of gold into social aquarium and people are seized by an impulse which can be called 'chrysotropism'. It can be made artificially. A shrewd person is able to plan and create the tropisms and he does. (Sinclair 1929, 11)

Sinclair declares that the most significant things in our modern lives are motivated by these kinds of artificial compulsions, and it is important to note that he is talking about social facts. Tropisms in Sinclair's sense are like "moving picture tropism", "chewing gum tropism", he even talks about "Harding-Coolidge tropism" according the presidential elections of 1921, and "safety razor tropism". Suddenly everyone has an obliging desire to act uniformly. The idea of tropisms connected to expenditure is a remarkable one. It helps us to understand the close relation of consumption to the arts of advertising and persuasion. It makes

advertising a matter of simple manipulation and converting. If valid, this thesis finally results in the curious uniformity in which everyone carries exactly the same general style and spirit that were created by money.[227]

Sinclair then describes in a few pages the conspicuous economic facts about America. The following paraphrastic summary gives us a good illustration of his conception of wealth and its use.

The first one, and the most important single fact in America is economic inequality. There has been inequality in other times and places as well, but never in history have the rich been so rich or so secure in their riches, and never have they built so elaborate a machine for flaunting their riches before the eyes of the poor. This means that the victims of exploitation are held face to face with the evidence of their loss. And this means humiliation and shame for most of the people in modern America. The press and the moving picture are important means in this regard for they bring all the luxury before the eyes of the poor and the propaganda teaches them to be content with their lot because everyone knows that every child born in America has a chance to become a president.[228]

In Sinclair's world, it is not merely the money, it is what the money can buy. Showing off means that one really is somebody. And all the other people share the reflected honor of that somebody. What is the thing you spend your money on is beside the point. "A great man is a great man. It doesn't matter if he is a prize-fighter or a president."[229]

Furthermore, this means that in order to be seen, all the arts of civilization are to be concentrated upon the task of coining the greatest possible number of dollars in the fewest possible number of days.[230] Of course, this means Veblenian conspicuous consumption in its many forms. The waste of goods is a full-time occupation. Sinclair has adapted Veblenian ideas but not his vocabulary. Veblen's terminology had not penetrated daily language, not even in the use of a writer as radical as Sinclair.

> [E]veryone who wishes to be respected by his fellows has to throw away his perfectly good clothes at least twice every year [...] This means that Christmas time every child of the Western world is made ill from overeating in the name of Jesus. (Sinclair 1929, 25)

227 Sinclair 1927, 12
228 Sinclair 1927, 13-15
229 Sinclair 1927, 16
230 Sinclair 1927, 22

The mechanism of conspicuous consumption also connects to the world of art. Specifically concerning the relation of literature and money, Sinclair cautions us of "a dozen men commanding billion dollar resources, who meet in Wall Street offices and decide what American culture shall be and create a propaganda machinery to make it exactly that".[231] This is brought about through people's wishing to be equal with others. Sinclair is not worried primarily about the morality of people in general but about the independence of art. Big money results in lack of mastery. Big money corrupts the art of words and this results in immoral, naughty novels and the poetry of free verse. As an example Sinclair takes Edwin Robinson who "gets lost in his labyrinth of words and forgets to finish his sentence".[232] Edgar Lee Masters' "Spoon River Anthology", J.B. Cabell's "Jurgen", and all the works of Carl van Vechten are displayed as other masterpieces of immorality.

> If we take a list of the best sellers for the past twenty years, British and American, and study the social status of the heroes and hero ines, we will find that in the British case the noble titles exceeds by ten thousand per cent the actual proportion of such titles. In the case of America fifty per cent of the heroes are wealthy at the outset and 49% become so before the end of the story. (Sinclair 1929, 74)

> Depraved literature is a symptom, not a cause, and this is not a unique American case. A thousand other empires were destroyed by the combination of luxury on the top and poverty at the bottom. (Sinclair 1929, 106)

According to Sinclair hereditary privilege is simply a destroyer of morality. The children of the rich run wild and each new batch outdoes the last. It may seem as if Sinclair was over-estimating the significance of books. This is not the case. He perfectly understands the rule of moving pictures, radio, Sunday supplements and popular magazines. But, for Sinclair, all these institutions were working under the same principles. They were agencies of propaganda and all writers who served them were "henchmen of big business".[233] The substantial message of Sinclair is shortly manifested in the following quotation. It is indeed an apt closing for the Sinclair section of our discussion.

231 Sinclair 1927, 38
232 Sinclair 1927, 147
233 Sinclair 1927, 56

The fundamental fact in capitalist culture is that it maintains a large class of people in luxurious idleness. They represent the goal of aspiration for the rest, and so what they think and say and do becomes the standard. Capitalist art is made for parasites and exists by glorifying and defending parasitism. The novel is one of the principal channels through which the ideals and manners of 'smart' society – that is to say, the idle and wasteful part of the community – are fed to the masses. (Sinclair 1929, 100)

This should not be misunderstood. Sinclair does not held that art should be ruled out from the realm of propaganda. Quite the opposite, he sees himself as a propagandist, too. In his books on art, Sinclair tries to convince his readers that the propagandist tone should be attached to naturalist – almost sociological – way of writing. In being so motivated, he had begun what we call investigative reporting.[234]

3.2.6. Summary: The Wealth in Upton Sinclair's Books

How could we sum up Upton Sinclair's views of luxury and waste in his works? We have collected plenty of details requiring some kind of rearrangement. First, money is one of his favorite subjects, and it is always big money, tumultuous luxury, which he is interested in. Second, the grapes of money are vicious in nature, deprecatory and condemnable with no exceptions. Big money writes, persuades people; it creates our styles and designs our tastes; it corrupts our morals; it is the seed of graft in schools, in universities and in politics; it prostitutes the truth in publicity and misdirects the religious proclivities of laymen, priests and churches. There is nothing heroic, no supreme virtue in being rich.

It is to be noted, however, that for the most part Sinclair's critique does not direct itself at the habits of expenditure, consumption or leisure. It is not Veblenian critique of pecuniary occupations or conspicuous waste. It mainly reflects Ricardian socialistic themes. The deprecative denouncement of luxurious expenditure is at its strongest in Sinclair's novels, but the regular line of his more serious writing is orientated against the corruptive power of money; and this cannot be

234 See Mookerjee 1988, 116

taken to represent the conventional concept of the object of our daily consumption. Of course, receiving instruction in an establishment of higher learning, listening to a sermon in a church etc., all this can be subsumed under the substantial concept of consumption in its larger sense; but the inner circle of material consumption is not given so much attention by Sinclair, after all. The emphasis on the corrupting effects of money gives us a glimpse of the muckraking criticism of the 1900s which is to be discussed next.

3.3. The Wealth Leading to Graft in Lincoln Steffens' Writings

Lincoln Steffens is a fine specimen of a muckraker for many reasons. He was one of the pioneering journalists in this area, and probably an honest one. His analytical tone was one that most top muckrakers worked to achieve. He wanted to move and convince. His biographer sees him almost as a prophet who naively believed in the goodness of the American people.[235] Originally he was not a socialist like Sinclair, Dreiser, Norris, or most of the radical novelists. Indeed, he was the opposite, until he underwent his strong process of "disillusionment" that was shared by nearly the entire liberal left during the First World War. He was one of the LaFollette's fellows when The National Progressive Republican League was created at LaFollette's home in January 1911.[236] But after his disillusionment, Steffens converted to communism.[237] He did not hesitate to regard himself as radicalist, but he certainly preferred the label *Christian*. Ever since he was also disillusioned with his church in 1911, he wore a small golden cross, calling himself "the only Christian on earth".[238] He tried to take conscientious care of the truthfulness of all of his accusations.

The blatant novelists, exemplified above by Sinclair, were one chapter in the muckraker movement. The turn of journalism was another. A sensational and unscrupulous literature of exposure thrived. One publisher after another inaugurated a new epoch of revelations. And when the progressives in the twenties

235 Palermo 1978, 57-58
236 Filler 1996, 385
237 Rochester 1977, 100-102. Steffens never joined either of the parties, neither the Progressives nor the Communists.
238 Horton 1974, 85

looked back, they had to confess that the agitation was a success. Proof after proof was accumulated by the journalists of the abuses, of the alliance between political and business misbehavior, but no covering diagnosis was yet made.[239] It was the mighty individuals who usually were under survey, not the whole social order. Papers like *Collier's Weekly*, *Evening Sun, World* and *American Magazine* made remarkable profits to their publishing houses with articles considering the origin of big fortunes. Writers like Henry Demarest Lloyd and Gustavus Myers became heroes. And Steffens was one of the most celebrated muckrakers.

Steffens' articles in *McClure's* have been collected into book form which makes them a suitable and convenient objects of our inquiry. The first two of them, "Shame of the Cities" (1904) and "The Struggle for Self-Government" (1906), are already classics of American radicalism. They made him one of the most popular authors in America; Steffens and his revelations were talked about. He was a prominent friend and a dangerous enemy. The later collections did not spread as widely as these two but after a while, in the thirties, Steffens was again in vogue when he published his brilliant autobiography in 1931. The third selection of Steffens' writings, entitled "Upbuilders" (1909), consisted of six stories about the progressives.

As we have seen, the span of the muckraking era varied from four years to over ten years. All the same, the era remained short-lasting. It culminated in the efforts of the progressives to elect Theodore Roosevelt president in the Wilson-Taft-Roosevelt elections, in 1912. The significance of his election – if it would have come about – is doubtful. In March, 1906, Roosevelt had already denounced the muckrakers in his public speech. Soon the world exploded into war and American idealism diverted into a new channel. The writers of America were organized as "vigilantes". Sinclair, for example, tried to hold the radicals in line for Wilson's policies. In this order he also established his journal. In fact, he was one of the most extreme Wilsonians.[240] Steffens favored both LaFollette, Debs, and Roosevelt more than Wilson, all three in that order.[241] The enthusiastic muckraking was a product of the passionate progressivism which had seized the Americans. It also was a reflection of social gospel. This can be visibly seen in Steffens.

239 Croly 1914, 5
240 Sinclair 1927, 51
241 Horton 1974, 63

Many former reformers cleared themselves from muck in their writings of the early 1910s. For Steffens the purgatory review was "Out of the Muck" that was published in 1911 in *Everybody's*, but for him any opportunist change was absolutely out of the question. As a Christian, he delicately apologized if he had ever enraged businessmen but he also defended his wrath with Jesus' example.[242] Even Jesus had used force against the pharisees and money-changers.

Steffens now traveled around the world seeking revolutions, first among Mexican rebels, then among European communists. Venustiano Carranza hardly was a man worthy of admiration, but Steffens supported his troops, mostly because he was opposed by Wall Street businessmen.[243] During his Russian time, Steffens finally converted to communism. Further on, this change is a visible vein in his writings. And Steffens seems to find understanding where most sympathizers are near to loosing their faith. The anarchists Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman did not valuate *bolsheviks* very highly. Nobody could put the question to John Reed. In Steffens' later writings Lenin appears as a genius, "the greatest liberal on the earth", and Stalin as "a man of action", even the doubtful methods of whom can be understood.[244]

3.3.1. Political Graft

Steffens' first book begins with an astonishing comment. "This is not a book." Steffens knew what he was producing, "The Shame of the Cities" is journalism, a collection of articles; but articles which are tied closely together by one general interest, a strong motivation to reveal the corruption of politics by businessmen. Steffens was a son of his times. Had there been no one but him "The Shame" would never have been written.[245] In his criticism Steffens is almost identical with Veblen's contemporaneous and later analysis of corrupt politics and capitalistic sabotage, the pursuits of businessmen in "Theory of the Business Enterprise" (1904) and "Engineers and the Price System" (1921). Steffens puts it thusly:

242 Steffens 1911
243 Steffens 1936, 242-243
244 See Steffens 1936, 256-262
245 Filler's notion, cited in Horton 1974, 57

> There is hardly an office from United States Senator down to alderman in any part of the country to which the business man has not been elected, yet politics remains corrupt, government pretty bad [...] The business man has failed in politics as he has failed in citizenship, Why?
> Because politics is business. [...] The politician is a business man with a specialty. (Steffens 1904, 3-4)

> The commercial spirit [of politics] is the spirit of profit, not patriotism; of credit, not honor; of individual gain, not national prosperity; of trade and dickering, not principle. 'My business is sacred,' says the business man in his heart. 'Whatever prospers my business, is good; it must be. Whatever hinders it is wrong; it must be. (Steffens 1904, 4-5)

In his articles Steffens moved from one city to another. The cities were different, St. Louis a German, Minneapolis a Scandinavian, Pittsburgh a Scotch Presbyterian and – finally – Philadelphia was a pure American community and famous for that. But all of them were shamelessly corrupted, each in their own way, and Steffens showed that the most American one was the most hopeless of all. The best example of good government Steffens found in New York, which was presented in the closing article of the book. However, there seemed to be a different form of corruption in every town.

In St. Louis Steffens found financial corruption, in Minneapolis police blackmail, Pittsburgh was an example of both. Bribery was undertaken on an enormous scale. According to Steffens, it created a hundred new millionaires in six months in Pittsburgh.[246] The railroads began the corruption in this city and other corporations followed.

> The corruption of St. Louis came from the top [...] The business men were not mere merchants and the politicians were not mere grafters; the two kinds of citizens got together and wielded the power of banks, railroads, factories, the prestiges of city, and the spirit of its citizens to gain business and population. (Steffens 1904, 20)

246 Steffens 1904, 102

> The graft of Pittsburg falls conveniently into four classes: franchises, public contracts, vice, and public funds. There was, besides these, a lot of miscellaneous loot – public supplies, public lighting, and the water supply. (Steffens 1904, 115)

The corruption that involved politics and big corporations had been under examination for about twenty years already, but the results were not commonly talked about. In "Our Country", Strong gave a warning about the connections of saloons and political bribery.[247] Ida Tarbell reminded us in her "History" that Standard Oil had been charged with bribery in 1886 already.[248] The case of Pittsburgh was analogical. Tarbell's book made Rockefeller one of the most wicked robber barons and this opinion seemed to be shared by many authors of the time. Fight against trusts had just begun. The yellow press of the 1900s took the attack much further. Charles Russell's greatest revelation was the investigation of the American Beef Trust, motivated in part by Sinclair's "The Jungle". In another collection, "Lawless Wealth", he investigated the doubtful origin of some great American fortunes. Thomas Ryan's, Charles T. Yerkes', J.B. Duke's and some others' properties were taken under the magnifying glass.[249] The original title of the series, "Where Did You Get It, Gentlemen?", well reflects Russell's reactions in muckraking. Naturally this is not the whole truth. All the rich were not bad, neither were all the poor good. Indeed, Rockefeller was not Al Capone, as had been claimed.[250] And we also should remember that robber barons often employed themselves in philantrophic purposes. The adherents of Carnegie's "Gospel of Wealth" congratulated America upon her millionaires: they only made real science, art, and culture possible. Progress and prosperity were brought by millionaires.[251] Steffens did not simply charge property or richness; he did not condemn the institution as a whole. He did not look for individual scoundrels, like millionaires. According to Louis Filler, this made Steffens more powerful: "Steffens was accounted political muckraking's greatest authority because he gave more than sensations, more than corruption; he gave the *formula* for municipal corruption as it was to be found not only in St. Louis, or Minneapolis, or elsewhere, but *anywhere*."[252]

247 Strong 1891, 130-131
248 Tarbell 1904, 144
249 Russell 1905; Russell 1908
250 Hinckley 1982, 124
251 Carnegie 1900; the book was originally written between 1886 and 1899
252 Filler 1976, 99. His italics

In Philadelphia, Steffens unmasked shocking misdemeanours in political elections. In fact the Philadelphians did not vote at all because there was "a machine", controlling the process of voting.[253] Steffens showed that in Philadelphia the voting list was written by an assessor who was "the machine's man". Most names on the list were false and there were names not only of non-existent persons, but of children and even of dead dogs in it, too.[254]

Unbelievable as it may sound, these accusations were, for the sufficient part, confirmed afterwards. And, in fact, they should not have been surprising during the muckraking era either. Strong had connected wealth with political bribery[255] and Riis had already revealed how the genius of politics made capital out of the dead voter.[256] Croly traced the connections of the "curious mixture of corruption and democracy" back to Jacksonian democracy[257] and saw it then in the form of an alliance between the political machines and big corporations. The politicians of the 1880s were commonly taken to form "a machine".[258]

George Howe, in his biography, culminates machine politics in the presidential era of Chester A. Arthur, the Vice President who suddenly rose to presidency with the assassination of Garfield in 1881. In his doctoral thesis, Howe cites numerous worried contemporaneous comments on Arthur, when the message of the assassination spread over the country.[259] About a quarter-century on, there was a machine of a small number of members in a leading ring guiding America according to their own interests. As declared by Riis' editor Sam Bass Warner Jr., all American cities during the nineteenth century suffered from dishonest elections. It was a common practice to use paid repeaters who voted many times on election day. "By first registering the names of dead persons on the election rolls, politicians could later hire repeaters to go from poll to poll using such names."[260] All this can be read in detail in Morris R. Werner's "Tammany Hall".[261]

Steffens used exactly the same pattern of content and structure in his second collection of muckraking. New articles were first published, again, in *McClure's*

253 The machine metaphor is not typical of Steffens; elsewhere he prefers "system".
254 Steffens 1904, 138-139
255 Strong 1891, 163
256 Riis 1890, 116
257 Croly 1909, 120-123
258 As an illustration, see Herron 1899, 90-91
259 Howe 1957, 150-157
260 Editor's note in Riis 1890, 116
261 Werner 1928

Magazine, later in a book of state corruption entitled "The Struggle for Self-Government" (1906). The aim of this series was to show correspondence between states and their corrupt cities. State, city, national government represent corrupt politics. The message was heard. Neither "The Shame" nor "The Struggle" did sell well in book form, but they had impressive circulation in magazines, 370,000 copies.[262]

Again Steffens' deprecation was directed against the connections of business and politics. He surveyed and wrote articles considering Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, Rhode Island, Ohio, and New Jersey. Not all business was active in politics, only some sectors. These Steffens called "Big Business and Bad Politics".[263] In Illinois it was a railway company "that led and the small fellows only followed". The other states had their own "leaders". In his "Autobiography", Steffens mentions that at this time people seemed to be saturated with all that muckraking. The editors started to get letters crying "Don't you find anything good in this country?".[264] President Roosevelt recommended that the loud muck raking should be stopped. Steffens decided to find a new angle of vision to his theme. It was wrong, he saw, to despise businessmen and politicians; their behavior was inevitable and understandable in this context.[265]

3.3.2. Business Life at the Individual Level

"The Upbuilders" (1909) was the third and last selection of writings which based upon the articles of *McClure's Magazine*. The series was published in the paper in 1905–1908. Steffens was then more famous than ever. The early muckraking articles were seeking of the truth by means of offensive revelations. In this series we meet a warmer, a more human point of view. The book is composed of five progressives' stories as examples of more or less successful reformers. Yet Steffens did not have just good news to tell. All his objects are human beings in every respect.

Mark M. Fagan, Everett Colby, Ben B. Lindsey, Rudolf Spreckels, and William S. U'Ren, each of Steffens' five subjects were progressives of a kind. They were

262 Stinson 1979, 63-64
263 Steffens 1906, 4, 116
264 Steffens 1931, 497
265 Stinson 1979, 135

examples of good political actors in the era of corrupt politics, usually exemplified by McKinley's campaign-manager Mark Hanna who systematically leaned on the nation's most important businessmen. Many of Hanna's supporters had never before been involved seriously in politics.[266] Steffens' progressives were young – all but one younger than Steffens himself – and they were thirsty for reforms. They were Populists, single taxers, Georgists, and Democrats.

Especially two of these "good men" may interest us, Lindsey and Spreckels. Ben Lindsey, the "Just Judge", was a friend of street boys. There is the old Steffens revealing grafters and rascals in this article; big business is corrupting Denver[267] but Lindsey is not allowed to direct his investigations at the bribery of the political parties and saloon keepers; no, he should concentrate his juridical capacities to the juvenile delinquency. And even these little thieves, the cynical pickpockets who Lindsey often is obliged to judge, understand that it is not the wayward streetboys who commit the real crimes but the highly respected businessmen.[268]

As a whole, the article is a story of a just minded gentleman who wins the appreciation of children. What Steffens praises in Lindsey is his bravery in imprisoning "money" if the latter hurts the poor, in this case the children.[269] According to Steffens, this is something unusual. "[T]he big men of his state would prefer to see children hurt [rather] than business."[270] In other words, Lindsey should do his best with the pickpockets and the street-walkers but he must not undermine the vice of the city which is behind this juvenile delinquency. Most of the judges keep the peace but the "just judge" decided to fight this "system"; the system which causes the corruption and all the succeeding evils.

Lindsey wins his battle; "The Upbuilders" is a selection of positive examples. It is not the aim of this study to go into further details of the case. But there also subsists an obvious message of another kind in the story of Lindsey. It is the same old story of big money and its power. "Politics is business and – business comes first."[271]

The next subject is a businessman himself; a good businessman, a real American self-made-man. This is how Steffens presents Rudolf Spreckels to us.

266 Wiebe 1983, 104
267 Steffens 1909, 195-198
268 Steffens 1909, 201
269 Steffens 1909, 205
270 Steffens 1909, 225
271 Steffens 1909, 241

> It is important to know Rudolph Spreckels. He is a business man. He never has been anything but a business man. [...] His boyish ambition, confessed to the amusement of the family, was to be a millionaire. That was all. He didn't mean to run a locomotive, find the North Pole, write a sonnet, or set the world on fire. He didn't dream even of the management of some great business. [...] He wanted millions. And he succeeded; before he was twenty-six he was able to retire a millionaire, self-made. (Steffens 1909, 244)

Steffens' text is like political advertisement directed at voters. Spreckels is "a political ideal of the business world", "the business men's dream come true", he has all the virtues imaginable. His father's methods were victorious, efficient business methods and they made him, not only rich, but an independent financial power.[272] This was the education that young Spreckels got. He also noticed the disadvantages of these methods at an early stage and this made him oppose the system. He did not want to live like the other rich did. However, only the money made it possible for him to protest.

Unfortunately Steffens does not show an interest in Spreckels' life style or the styles of the other millionaires against whom Spreckels protested. Again it is the bribery and corruption which rise to the center of things, but some glimpses of modest idealism can be found. Maybe the Spreckels' order of life could be like W.S. U'Rens in a later article: "Never be conspicuous."[273] Anyway, Steffens' picture of the millionaires is not as dark as Veblen's or Sinclair's. This millionaire is an honest man, even an ideal man. Or he can be, for Spreckels is clearly an exception. He does not gain acceptance from the kept class.

> Business men do not like and applaud and support Mr. Spreckels. They denounce him and they oppose him and they oppose his reform. The leading business men in San Francisco hate him and they vilify him and they oppose his prosecution of criminals. They and their organs fight on the side of graft against this young business man. (Steffens 1909, 246-247)

272 Steffens 1909, 251
273 Steffens 1909, 299

What do the millionaires have against this progressive? According to Steffens it seems to be the rule, or order of money; it is not possible to be honest and rich at the same time. The sick logic of money is to be refused and discarded. Steffens had gone far beyond his previous criticism in his "Upbuilders". As a result he now condemned all institutions as a source of corruption. Steffens' definite condemnation of businessmen remains clearly valid in 1911 when he left muckraking writing for peace and love. "I have come out of the muck believing that Christianity will work" he declared in a letter originally addressed to Ridgway, the editor-in-chief of the *Everybody's*. "The advocacy, by an editor, of a censorship, is not an application of Christianity in a magazine."[274] He willingly accentuated his faith as the basis of his morality, applied Christianity.[275]

After his return from Europe in the late 20s, Steffens met with a totally new world of consumption, and America had changed in other respects as well. Of course, much had been changed in Steffens' own visions, too. But he had not relinquished his beliefs an inch. He never underwent a liberalizing process of disillusionment as did the mainstream of former muckrakers. Quite the opposite, during his Russian era Steffens had finally converted to communism and this change is reflected everywhere in his writings. He now tended to persuade his readers; he tried to understand the motives of Stalin, and Lenin appears to mean brains to him;[276] Steffens now made a difference between "true radicals", like himself or Charles Russell, and mere "liberals", in those former reformists of the first decades of this century; and he seemed to be discontent even with such friends of his as Sinclair, who was now reaching a position in the Democratic Party.[277] The same year that Bruce Barton tried to prove that Christ was the first capitalist, Steffens pictured Moses as the first Bolshevik.[278] Neither of the established parties was a solution for Steffens. He never joined the Communist Party, either. As a true remedy he called for the American Labor Party as a second alternative party to represent labor, farmers and consumers.[279] Here we can distinguish a glimpse of a new notion of consumption in Steffens' texts.

The Keynesian ideas of keeping wages up during the depression and of the significance of the public sector in business alteration were spreading in a world

274 Steffens 1911, 27
275 Palermo 1978, 75; Horton 1974, 144
276 Steffens 1929, 96
277 Steffens 1936, 157-161, 231-232
278 Lincoln Steffens: *Moses in Red*, 1925
279 Steffens 1936, 224-225

of mass production and mass consumption. Steffens' denouncing tone of the businessman's corrupting influence is now giving place to a novel interpretation of industry as "a mass production for mass property"[280] in Steffens' writings also. Even if there can be discerned a hint of irony in his praise of the "Capitalist System" there is always the possibility that businessmen would withdraw their selfish interests resulting in the utopian conditions in which "all necessities and many luxuries will soon be sold in mass to the masses". "The rich are often shy people who have to drink to feel bold and express themselves."[281]

3.3.3. Summary: Wealth in Steffens' Writings

Steffens' notion of wealth, his attitude towards the rich, corresponds in much to that of Sinclair's and of other muckraking men's. In any case, the atrocious pathos of antagonism is missing. Luxury is not the central theme in Steffens' writings, neither is waste or consumption. These were but one strand in muckrakers discourse on modernism. Steffens is the journalist of bribery. The sharpest peak of his critique lies in the corruption of the U.S. government; but here we are back with money again.

In "The Shame of the Cities" we are able to trace the evil influence of money, e.g. of *big money* and *big business* to its backing force, the better classes, which are the ultimate source of graft in Steffens' notions, too. The accusation is formulated clearly in the following citation: "In all the cities, the better classes – the business men – are the sources of corruption".[282]

280 Steffens 1928, 74
281 Steffens 1936, 121-122
282 Steffens 1904, 40

CHAPTER FOUR

Luxury and Waste in the Discourse of Left-Wing Social Gospelers

4.1. Social Gospel in American Spirituality

So far we have studied a certain cluster of concepts in the works of radical economists and writers. We have interpreted the economists of the historical school, institutionalists and muckraking journalists as social radicals. Important socialist authors have also been taken into account. Their radicalism cannot be passed over, even if their roots lie deep in European Marxist criticism.

Regarding radical theology, the question of definition is problematic, again. In fact, most of the religious movements tend to make a departure from the mainstream masses. A new creed always has some more or less fundamental request for a thoroughgoing change to existing views, traditions or habits. The most extreme sects may endeavor revolution immediately, or perhaps they try to isolate themselves completely from the secular world. Both are radical reactions by definition. Naturally, the notable movements that tend to change the world appear to be more interesting. There would be no sense in studying the isolating denominations with no zeal to influence the heathens around, nor the miniscule sects with but few confessional adherents.

First, we have to define more profoundly some concepts for the study above. *American Christianity* – what does it include? Are there any characteristics to unify all sporadic Christian sects as an autonomous category, a certain genre of Christianity, and also to differentiate it from *European* Christianity, for instance? Religiosity possibly had some special forms and patterns in America, something that was born in the famous American melting pot. However, here we have no purpose in defining American Christianity that way. For us, American Christianity is just a tool for further analysis. In this term we have, again, an extra means for our discussion, and it should not be used without noticing two noteworthy restrictions. First: This discussion will cover Protestant Christianity only. Roman Catholics are not included in this analysis for they were usually not treated as real Americans, but unpatriotic, un-American *others,* almost aliens. They were not representatives of the true American mind. The existence of Catholicism in America is precisely the reason why the concept of American Christianity has a sense. Second: We could, of course, easily trace American religious movements back to their European roots, making it seem European, once again.[283] But, that would be

283 A surprisingly large number of Unitarian, Congregational, and Presbyterian churchmen who taught in religion departments and theological schools from the mid-nineteenth century on (like Daniel Gilman, Andrew White, and William Harper) had German training. Eisenach 1994, 99. For further details, see: Stevenson 1986, 36

fruitless from our point of view. American culture is naturally *Euro*-American culture. Immigrants brought their European ideas along when they reached the new continent. But, we have to accept the fact that there was no America in existence yet. America was in the process of formation. The ingredients may have originally been European, but the outcome was something else. Thus, also Christianity had certain American features, not totally strange in Europe, but of manifold importance in the United States. Such was, for example, the rise of the social gospel movement that we are going to discuss more minutely. The same ideas were also presented in Europe, but there they never had such a pervading influence in Protestantism. In America, the main theses of the movement got polemical meanings in everyday language. Phrases, like *earthly kingdom of God*, and *social salvation* soon became commonly accepted slogans in secular purports, too.

In reality, there were two pervading waves of religiosity in American protestant Christianity at the turn of the century: social gospel, and its more secular version, modernism. Pervading ideas were numerous, but they can be counted within these major streams. The main interest will, thus, be directed at the social gospel movement and to its left wing especially. Modernist Christianity will be taken into account only cursorily. In the religious radicalism thus defined we may presume to face especially the ethical and moral parts of discussion considering luxury and waste. The preachers of social gospel certainly should have something to say about consumers' habits of life with regard to our subject.

We cannot say that material and social factors were of less importance than religion in shaping American ideals, but the great spiritual influence of John Wesley, George Whitefield, Samuel Hopkins and many other religious authors over the American mind is equally undeniable. The American way of progress is often illustrated as a path from one revival to another.[284]

The traditional religiosity of the Protestantism in 19th-century America was strictly individual in character. The central point in man's religious life was salvation by conscious solution, and naturally salvation was a personal affair. The lack of social unity could also be seen in the infinite dividing of churches into numerous denominations and sects. Besides, American Christianity was, and still is, characterized by frequent waves of revival movements. The unbelievable success and hysterical atmosphere of those movements is a characteristically

284 Smith 1976, 9, 18-19

American phenomenon. The roots of these hectic motions lay in the Great Awakening, but analogical movements have not been rare in the later history of the USA either. The TV evangelists had their early predecessors in these preachers. At the beginning of the 20th century the great evangelist and awakener was a baseball player, Billy Sunday. He traveled like a circus and his religious awakening, called "trail-hitting", was a big show.[285] Sinclair points out venomously that the real target of Sunday's message was not at all to witness the resurrection nor to find salvation for the sinner: "[H]e tells the wage-slavers to beware the stinking socialists and to concentrate their energy on the saving of their souls."[286] But this is sufficiently in accordance with Sinclair's visions of the role of the church. Everywhere the main rule seems to be: the poor use the churches but the rich run them. This is why Sinclair saw churches merely as plutocratic traps.[287]

The most influental rupture, or saddle point, in the intellectual world of the 19th century was everywhere the spreading of Darwinian science, from geology to theology. The new Social Darwinian thought challenged all religious faiths, from Emersonian transcendentalism on the left to Calvinism on the right. Philosophers began to investigate ways of reconciling this new science with religion. It seemed to be especially fruitful to apply Darwinism as a part of cultural phenomena. We could say, that the independent existence and derivation of the social level was invented in philosophy. This caused the rise of American sociology which, in its origins, was deeply Darwinian in nature.

The social gospel of the 1880s also has connections to this event. It was the first religious movement in America that underlined the social level of spirituality. It differed from all other religious movements thus far also in that it was initiated in big cities, not amidst rural landscapes. Besides, it was clearly an intellectual movement. Eminent laymen as different as Ely, Clark, Cooley, and Sinclair, with many of the most central authors of the time, thought that religion could reply to the challenges of modern society, such as urbanization and the new desperation that was felt in the big metropolis. The same kind of mass orientation towards religion cannot be seen in the European thinking of those

285 Sinclair 1918, 208
286 Sinclair 1918, 211
287 Sinclair 1918, 259-260
There are, naturally, notable developments in American revivalism too. See Marsden 1990. Marsden shows, however, a gradual continuence from Whitefield's Great Awakening through Charles Finley's Second Great Awakening and Billy Sunday's baseball evangelism up to the mass evangelists of our days.

days. The most central authors of the social gospel movement directed their attention more to sociology (writers such as Strong, Rauschenbusch, Gladden, Herron, and Francis Greenwood Peabody).[288] At the same time, some of the most eminent authors were social scientists. And the main stream of American sociology was deeply Protestant.[289] As one historian has remarked, for a reader, it is not at all clear who is a churchman and who a philosopher – whether Ely or Jane Addams, for example, were less religious than Herron or Bliss. They shared a common audience, and a common set of enemies.[290] In short, the social gospel tradition simultaneously worked two ways, sacralizing sociology and sociologizing religion. On the other hand, the import of social gospel has remained a matter of controversy right up to today. It could be the process of really Christianizing society, but it can also be seen as a halfway house from orthodoxy to unbelief.[291] A number of historians have supported the view that the social ethics before the social gospel movement was characterized by charity.

Social gospelers naturally had certain predecessors in their moralizing ethics of the kingdom on earth. Mark Hopkins' "The Law of Love, and Love as Law", published in 1865, anticipated the intellectual redirection of American Christianity towards social gospel, and single predecessors, such as Edward Beecher, can be found three decades before.[292] A stauncher stand for social reform was not taken, however, until the 1870s, simultaneously by evangelists like William Booth and Charles Sheldon, and reformists like Washington Gladden and George Herron.

The critical emphasis on luxury and wealth was not a novel feature in American Christianity, either. Transcendentalists noticed the close connections between money, demeanor, good taste and social appreciation. In his "Essays", Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote about the manners of his contemporaries and remarked that "a plentiful fortune is reckoned necessary, in the popular judgment, to the completion of this man of the world [...] The manners of this class are observed and caught with devotion by men of taste [...] The good forms, the

288 Greek 1992, 55-57

289 Greek 1992, 105-175. Greek handles with Chicago sociologists (Albion Small, Charles Henderson, George Vincent, Marion Talbot), Wisconsin economists (Richard Ely, E.A. Ross) and Michigan sociologists and their connections to the social gospel movement.

290 Eisenach 1994, 102-103

291 Danbom 1987, 53

292 Smith 1976, 225, 230. Smith has traced the evangelical origins of social Christianity back to such preachers as Albert Barnes, Samuel Schmucker, Edward N. Kirk and Matthew Simpson among others. See Smith 1976, esp. Chs. X and XI.

happiest expressions of each, are repeated and adopted."[293] And much of the same could be found in the manners of English aristocracy, too.

Social gospel involved itself keenly with the other protest movements at the end of the 19th century. So, young social photographer Jacob Riis was an active churchman and was woken up – like so many social gospelers – by Josiah Strong's sensational publication "Our Country" (1886) before he wrote his own narrative of how the other half lives. Riis was not an exception. Strong's book is to be mentioned as one of the prime movers in the 1890s social gospel. It touched people's deepest senses of respect and duty and with its 175,000 copies it spread everywhere as the catalyst of daily conversations. Besides, its individual chapters were reprinted in magazines and newspapers and even published as a pamphlet. The book includes, it seems now, many amusing features, such as a peculiarly complacent Americanism and nativism which occur here and there. It also includes some clearly racist conceptions; the blacks, for example, are seen as somewhat infant creatures, much like Rudyard Kipling puts it in his poems, as the "white man's burden". Although he was politically a conservative, Strong's book served as an impulse to many radical theologians of the time. "Our Country" was indisputably the most important ferment in the rising discussion about the social question in churches.

Another inspirer, muckraker Henry Demarest Lloyd's "Wealth against Commonwealth" (1894), had an explicitly Christian message, too. Lloyd's basic statement was that wealth had corrupted government, industry, culture and politics in the USA so completely that it could legitimately be called anarchy. The new centrum of Chicago, for example, was built purely after the requirements of money power; the welfare of its citizens was of secondary interest only.[294] Oil-trusts cared only for their own profits, the social aggregate utility was not thought about. However, millionaires were admired as great philanthropists, modern heroes and survivors. Lloyd tried to challenge this gospel of wealth.[295] The fight of luxury and poverty was a simple zero-sum-game: one man gained fortunes, the other man lost them.

Quite opposite to Strong, Lloyd's book never met a large audience, but "Wealth against Commonwealth" profoundly influenced many cultural persons, such as

293 Emerson 1844, 226; 1856, 444-449
294 Lloyd 1894, 161-162
295 Lloyd 1894, 147-148, 157-158

Robert L. Stevenson and Washington Gladden, the leading figure in the social gospel of the 1880s. Lloyd's writings were directed, in principal, to a larger public. His revealings also received more attention, when the golden age of muckraker journalism began and ended, in the years 1903–1906.

The third public awakener was a novel written by a Kansas Congregationalist pastor, Charles M. Sheldon. "In His Steps or What Would Jesus Do?" (1896), was one of the most popular novels of the era and one of the rare American novels that was translated quickly into dozens of foreign languages. It sold an amazing eight million copies and remained America's best seller – except for the Bible – for over sixty years.[296]

"In His Steps" is the story of a small city with middle-class American inhabitants. In this book, Sheldon simply shows the revolutionary possibilities that American civilization would possess if only the common people constantly asked themselves "What would Jesus do?" in their daily tasks. The book was not the first in its genre. William Stead's "If Christ Came to Chicago" pioneered in 1893 and for a couple of years Christ was kept busy visiting American cities.

The problems that Sheldon's characters wrestle with are mostly social, even political, in nature. That is perfectly in accord with the rising practical Christianity adopted by such modern Christian associations as the YMCA, WSCF, various associations of Christian Socialism and the Christian settlements as well as the Salvation Army; the first named was founded in 1851, and the rest before 1890. The share of the clergy with radical tendencies was noticeable at the end of the 19th century and among the socialist leaders it was considerable enough to surprise most European radicals. At the Christian Socialist Congress in 1908 it was claimed that more than 300 preachers altogether belonged to the Socialist Party.[297] The common men in Sheldon's book are church-goers of a wealthy class, not men of leisure but clearly above the average level of income. These Christians had never faced the cold reality of the city; the poor inhabitation of slums. Their ignorance was revealed when their priest suddenly suggested that everyone should make a certain promise and ask themselves the simple question mentioned previously. Sheldon then goes to prove that the solving of the social problems would lead the USA into a new golden age, into the earthly

296 Hackett 1967, 12. Hackett's estimation of the total sales of the "In His Steps" is 8,065,398 copies, but larger numbers, like 15,000,000, have been presented. Boase 1980, 250

297 Cannon 1970, 28

kingdom of God – one of the most popular ideas in the works of social gospelers.

If we look first at the notions of the lay religious scholars mentioned earlier, we will immediately notice that the common tendency towards the church was everywhere inspired by social questions. Clark saw the latest industrial state as transitional and chaotic.[298] He thought that the fragmentation of believers into numerous denominations was both un-Christian and undemocratic. He sympathized with the old Puritan churches because they had taken care of their members as a whole. The Puritan community was an entity living in accordance with Christian ideals. The final solution to social problems could still be Christian love (*agape*). Clark demanded that churches take a lead in the debate of the so-called labor question, for the problems of cooperation, distribution and consolidation were deeply moral in nature.[299]

It was, therefore, the social question that made Clark lean to religion. Cooley constructed his argument for Christian values from an entirely different direction. According to Cooley, a human being always reflects in some way the divine life of God.[300] Besides, Cooley's religion was a mixture of highminded patriotism and a vast persuasion of social salvation. The salvation of an individual was possible only through the salvation of the whole society. Thus, his argument, too, was socially inspired.

An essential theological part of the social question was the controversy between redemption and richness. Lyman Abbott offered an explanation to this dilemma in his "The Ethical Teaching of Jesus". According to Abbott, what Jesus condemned was not the treasures themselves but "the hoarding of wealth". Many socially-oriented authors protested. Henry George, Edward McGlynn and Sinclair, for example, had a different view about Christianity. "You cannot find an action more completely in the spirit and manner of Jesus than that of Bouck White, the author of "The Call of the Carpenter"[301]. White was one of the most blatantly radical theologians of his time. He had made a protest, in the name of Jesus, against Standard ●il, the company that continuously seemed to be on everybody's tongue.

The social gospel did not have a majority in any denomination. It was a transsectional movement of the radical clergy that united many liberal adherents

298 Clark 1887, 148
299 Clark 1887, 214; 234
300 Cooley 1918, 100-101, 111
301 Sinclair 1927, 192. ●f McGlynn's and George's political connections, see Gompers 1925, 99-103

with different creeds.[302] At its strongest it was during the period 1900–1920. We can say that it received a position as the leading religious direction in America in the sense of an interdenominational movement that gained supporters from every protestant church.[303] At first, the movement spread among the Episcopalians and the Congregationalists, later on it received the support of the theologians of the Baptist and Methodist churches. And, as one of its major outcome, the movement concluded in the formation of the Federal Council, 1908, in which some Protestant churches were united. The most well-known and most popular clergyman of the movement was a Congregationalist, Washington Gladden. He preached on all possible social questions and his influence was immense all over the country. He had first-hand knowledge of life in modern industrial communities and, accordingly, his message was clearly directed at the members of the urban middle classes.

There is no social emphasis in Gladden's early works. Surprisingly, he does not say a word about the Christian's relation to money or wealth in his descriptions on the influence of personal faith in daily life.[304] This is hard to believe on the basis of later developments. The ethics of economics was to be one of the most profoundly studied areas in social gospel; economy is a conspicuous part of our social life. Each of us will involve in its turns every day, i.e. the faith of a man is weighted day after day in his purse. In the 1890s Gladden was already preaching on social items and his impact was seen everywhere.[305] More than anything else, Gladden was the preacher of cities.

Inspired by Gladden, the social gospel soon began to spread from one denomination to another. The social teaching of Jesus was enthusiastically studied

302 Not all theologians of the movement were liberals, of course. Paul A. Carter has divided the social gospel into three factions in his already classic study of the movement: it included liberal, progressive and conservative sectors. Some key figures in the movement, Horace Bushnell, Minot Savage, and Joseph Cook, were socially conservative. However, these are, of course, latter-day descriptions drawn for the purposes of historical analysis and they are not religious distinctions, but political. Carter 1956. See also Boase 1980, 244-247. Conservative social gospel also had its therapeutic turn in the 1910s in the works of Harry Emerson Fosdick, Luther Gulick and others. They saw Jesus as a healthy person, the founder of modern business, a prophet of consumption. This direction culminated in Bruce Barton's psychotherapeutic evangelism in the 1920s. See Lears 1983, 30-38

303 See Gorrell 1988. It is to be noticed that, beside Catholics, Lutherans were not involved keenly with the unifying, intersectal influence of social gospel. This is mostly because of the Lutheran doctrine of two regiments. Church had no need to deeply interfere with social questions for it is the task of the secular regiment, i.e. the government. Social ethics has never been the strong part of the Lutheran creed.

304 Gladden 1876

305 Gladden 1895 serves as an example of his social teaching; an introduction into socially actual ideas.

and attempts were made to establish an ideal society based on it in reality. The concept of social salvation surfaced here in embryonic form. The target of religion should be to save Christianity, and all the creations with it, from eternal damage and doom by living anew Christ's teachings in society.

The conception of what were the most crucial social questions differed. Gladden took social unequality, gaming and drunkenness as the most problematic items.[306] But all these problems could be repaired and, thus, the millennial kingdom could be attained. The idea of an earthly kingdom was extremely victorous during the 1890s, but of course there were other themes as well, shared by social gospelers. According to Cecil Greek, they had four more major conceptions, connecting different preachers in one religious movement. These were the acceptance of evolutionism, faith in inevitable progress, an optimistic perspective on human nature, and a conception that America would be the place where the kingdom would be first established.[307]

Strong's "Our Country" was preceded by a series of articles with the same title published by the American Home Missionary Society, the same society for which Strong was working.[308] The first of these, entitled "Our Country – Its Capabilities, Its Perils, and Its Hope", was published in 1841. The name well reflects the content of Strong's book. He wrote about the perils such as the Roman Catholic Church, the power of liquor, foreign immigrants, socialists, urbanization, and the extremes of wealth and poverty. The book has clearly been written from the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant point of view. And the author seems to be proud of the fact that he was lucky to declare his nativism well before John Fiske's "Manifest Destiny" which was published in *Harper's Magazine*, in March 1885.[309] However, Strong aimed to enlist wealth in the service of God. That is why "Our Country" deals so loudly with money, luxury and waste.

There are four dangerous perils involved with wealth, according to Strong's analysis. Mammonism, or the love of money, the will to be rich, is the first of those. This "root of all evil" is the "besetting sin of commercial people".[310] It corrupts popular morals and ballot-boxes as well. The Assisian ideal of poverty,

306 Gladden 1902, 135
307 Greek 1992, 21
308 See the Editor's Introduction to *Our Country*
309 Strong 1891, 200
310 Strong 1891, 160

too, belongs to Strong's Christianity. The real Christian has no time to make money. Mammonism is the ultimate danger because it is the pushing power which induces men to the other perils of wealth. The fear of mammonism was also the old Puritan ground for modesty, and it can be found in Beecher's works, for example. Men who put their supreme idea of life in mammon are endangering their ability to understand God.[311]

Secondly, wealth leads people into materialism and thirdly, into luxuriousness. They accumulate a mass of things around them and finally lose their natural sense of beauty. Still another danger lies in the increasing tendency towards a congestion of wealth.[312] A modern millionaire can easily double his money because wealth increases much more rapidly than population. The results of enormous wealth in the hands of people are frightening from the social point of view.

> Nations, in their beginnings, are poor; poverty is favorable to hardihood and industry; industry leads to thrift and wealth; wealth produces luxury, and luxury results in enervation, corruption, and destruction. This is the historic round which nations have run. (Strong 1891, 165)

Money is, after all, indispensable in our daily life. How should a Christian live? We live in a material world. What is the true way of expenditure? Strong's reasoning gives a simple guiding rule:

> It is the duty of some men to make a great deal of money. God has given to them the money-making talent; and it is as wrong to bury that talent as to bury a talent for preaching; [...] But let a man beware! This power in money is something awful. It is more dangerous than dynamite. The victims of 'saint-seducing gold' are numberless. If a Christian grows rich, it should be with fear and trembling, lest the 'deceitfulness of riches' undo him; for Christ spoke of the salvation of a rich man as something miraculous (Luke xviii, 24-27). (Strong 1891, 235)

> Here, then, is the principle always applicable, that *our entire possessions, every dollar, every cent, is to be employed in the way that will best honor God.* (Strong 1891, 223, his italics)

311 Rodgers 1978, 97-98
312 Strong 1891, 167

In detail the principle is not so simple to follow. Where should we draw the line between justifiable and unjustifiable expenditure? Many of our necessary goods of today have been the luxuries of yesterday. Strong agrees with Ely that there exists a difference between useful and useless consumption. There is a true difference, if we give work and bread to a poor man by employing him to produce destructive items, like weapons and drugs, or to produce luxuries for few, or those necessities of life that enrich the life of the whole society.[313]

Another Congregational minister, George Herron, will serve as an example of the radical wing in this movement. He propagated social gospel among the farmers and agrarian population of the West; much like the Kansas radical democrats who are known as populists. The core of his religious preaching was the emphasis on redemption made by the human-god as the redress of all wrong. Herron is a reasonable subject for our discussion, for he was the leader of the left-wing gospelers, a radical minister in his comments and a revolutionary socialist as well. In fact, this was not at all exceptional among the social gospelers. The American revolutionary socialists were commonly much more true believers than their comrades in Europe; a fact which often caused surprise, headache and deprecation to the European socialist leaders.[314] We have already met one of those "invidious and impossible" socialist Christians, a friend of Herron's, the muckraking writer Sinclair, and we will later meet yet another, Eugene Victor Debs. The religious group was called Christian Socialists, best represented by Herron, and W.D.P. Bliss, founder of the Society of Christian Socialists, in 1889. Others were Hamlin Garland, Mary Livermore, and Frances E. Willard. They also had a journal, *The Dawn* and they demanded more than a reform of the economic and polical system. Capitalism contained inherent evils necessitating a complete revolution. Bliss served as the missionary of this revolution and Herron as the evangelist.[315]

Most of the preachers of social gospel were not as radical as this. One of the most eminent theorists in the movement, Walter Rauschenbusch, did not try to change radically the structures of society, especially in his later works. In fact, his work has been seen as an attempt to bridge the gap between liberals and conservatives.[316] As a theologian he was the most successful of the representa-

313 Strong 1891, 227-230
314 Rauschenbusch 1912, 108-109
315 Boase 1980, 248
316 Zalampas 1982, 58

tives in this movement. He made an attempt to create a doctrinal basis for the social gospel. He pressed ministers to preach from their pulpits about questions of public morality. So he proclaimed that the religious spirit should assert the supremacy of life over property.[317] Jesus' example is a guiding mover. Rauschenbusch was convinced that Jesus would have taken our quest for money and plenty (more dresses, automobiles and luxurious dinners) as a shameful item of paganism.[318] Thus Rauschenbusch reached just into the sphere of our interest. And he went on in the same direction.

Still another movement scattered over the various denominations at the end of the century. It was called modernism and it has been taken as the most radical Christian attitude in the first decades of 1900. The principles of modernist Christianity are traceable back to secular life. It replaced the former belief in the Bible with an infallible faith in science and progress. This movement emphasized human values and peculiarly the importance of democracy. Its leading scholars were concentrated into the Divinity School at the University of Chicago. William R. Harper, G.P. Foster and Shailer Mathews developed a new tenet that was to be known as Chicago Theology.[319] The central modernist faith can be found in the writings of Edward Scribner Ames' and Shailer Mathews'. Both of the basic emphases (progress and democracy) are common with the social gospelers; and they share these ideas in so much that the demarcation between modernism and social gospel is often impossible and useless to do.

Shailer Mathews can be named as the founder of the modernist principles in outline. His study on the social teachings of Jesus was originally published in *American Journal of Sociology* in article series. It strongly connected as a part of the social gospel movement. The idea of the earthly kingdom is centrally presented. Jesus did not commend, in his teachings, any specific social order. As a necessary, indispensable premise Mathews mentions, however, the requirement of democratic institutions.[320]

Edward Ames saw modernism as the only democratic religion of the 20th century. Like old humanism, it took man as a powerful, creative being. If religion did not meet the demands of the people, it was nothing but a burden,

317 Moseley 1981, 92-93
318 Rauschenbusch 1912, 62-63
319 Zalampas 1982, 51
320 Mathews 1897, 45-69, 130

Ames declared. A modern man needed a new modernist Christianity, the religion of democracy.[321] The Americans of the time believed that their life time was somehow specific, a unique era in the history of Western civilization; and the specific era needed a specific religion, the new scientific religion of modernism, of course. As the only alternative, Ames could see but the pessimistic fundamentalism of Agassiz, Charles Hodge and others who insisted on swallowing the Bible as a whole, without exceptions or explanations. Christian faith thus included "the Bible, the whole Bible, and only the Bible".[322] According to Ames, this is an attitude totally invalid for the modern Western man: the Bible is a book among others. The specific revelation, formerly imperative, was not so definitive for modernists.[323] The Old Testament, above all, was but a primitive collection of religious myths. Instead of myths, Ames wanted to elevate modern science to the status as the central part of his credo. Science, not the Word, is capable of indicating what is really worthy and eternal.

Ames collected his principles in 1918 into his "The New Orthodoxy". The central theses are the principle of continuing revelation, the principle of Christian love of one's neighbor, and the belief in progress. This kind of Christian doctrine was not a new phenomenon in religious thinking. It can be visibly traced back to the European tradition of liberal theology, to Schleiermacher, von Humboldt, and Ritschl, even if it did get a new American accentuation.[324] But, in this inquiry, modernism is interesting merely in its coincidence with the theses of the social gospel: the hectic tendency towards the earthly kingdom of God.

At the end of the 1910s there was a certain difference between Ames' modernism and Rauschenbusch's social gospel. At the turn of the century, on the other hand, there were many connections between these religious reform movements. Mathew's "The Social Teachings of Jesus" (1897) is a classic of social gospel, too. Mathews always kept alive his mitigated modernism and never took off his label of social gospeler. His program of social salvation is very similar to Rauschenbusch's social theology.[325] Later the modernist tenet has developed to the point where contact has broken and modernism has moved further away from the initial accentuation of democracy to much more scientism.

321 Ames 1918, 5-6, 10
322 Cited from Zalampas 1982, 52
323 Ames 1918, 57-58, 69, 81-82
324 One historian, at least, takes Christian Socialism as a native-born tradition that was only augmented by European theology, brought by immigrant groups, after the First World War. Dietrich 1996, 48
325 Mathews 1914, 1-84

4.2. Wealth as a Sin in the Works of George D. Herron and Walter Rauschenbusch

4.2.1. The Redemption from Waste in Herron's Sermons

The wave of social gospel can be seen as a reactive movement and, in part, a radical force in American discourse. Its most central theses propagated a rapid change in current life style. The change was taken to be inevitable, some authors even preached for a complete, perfect turn not only in the personal order of life, but in the politico-social order. The old histories of social gospel have usually assumed that the movement was generated by forces wholly external to the churches. Specific events, such like the uprise of the Knights of Labor, the Pullman and Homestead strikes, the Haymarket bombing, the Populists, the Bryanites etc., surely had a certain impact, but they cannot entirely explain the success of social gospel. Church historians have rejected this explanation. Not all the key members were politically liberals. Socially conservative people contributed to the movement, too. The Christian Church has been throughout its history both a conservative and a radical force and in both forms it has always exorted an influence also in the world beyond the churches. The social gospel of the 1890s included the whole spectrum of Christianity. All kinds of people were interested in social questions.

According to Paul Carter, the social gospel, employed by the conservative right, most closely approximated the individualistic, voluntaristic reform movements. The first hand target was clearly to relieve misery in the world (in the soup-soap-and-soul style), motivated by charity and philanthropy. The following of Jesus' example induced changes in personal, individual activities. The left wing argued that this kind of social uplift was worse than useless, because its advocates received the emotional satisfaction of reform without achieving reform in reality. It was relief without repairing the cause. Only a totally different kind of social order would help to save the world by constructing the kingdom of God. The change was needed, not on individual level, but as a collective. Between the extremes lay the progressive center. It accepted the radical contention of institutional changes as well as personal changes, but it abandoned the

claim that only institutional changes would bring the millennium. Neither could have got priority in religious teaching.[326]

The leaders, analyzed in the following, are representing the left or the central-left on this classification. On the other hand, the typology should not be applied to the pioneering awakeners, like Josiah Strong, for the social gospel of his age was not yet a movement. Classifying them would be arbitrary only.

The vigorous condemnation of luxury, advocated by Strong, is evidently traceable back to the puritan's fear of mammonism; and this point of view undeniably has a strong basis in the canonized books of the Bible. The evidence of the New Testament is quite convincing and coherent. In the Bible the rich man meets an unhappy end. It is the conventional conception in literature, too, that salvation is a hard and difficult process for the rich. Rauschenbusch refers to Howells' (maybe best-known) character, Silas Lapham, who had to meet a bankruptcy, and Twain's prince, who had to become a pauper, to get saved.[327] Plutus, the god of richness, has been presented as the only habitant in hell who cannot produce a reasonable voice.[328] To these we could add Fitzgerald's great Gatsby and many others who could not meet salvation at all. The following numerous examples may illustrate the biblical fear of mammonism.

> Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal.
> Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.
> To whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.
> But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.
> Freely ye received, freely give. Get you no gold, nor silver in your purses; no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff, for the laborer is worthy of his food.
> Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things that thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.
> Extort no more than that which is appointed to you.
> One thing thou lackest yet: sell all that thou hast; and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. [...] How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to enter in through the needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

326 Carter 1956, 4, 13
327 Rauschenbusch 1912, 293
328 Rauschenbusch 1912, 302

Maybe the most influential text of all is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) in which the rich man is doomed to hell by Jesus as a matter of course, without any crimes or vices being alleged. And this is the only real picture of hell drawn by Jesus. The only crimes of the rich man seem to be the luxurious life and the ignoring of the beggar.[329] The picture of money and wealth given by the Bible is cautiously frightening. In the case of Josiah Strong this fear can be traced in the forms of *mammonism*, *materialism* and *luxuriousness* back to the puritan concept of wealth, and even further back to Assisian ideals of modesty and poorness. But, in addition to puritan tradition, the radical wing of social gospelers grounded their criticism in political tenets.

George D. Herron has already been mentioned as the leader of the left wing gospelers among the preachers at the end of 19th-century social evangelism. His reaction to socio-economic conditions is a paradigmatic representation of a small, but revealing group of radical clergymen. They went much further with the populist antagonism to monopoly and plutocracy. In the early 1890s George Herron was the dominant figure in this group. He found private property to be sinful, urged state control of railroads, accepted Marx's view on class struggle, and so on. He often equalized Christianity with democracy, politics, socialism or sociology. According to Josiah Strong:

> Property is one of the cardinal facts of our civilization. It is the great object of endeavor, the great occasion of discontent, and one of the great sources of danger. For Christians to apprehend their true relations to money, and the relations of money to the kingdom of Christ and its progress in the world, is to find the key to many of the great problems now pressing for solution. (Strong 1891, 219)

Strong's attitude to money is, nevertheless, a realistic one. Money is a danger but also a promise for a better future. A much stronger attitude could have be taken, and was now taken, by the radical ministers of the 1890s. In his book dealing with wages, labor and wealth, "The New Redemption" (1893), Herron, not primarily a theologian but an orator, "a prophet of the prairies", accentuated the contrast between selfish and amoral capitalism and the safe, united, brotherly and just – but temporal – kingdom of God, already here on earth.[330] He seemed to doom

329 Rauschenbusch 1912, 292
330 Herron 1893

money, property and wealth as essentially sinful phenomena. He enormously emphasized the human nature of God. All this "radicalism" was too much for the middle-class Congregational Church. In fact, exactly the same accentuation of the earthly kingdom can be found in the writings of other social gospelers, too[331]. The real problems with Herron must have been elsewhere: in his extreme political opinions, perhaps, and even in some of his biographical details.

During the last ten years of the nineteenh century, Herron was unquestionably the most colorful figure in the Social Gospel movement. He was called "the John the Baptist", "Nineteenth Century Ezekiel".[332] With George Gates he was also the leading figure in *The Kingdom*, an important Social Gospel paper.

Herron had reached his fame in the small towns of the Upper Midwest in 1884–1890. His most famous sermon, "The Message of Jesus to Men of Wealth" was given before the Minnesota Congregational Club, in September, 1890, and it aroused widespread comment.[333] It was the one he gave consistently for the next decade. This ultimately led him to teach at Iowa College in 1893. During the first years of the decade, Herron developed his visions of social redemption and published them in the form of six volumes of writings. The first one, "Larger Christ" was published, however, in 1891 right after the conspicuous Minnesota sermon. In these texts, mostly sermons, Herron adapted much of Marx's political program. Conservative priests and ministers strongly opposed this "politics from the pulpit", e.g. the Christian socialism of Herron's style. He received fame for inspiring the best-selling novel ever (Sheldon's "In His Steps") and for inspiring an experiment in Christian communal living (the Commonwealth Colony in Georgia).[334]

The matrimonial problems that eventually resulted in divorce did not help Herron at all in his struggle. He was obliged to leave his post in 1895. In 1901 his wife divorced him, and two months later he married another woman. In the USA divorce would have been a humiliating process for anybody, for such a famous minister like Herron, it was a scandal. The Congregational Church expalled him.[335] Later he even had to travel from the country (in this regard) to the much

331 Strong 1891, Ch. XV; Gladden 1908, Ch. XI; Rauschenbusch 1912, Part II, Ch. V
332 Boase 1980, 249
333 Republished many times. See Herron 1894, Ch. IV
334 These were inspired as much by the unsuccessful attempts of the apostolic church to establish a voluntary form of communism. America, in the first half of the 19th century, had both religious and nonreligious socialistic communities (like Brook Farm, New Harmony, Oneida etc.).
335 Boase 1980, 252

more tolerant Europe. There he joined the socialist party and further developed his Christian socialistic utopia. By this time, his most flourishing literal era was over.

And where can we find Herron's politics from the pulpit? According to Herron, the history of Christianity had been a process of acquiring a better awareness of Christ's political teaching. Herron speaks about "the political coming of Christ".[336] Thus far the Christian churches had not yet understood the social meaning of Jesus' works, or had understood it only partially. The life and death of Jesus is an example that obliges Herron to further develop and cultivate the democratic Christian state. In Herron's words: "Revolution is the Christian's business", and "Christianity must become political".[337] In his later books written in Europe, Herron concentrated more upon the problematics of democracy and less upon the definition of Christianity. His main interest was, clearly, centered on politics in the European (and American) nations after the First World War. Real democracy was defined in the very spirit of progressivism as democratizing our industrial, educational, and moral codes. Democracy was, in fact, identical to Christianity.[338]

> The state is religious organism. Politics is religion, true or false, and nothing else. Human institutions are the organization of religion of some quality, whether we would have it so in theory or not. The people act politically what they believe religiously. The politics of the people is a living record of their religious faith. (Herron 1895, 66)

Herron's reasoning is biting. If politics is action, and if people act according their belief, and if their belief is truly Christian in nature, then the kingdom of God can be attained by Christianizing the society (a phrase that was popularized later by Rauschenbusch in 1912). In Herron's vision this means democratizing it. The emphasis on democracy reveals Herron's connections to modernist theology and, above all, to the progressive movement. The other modernist weight, that of progress, is also clearly visible in Herron's thought. So, the big scientists like Thomas Edison and Nicola Tesla were preparing the way of God in their work,

336 This is one of the favorite themes in Herron's sermons. See for example Herron 1899, 144-146; Herron 1895, 36, Ch. III

337 Herron 1899, 141. Herron also accentuated the continuance of revolution: "The worst charge that can be made against a Christian is that he attempts to justify the existing social order." 1899, 143

338 Herron 1919, 84, 90

by the same token as Luther or Cromwell were.[339]

What role, then, do wealth, consumption and waste play in Herron's theology? What is his conception concerning luxury? All these are central parts of Herron's discussion. His most famous sermons treat items like the "Christian Doctrine of Property", "The Gospel of Jesus to the Poor", "The Political Economy of the Lord's Prayer", "Message for the Men of Wealth", and so on. It is the *rich* who need the gospel preached to them.[340] Still the systematic analysis of the evils of plenty, shown by Strong in his reasoning, is lacking in Herron's works, but the theme is processed over again, in any case. Of course, the denunciation of luxury seems to be nothing exceptional, rather is it a common theme in social gospel. Gladden, for example, identifies one root of social problems in the growing amount of luxury. This is an invidious fact especially in our modern industrial society.

> The artificial and luxurious life of our modern society is the heart of the trouble; the overvaluation of style and fashion; the undervaluation of the happiness that consists with plain and simple living; the theory that the only life indeed is one that consists of an abundance of things. (Gladden 1902, 147-148)

What is essential in this warning is not the mere condemnation of luxury, but the relation between luxurious life and modern society. *Modern* people want an abundance of things and this induces social problems.

In this regard, the evidence of some simple sentences of Herron's, like the following, are clear enough. "The worship of Baal and Moloch was relatively no more degrading and dehumanizing than the conception of the state as commercial compact and secular institution, with only police functions to procure individual liberty and protect property."[341] The quotation gives us the impression of a man who totally dislikes wealth, paralleled with idolatry. But, what really is denounced is wealth in its current form. Herron, in his descriptions of the coming kingdom, represents it as a world with plenty of material prosperity. The aim of the coming revolution is not to destroy wealth, but to save it in the millennial kingdom.[342] But, unlike the America of that time, it would be the prosperity of the people. God has not planned for people to starve on earth but to live in

339 Herron 1896, 174
340 Herron 1891, 42
341 Herron 1895, 55
342 Herron 1893, 18

abundance.[343] In addition to all his love, Jesus has given us the means and methods required for abundant life: plenty can be obtained if we accept the democracy of the Sermon on the Mount. The earthly kingdom would be a democracy with equal distribution of wealth. At the turn of the century the real danger did not lie in prosperity, but in the fact that its control was centralizing rapidly into the hands of a small minority.[344] And, what is even worse, a minority not willing to work. According to Herron work is a "manifestation of life" and "communion with God".[345] This leads us straight to the point. Not to work means leisure and the counterpart of leisure is luxury.

> Under no circumstances, is private luxury tolerable; it is not only not Christian: in a world of wretched want and poverty, it is indecent and criminal. (Herron 1899, 53)

Herron's concept of luxury resembles that of Marx's; or, more precisely, that of later Marxists': a vertical departure from others' scheme of consumption.[346] In reality, Marx himself did not conceptualize luxury, he did not utilize the concept of *Luxus* in his works. But we will return to this problematics more minutely in a later chapter. Marx surely had a vast influence in Herron's writings, but Herron systematically refused to be classified with him, or with George, or Tolstoy, either. He insisted on standing as an independent interpreter of Jesus and the holy writings, especially the Sermon on the Mount.[347] But, according to his own reasoning too, the real Christian message is almost equal with Marxist doctrines. However, Herron's premise does not lie in political economy or philosophic reasoning. In order to enter the kingdom of God, a rich man should give up his property to the common good. "Opulence is always the result of theft", Herron cites prophet Jerome,[348] not prophet Marx.

In reality, Herron does not, however, construct his communism from the biblical prophecies or the Sermon on the Mount, but takes it for granted and tries then to bring out the ultimate communist opinion in those prophets as well as in Church fathers like Chrysostom, Ambrose and Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Anselm and also in authors like Pascal, John Huss, John Knox, Luther, Calvin

343 Herron 1899, 30
344 Herron 1895, 99
345 Herron 1893, 21
346 See also Herron 1899, 101
347 Herron 1899, 241-244
348 Herron 1899, 111

and Zwingli, Henry George, and Rousseau. Herron considers each of them a social reformer with communist ideals. Only the targets of the English reformist Henry VIII are hard to equate with the aims of Herron's new social order. "Christianity is the highest and purest socialism" but the Anglican Church has a capitalistic nature. Luxurism and Christianity are mutually exclusive for "a rich Christian is a contradiction of terms".[349]

The relation of economics to religion is discussed in one of the largest chapters of his volume "Social Meanings of Religious Experiences". The quotation of William Penn's "No Cross No Crown" – situated as a motto right at the beginning of the text – presents precious metals and gems as vanity and superstition. We meet again with the old conception of Puritans, Emersonians, revivalists and of Josiah Strong's that we have already met. In order to uncover the biblical attitude towards money, Herron analyzes some Old Testament narrations including economical teaching. Such a one is the life story of the patriarch Jacob who really was a rich man in any sense whatever. In the story Herron sees wealth as a seducing trap that makes its victims unable to meet salvation and to save others. Riches are as seducing for everyone, even the church is in danger of giving money more influence than Jesus has in the ecclesiastical teachings on economic questions. Herron's conclusion is a reclamation-like deterrent.

> The church must repent of its manifest subjection to money, and free its institutions from servile dependence thereupon, if it is to avert the necessity of God's turning to the churchless peoples, or to the peoples regardless of the church [...] (Herron 1896, 81-82)

Almost the same pathos can be heard in Herron's very first collection of writings; it is the worry of a church that will demolish itself in covetousness and hypocrisy. It is an open shame that churches are gilding His cross with gold of mammon; "a church that shall not build palaces in which to sit at ease".[350] There would be plenty of objects, better than edifices, for Christians' money to be used on.

Herron's growing stress on modernism can be identified in his deprecatory attitude towards waste. Waste is a horror, and ethically wrong as well. Science and progress signify men's improvement in slaying waste both in production

349 Herron 1899, 129, 137
350 Herron 1891, 97-98

and consumption, both of material and of time. And the example Herron takes up is, once again, the waste of American forests,[351] the same illustration that was also preferred by the economists. Herron joins a group of later progressives by anticipating the coming discourse of conservation that we have already studied in a previous chapter, 2.1.3. But Herron's work ethic is interesting, as well. It makes him denounce the value of inherited wealth.

> The man who is able to work and works not, is a slave; he is a pauper. Of all pauperism the most degraded and degrading, because utterly shameless and thriftless, is that aristocracy which idly luxuriates in money obtained through speculation, extortion, or inheritance. (Herron 1893, 22)

Instead of the slaves of labor, Herron dooms the slaves of leisure. Man is created to work, and to live by the product of his hands. There cannot exist luxury in the sense of vertical differences in consumers habits of expenditure in Herron's kingdom, because he equates Christian social order with "democratic" opportunities of the people. Sin basically means to him unevenness in our world. It means unequality also in the distribution of wealth and thus causes the differences in our standards of living. "Because sin has entered the world some have little and some have much."[352] The opposite of democratic in Herron's sermons is not undemocratic but *plutocratic*.

4.2.2. The Public Sins of Money

Waste is explicitly denounced by another minister of social evangelism, Walter Rauschenbusch,[353] and waste of forests and resources are mentioned in his works equally with the waste of religious forces in religious bigotry. If, for instance, a church is teaching and preaching about questions that have nothing to do with the realities of today, it simply wastes its energy. This is the sacerdotal form of waste.[354]

In Rauschenbusch we have, at last, an American scholar who does not bind

351 Herron 1896, 175
352 Herron 1893, 25
353 Rauschenbusch 1912, 98
354 Rauschenbusch 1916, 110

himself to any Social Darwinian principles, and least with the principles of struggle and elimination of the unfit. Rauschenbusch's backing is in theological traditions and in the social teachings of Jesus. And Jesus did not plan to eliminate the unfit. He planned on saving them.[355] Pride of birth, of wealth, or of whatever is definitely excluded from his teachings. This does not mean, however, that Jesus would have nothing to say about the interactions between the rich and the poor; and Rauschenbusch is extremely interested in this relation. He emphasizes that Jesus clearly saw the poor as above the rich.[356]

In fact, Rauschenbusch does not add much to the tenet of the preceding social gospelers. His greatest merit undeniably lies in the notable systematizing work that he undertook in the 1910s. Rauschenbusch was not aiming at the role of a radical reformist at all; he merely tended to combine social gospel with the traditional doctrines of the apostolic creeds. He did not meet the opposition and conflicts that Herron did, simply because he was not as radical and unconventional in his teaching and life. On Carter's scale he could be classified as a progressivist of the left.

Finally Rauschenbusch's theology culminated in a new concept of sin, according to which there always exists in sin some form of exploitation. There are many species of sin in our world. Sensuousness, selfishness and godlessness are the main categories by which Rauschenbusch operates. The first and third ones are well-known; they have received a plentitude of attention from Christian theology throughout the ages, but the definition of sin as selfishness was a somewhat new attempt to understand the nature of sin. It is, however, an acknowledged explanation among the earlier social gospelers. Herron, for example, took it up in his books ("The New Redemption", "Christian State") and so anticipated the later theology of public sin.[357]

The main causes of evil in modern society are business life and the rule of money. There are many strongly muckraking-like chapters in Rauschenbusch's books. The section 3.5. in "Christianizing the Society" considerably so.[358] He takes numerous examples of the immorality of businessmen, but the systematic representation is given only in his closing piece of thought, "A Theology for the Social Gospel" (1917). Not until this book does he explicitly define the concept

355 Rauschenbusch 1916, 13
356 Rauschenbusch 1916, 40
357 Herron 1893, 103-; 1895, 181
358 Rauschenbusch 1912, 180-202

of "public sin". In order to specify the concept, he enumerates six items that combined to kill Jesus. Nothing in Herron's short references to social sins equals this systematic classification of sins. Although the sins of wealth are not the most peculiar ones, the sins like exploitation, corruption and graft, and the most fundamental of all, taking of unearned incomes, are mentioned loudly in his teaching.[359] All of these are caused by selfishness and are only constructed within social relations. An isolated individual can corrupt nothing.

> Religious bigotry, the combination of graft and political power, the corruption of justice, the mob spirit, militarism, and class contempt, – every student of history will recognize that these sum up the constitutional forces in the Kingdom of Evil. (Rauschenbusch 1917, 257-258)

Different temptations do seduce different groups of people. The big problems with the poor are crimes and misery, with the rich, it is the power obtained through money and goods. These are the social classes that, according to Rauschenbusch, are most difficult to save.[360] Each for its own reason.

The rich people living in plenty deserve special attention. Rauschenbusch recalls to the reader's mind the fact that there is a numerous group of extremely rich millionaires in America, while there probably were none at all in ancient Palestine. Their life styles cannot be acceptable and the suspect origin of their riches is obvious. Rauschenbusch refers to the statistics that we are already familiar with. In 1892 there were 4047 millionaires altogether in America. 468 of them owed their millions to the increment of soil; 981 were proprietors of mines, forests or other natural resources; 303 were financiers. Sarcastically Rauschenbusch points out that there were no poets, writers, not to mention evangelists, among the novel millionaires. The riches that Rauschenbusch is most reluctant to accept are unearned increments of value. There are, for example, those who have got their riches through inheritance or as a fee like the big American railway companies. This way of enrichment was quite peculiar in the USA of the time. The government donated to the railway companies large areas of soil, the common property of the American people, more than 158,000 acres altogether.

359 "The fundamental sin of all dominant classes has been the taking of unearned incomes." Rauschenbusch 1916, 162

360 Rauschenbusch 1912, 465-468

Rauschenbusch concludes that it seems to be impossible to get rich through honesty.[361] And further, it seems to be impossible to act honestly after a sudden enrichment.

> To-day a man can store millions in paper evidences of wealth in a safe deposit box, and collect the income of it with a stenographer, a lawyer, and a pair of shears. He can acquire tens of millions, hundreds of millions. Imagine a digestive organs expanding to the size of a Zeppelin.
>
> If 'the love of money is the root of all evil', and if selfishness is the essence of sin, such an expansion or the range and storage capacity of selfishness must necessarily mark a new era in the history of sin, just as the invention of the steam-engine marked a new era in the production of wealth. Drink, over-eating, sexualism, vanity and idleness are still reliable standardized sins. But the exponent of the gigantic evil on the upper ranges of sin, is the love of money and the love of power over men which property connotes. This is the most difficult field of practical redemption and the most necessitous change of evangelism. (Rauschenbusch 1917, 66-67)

The wealth of nations is a zero-sum-game to Rauschenbusch. If somebody possesses a share of unearned riches it means that the rest possess less than the just share they had earned. The money cannot be kept in two men's pockets at the same time.[362] And again: mere wealth does not corrupt, but the seducing further influences of money do.

> If wealth is saved to raise and educate children, or achieve some social good, it deserves social respect or admiration. But if the acquisitive instinct is without social feeling or vision, and centered on self, it gets no respect, at least from Jesus. (Rauschenbusch 1916, 118)

Mathews does not draw as strict conclusions as Herron and Rauschenbusch concerning Jesus' reaction to millionaires. He reminds us that Jesus, though homeless, had continually the houses of the rich at his service.[363] He was no

361 According to Rauschenbusch's announcement the donations exceeded 190,000 acres, 1912, 277. My numbers are taken from Atack and Passell 1994, 435-444
362 Rauschenbusch 1912, 336
363 Mathews 1897, 147

more a friend of the poor than of the rich. He did not ask if you are wealthy, but if you have followed his will. Besides, Mathews' view of the purpose of wealth is quite positive, it equals Strongs' differentiation between the egoistic and social use of wealth: "Wealth must be used for the establishment of that ideal social order whose life is that of brothers – the kingdom of God."[364]

This differentiation is also adopted by Rauschenbusch. The dangers of the immorality hidden in money are obvious, in any case; not only are the methods to get rich ruinous, but the results it induces are, as well. Unearned incomes spoil the upper classes and tend to change them into parasites. According to Rauschenbusch, man has the right to rest, or even the duty to rest, for it has been enacted in the Ten Commandments. On the other hand one should not idle, for man expresses himself in the work he does.[365] The purpose of industrial progress should be to sustain the means of life, but in the capitalist system its purpose is the money itself and the enlargement of profits. Rauschenbusch takes this as the most dangerous enemy of life. It leads the rich people into the excess of luxuries.

Money offers almost endless opportunities to entertain oneself, but the more one enjoys the fun invested in, the less is the satisfaction received. It is just these unearned gains that work to make the rich unable to save anybody. Quite the opposite, some kind of immorality is always involved with riches. Rauschenbusch sees the emptiness of entertainments offered by capitalism most perfectly in the futile diversions of a market place; everything is on sale in markets and everything has to be paid for.[366] The pure logic of money pervades from the initial sphere of the rich to all spheres of society. Power, brought by money, is an "intoxicating beverage" which incapacitates its victims from making decisions of their own. The wealthy easily lose the capacity for a heroic life.[367]

The harmful influence of money occurs in our treatment of natural resources, too. Nature is suffering from people's sins. To enrich the life of a few we destroy resources, such as the natural beauty of rapids, that are created by nature during thousands of years; a notable damage is done without a utility to anyone. This cannot be the purpose of God, Rauschenbusch argues. His will is always directed to the better future, to the future realm of God. "It is a sin to rob our own

364 Mathews 1897 144
365 Curtis 1991, 16-18
366 Rauschenbusch 1912, 441
367 Rauschenbusch 1912, 309; 1916, 125

children by leaving soil, water, and forests poorer than we found them."[368] As a remedy he recommends the socialization of natural resources.[369] Today we can truly understand how perspicacious and biting this illustration of public sins in the misuse of natural resources really is. Usually, in such crimes, the evil cannot be named. We cannot say certainly who has been the real guilty party in polluting or destroying our environment. It is almost impossible to get anybody to answer for such a crime before the law, even if it has been proved. There is nobody behind the decisions. No individual has been guilty of a crime or a sin. And still, we can sense the selfishness, one of the main elements in Rauschenbusch's category of sin. Each of us will suffer from the consequences of the public sins.

Because of these social sins the whole prevailing social order needs to be reformed. Personal salvation of a man does not save the world, but is cosmetic progress only. In order to better the world, Rauschenbusch proclaims "Christianizing the society". The society has to be changed by its adopting Christian order. The same concept of Christianizing can be found in the writings of other social gospelers, too, Herron, for example. Individual's relation to society was analyzed also by Mathews in his book "The Individual and the Social Gospel". He eventuated a program quite similar to Rauschenbusch's Christianizing of society. In Mathews conception, salvation is obtained by Christianizing first the individual, then his home, education and, finally, the social order.[370] And the Christianizing does not end even here. A historian of progressivism, Eldon Eisenach, has seen in the concept of Christianizing an essential principle shared by many Progressives. William Stead's well-known social revelations "If Christ Came to Chicago" (1894) was, six years later, succeeded by another book, entitled "The Americanization of the World". The Christianization of the society had made such a success that it was time to look further, time to look abroad.[371] Here can be seen an American-born impetus to both the ecumenical movement and secular Americanization.

368 Rauschenbusch 1912, 252-255; 1916, 110
369 Rauschenbusch 1917, 143
370 Mathews 1914, 1-84
371 Eisenach 1994, 129-130. John R. Mott was one of those who looked abroad. In 1895, in cooperation with British student leaders, he organized and headed the World Student Christian Federation, an American-led international association. Subsequently, he made international work with prisoners and refugees, and is also called the father of the World Council of the Churches, founded in 1946. The same year Mott received the Nobel Peace Prize. Ibid. 236-239. On the other hand, many progressives did not pay the slightest attention to foreign policy in their writings, Croly for example.

Rauschenbusch confesses that there is always the possibility for legitimate profit, too. But, according to him, most of the enormous profits of the time, however, were gained through vice and by evil methods that must be put under a ban by true Christians.[372] Those very rich, like Tom L. Johnson and "Golden Rule" Jones, who had become objects of general respect and honor, have gained this position by confessing the fact that their personal properties have been based on the evil basis of exploitation.[373]

It is also clear that Rauschenbusch's evil has one face in mammonism. The mammonism is based on the power of money and it is damaging both to our civil and religious life. Rauschenbusch took it as the only form of paganism of which Jesus expressly warned us.[374] The love of money easily breaks all bounds and becomes ravenous.

> Life seems to consist of money, and the problems of money. People are valued according to that standard. Marriages are arrenged for it. Politics is run for it. Wars are begun for it. [...] This is what Jesus calls 'the deceitfulness of riches' and 'the darkening of the inner eye'. (Rauschenbusch 1916, 124-125)

From the pecuniary point of view capitalism seems to be a monstrous and morally impossible system in Rauschenbusch's theology. Again, it produces especially demoralizing effects in women. As families rise to wealth, it is the women who first slip into parasitism and luxurism.[375] Because the tendency looks inevitable, it is not surprising that the conclusion is that the father of Jesus Christ cannot, and does not, support a system like that. A Christian cannot accept any kind of exploitation, not even in order to enable others to live luxurious lives. Thus, he cannot support capitalism either.[376]

> If we can trust the Bible, God is against Capitalism, its methods, spirit, and results. The bourgeois theologians have misrepresented our revolutionary God. God is for the Kingdom of God, and His Kingdom does not mean injustice and the perpetuation of innocent suffering. (Rauschenbusch 1917, 184. See also Rauschenbusch 1916, 34)

372 Rauschenbusch 1912, 304-305
373 Rauschenbusch 1912, 289-290
374 Rauschenbusch 1912, 459
375 Rauschenbusch 1916, 112-113
376 The logic resembles that of "Golden Rule" Jones' in Danbom 1987, 75

4.2.3. Summary: Luxury as a Sin in Herron's Works

There is a long tradition against money and wealth in Christian religious thought. In the 1880s America it was represented in Josiah Strong's ideas and it consisted of the three vices of mammonism, materialism and luxuriousness. This fear can be traced, again, to the puritanical concepts of wealth, and even further back to the Assisian ideals of modesty and poverty. But, in addition to American puritan tradition, the radical wing of social gospelers grounded their criticism of luxury and waste in political philosophies, too. The abstension from all kinds of self-aggrandizements in the puritanical ideal of modesty gave place to the Marxist deprecation of luxury as a vertical difference in consumers' habits of expenditure. Self-importance of any kind was condemned already by the Puritans, but now it was only the exceptional departure from the common expenditure that was deprecated.

Herron took a high level of consumption as absolutely conflicting with Christianity. He saw wealth as a seductive trap that made its victims unable to meet salvation and to save others. Sin basically meant to him lack of equality in the world, also so in the distribution of wealth. Thus the differences in our standards of living were evil features, caused by sin.

This theology of evil luxury culminated in a new concept of public sin in Walter Rauschenbusch's works. There always exists sin in every form of exploitation. One appearence of that is the social unevenness with its morally ruining power. Riches always demoralize a man, causing waste and sufferings. All in all, the social gospelers condemned the luxurious life as immoral and sinful paganism. They defined millionaires merely as a symptom of social disease rather than as a triumph of civilization.

CHAPTER FIVE

Luxury and Waste in Radical Political Thought

5.1. American Political Radicalism

We have already talked much about the American critics of democracy, about theorists who criticized luxury for certain reasons and about the muckrakers who opposed it as a matter of course. It is reasonable to concentrate our attention finally on the political movements purporting to draw utility out of this wave of criticism. In this connection we shall investigate the radical outflames of American politics in the form of Populist and Socialist Parties. But, first we shall take a closer look upon American radicalism in party politics.

In his "L'Amérique", Jean Baudrillard states that America does not have history. In this lack of history lie its curiosity, its possibilities, and its strength. We agree, as far as our own era is concerned. But the nineteenth century was different. The USA undoubtedly had a history of its own. Communication did not work that rapidly, and the net was not so dense that everything novel would have been immediately mixed with the European. Immigration, of course, brought European ideas, such as Marxism, to the new world, but besides this, America created a lot of its own curiosities that, for the most part, remained strange to Europe. The frontier played a certain part as well. Turner got it right: certain features in the American nineteenth-century history can be investigated without any need to return back to its European roots. Such a phenomenon is the political farmer radicalism which originated in the West, by the frontier, when poor masses did move on bad areas that John Wesley Powell had warned not to populate.[377] The soil lost its fertility and thousands of people starved. Entirely intrinsic, American, waves of farmer radicalism arose from this unrest. Europe was need in nothing. Radicalism was such a dominating element in American politics that we may ask, like John P. Diggins, why did the first American Left of the twentieth century fail to find true revolutionary adherents in this movement? And why did they reject the nineteenth-century tradition of American radicalism and turn to Marxism as the true revolutionary ideology?[378]

Surely, American political radicalism had many guides and visionaries among the orthodox Marxists and other socialists, such as the utopian socialists Bellamy or Laurence Gronlund. The last named is sometimes praised as the father of

377 According to Powell, in unusually wet years only could the land west of the 100th meridian support cultivation by traditional means. McMath 1993, 20

378 Diggins 1992, 64

American socialism, mostly because of his "Coöperative Commonwealth" (1884). But guides were also among others who had descended from the ivory towers of utopianism, such as George, the theorist of single taxation. The radicalism also had many visionaries of a completely different kind, such as the leaders of the deeply political sect of the technocratic movement. This movement had its own connections back to European and Russian socialism in Veblen's "soviets of technicians".

The antipathy towards parasitic speculators and bankers, towards the plutocrats who preyed upon hard-working farmers, was a common American theme, already shared by Puritans, Jeffersonians, and Jacksonians in their classic criticism. All these also occupy a central place in American radical rhetorics, especially in Populist rhetorics at the end of the 19th century. Beside its religious ideal – Puritanism – Populism had other paragons in American political history. There emerged a trio of populist fathers from the 1790s to the 1860s: Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln. Each led the nation during a distinct period and each was taken to be the strong leader of his time: the Revolutionary Era, the Age of the Common Man, and the Civil War. With the exception of Jefferson, perhaps, the patriots focused their intellectual energies on behalf of the majority, the *people*. This made them suitable for the aims of later populists.

Maybe the most important paragon for the Populist leaders of the 1880s was the Jacksonian Age of the Common Man. But, the Populist rhetoric also incorporated the pietist impulse of great awakenings, and the secular faith in the Enlightenment, the belief that ordinary people could think and act reasonably, rationally. The true core of Americanism was composed of understanding and obeying the will of the people. "To mock the opinions, or oppose the interests of the majority was more than foolish politics; it was un-American."[379]

This antipathy towards the rich grew in drastic measures during the Gilded Age, in part because industrial capitalism had given finance capitalists more power; it was now more visible. But the poor as a class had become more visible, too. There had always been poor people in America, of course, but as we have seen, during the Gilded Age the dramatic contrast between pauperism and plenty became the conventional stuff of novels and journalistic articles. Poverty was "discovered" as Robert Bremner has shown in his classic work.[380]

379 Kazin 1995, 10-12
380 Bremner 1956

The other extreme of the consumption scale had a different history. The enemy of a poor man was hard to identify. There had always been the poor and the rich, but, as was now remarked, there had not been the special *class* of the *very rich* people in America until the last quarter of the 19th century.[381] The scholars with radical tendencies soon noticed that in order to resist the new plutocracy, the poor had to unite. In this purpose radical persuasion produced many political associations, unions, parties and organizations; their task was mass education.

The party system of the Gilded Age added a lot of novel labels to the political consciousness. Yankee, Southerner, white, black, Catholic, Protestant, Jew, rural, urban, and so on; each label had its origins in the era succeeding the Civil War. The Democrat–Republican two-party system was challenged by numerous third-party movements throughout the era. The number of protest votes had risen from one percent in 1876 to 11 in 1892, but this share was concentrated in a limited area. The radicals were delighted. The regional number of dissidents must have been over 20 percent.[382]

The speciality of American radicalism was noticed quite early. The historians of the left wing, Mary and Charles Beard, for example, do not seem to be compelled to draw direct connections between European and American experiences. They emphasize the significance of populism. The fear of "Money Power" had been strong in the crusades of the Western democrats in the Jacksonian Era, too.[383] And progressivism was still another movement with no counterpart in Europe. The requirements were the same in both movements but the means by which these were attained, or tended to be attained, differed.

These kinds of interpretations of the connections between American radicalism and the progressive movement dominated the historical studies during the inter-war period and are still common. Jürgen Kocka sees progressivism as a consolidating factor in a restless society. Thus, from his point of view, progressivism was an organic extension from populist persuasion.[384] Then, a notable part of post-war historians have underlined that progressives, contrary to Populists, had their basis in the growing middle-class. Robert Cherny has compared Populism with both Republican and Democrat progressivism and found more differences

381 For illustration, see Croly 1909, 104
382 Kazin 1995, 27;Trachtenberg 1982, 170, 177
383 Croly 1909, 58-59
384 Kocka 1980

than similarities, Wilson's Democrats being the more moderate faction.[385] Naturally, progressivism was not completely or necessarily a radical movement at all. There were many authors who agreed with Strong and took socialism as a peril to America.[386] However, we will see that a certain faction of former Populists were recruited as a part of the progressive movement. And it definitely attracted many more. If one takes American radicalism seriously and remembers the drastic immigration as well, one cannot overestimate progressivism as a balancing factor in the society. It was a fragmentary movement with a plethora of dispersed ideas. It was a moderate power, but it also offered a shelter for the radical authors who were not inclined to confess themselves to be socialists. This kind of radical output was the idea of technocracy. Unfortunately the extreme technocrats who wanted to reclaim all power to councils of engineers, like William Smythe, did not leave us much text to analyze; and those who did, such as Herbert Croly and Fredrick Howe, either cannot be taken as radicals or did not write about the problem of luxury.

Three different conflict frontiers have been distinguished in the America of 1890. The classical conflict between proletarian and bourgeois was mitigated by the ethnic heterogeneity that was growing along with the new immigration wave of that year. The market powers worked without governmental regulation, more crudely than in Europe. The underpaid labor masses were unskilled non-union immigrants who often lived under deplorable conditions, in distinct contrast to the skillful German workmen continuing their old artisan traditions.

Another conflict frontier was a characteristically American one. The new immigration was ethnically very coherent. The old cultural and social ties remained strong. This counter-reaction against the new immigrants was known as the WASP movement. The organizations that emphasized the primacy of the connections to the old immigration of the pilgrim fathers and other real "American" backgrounds (The Sons of Revolution, The Daughters of the Revolution etc.) were peculiarly anti-Catholic, nativistic, xenophobic, and anti-semitic movements.

The third frontier was between city and country, and it was mingled with the antagonism of the little enterprises in the landscape and the big corporations in industrial cities. All these frontiers, but especially the last named, were a fertile growing ground for the radical democratic, populistic movements of the Mid-

385 Cherny 1994
386 Strong 1891, 133-155

west. The religious movements, already discussed above, were also of great importance, and the impact of these two groups of persuasion, religious and populist, is often impossible to differentiate. The crusade against liquor is a splendid example of this. The People's Party perfectly exemplified this, too. A party based on evangelical, rural churchgoers could not help speaking about the agents of corruption: saloon keepers, plutocrats, dishonest public officials, and other moral items.[387] And, we maintain, it was a profoundly American movement.

5.1.1. Populist Radicalism and the Progressives

The populistic movement of the South, Southwest, and to a lesser degree the Midwest, strengthened at the 1890s. It drew its largest support from among the small entrepreneurs and farmers who did not yet count on governmental regulation, as their equals in Europe did. Craftsmen, native-born workers, and taxpayers were the common audience for populism. Their naive belief in free competition made them support these radical democrats.

Populism was a scattered collection of different protest movements. The Patrons of Husbandry, commonly known as Grangers, attempted to restrict railroad companies' power to determine their tariffs as monopoly prices. The granger movement was originally founded as early as 1867 in order to build an agrarian organization for self-help, without any radical targets. Grangers organized themselves on a cooperative basis. In 1874, the movement already scored over 1.5 million members.[388]

Two different organizations then began to rise in the beginning of the 1880s when the Granger movement started to weaken, the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union in Texas (the Southern Alliance) and the National Farmers' Alliance in the North and North-West (the Northern Alliance). Both fought against banks and their usury. Altogether, they achieved an impressive membership of 3.5 million adherents.[389] On December 1889, both alliances were convened in St. Louis to unite their forces. There, still another wave of discontent arose in the northern farmer populism.

387 Kazin 1995, 39
388 Åsard 1994, 31
389 McMath 1993, 4-7

The Greenbackers had protested against the gold standard, "the crime of 73" over a decade. In 1875, they even tried to found a third party to guarantee a larger amount of banknotes in circulation; thus the name, Greenback Party. The Party never flourished and it finally vanished when its adherents gradually started to support another method – free silver coining, i.e. *bimetallism*. The Greenbackers' protest now turned to the northern populism. Economic claims were raised for tax reform, new customs policy, and especially for "the sub-treasury plan", an economic plan modelled by Charles W. Macune, the former President of the Southern Alliance.[390] Campaigns were also raised for labor reform, prohibition, the eight-hour working day, and women's rights. Populist policy was a scattered creature. Also Ely's name was mentioned as a basis for the doctrine of the movement.[391] Ignatius Donnelly's role was essential in forming the new Party. He supported a loose, wide alliance in which the colored and laboring classes would be integrated. In the excited atmosphere of the Omaha conference people compared the populist revolt to the Great Revolution of 1789. The band did not play the Marseillaise but Yankee Doodle.

Formally, the Populist Party was constituted in St. Louis Exposition Hall on Washington's birthday in 1892 as the People's Party. It had had its predecessor in Kansas from 1890.[392] Months later, in Omaha convention, a greenbacker activist and bimetallist James B. Weaver was elected its first nominee for presidency. The election program was written by Ignatius Donnelly and it was strictly directed against corruption and the power of millionaires.[393] In the election, Weaver gained over a million votes, 8.5 percent of the total. He won a majority in three states (Colorado, Idaho, and Nevada). Two years later, in 1894, the party did even better (over 1.5 million votes). In fact, some of the victories were the result of a successful fusion with the weaker of the major parties (Republicans in the South, Democrats in the North). Populism was clearly a protest movement: the party scored all its wins in two underdeveloped regions, the Deep South and the trans-Mississippi West.[394]

It has been remarked that even by the loose standards that the Republicans and Democrats had set, the Populists scarcely functioned as a party.[395] Its suc-

390 Åsard 1994, 34
391 Clanton 1991, 72
392 Clanton 1991, 28-36
393 Åsard 1994, 37-38
394 Kazin 1995, 42
395 Wiebe 1983, 84

cess did not lie in organization, but in protest. It was a hybrid creation. The Populists rejected both existing political parties as monopolists' tools. But, they did not deny the awesome power and influence of their monied enemies; they recognized that they must use their superior numbers to capture the political institutions.[396] The People's Party was a notable challenge at least to the Democrats of the South.

Populism was a hybrid of various ideas in its racial programs, too. It consisted of a mixture of different ingredients, from the nativism and anti-urban racism of the South to the requests for radical democracy by the "nigger-lovers" who wanted to "wipe out the color line". Of course, it would have been foolish to neglect black voters. But, how could they promise blacks enough to get their votes, while almost all the white shared the era's doctrine about the desirability of the WASP? In the South, a Baptist minister Richard Manning Humphrey tried to appeal to blacks by organizing the segregated Colored Farmers Alliance. Again, there was a difference of opinion among the Populists when some of its members waged an unsuccessful strike against white landowners, some of whom were Populists themselves.[397] There is still a strict controversy over interpretations considering the xenophobic features in Southern Populism.[398]

In any case, the Populist programs were radical by whatever standards. The requirements of anti-trust laws, popular primaries, and new social laws were manifested, especially in Kansas where Donnelly, a man with a very magnetic personality, did his work. The Omaha Platform of 1892, also created by his pencil, set forth the radicalism: in short it proposed a coherent program for comprehensive change by means of government action.[399] It got numerous supporters, among them were well-known personalities such as Henry D. Lloyd, and Bellamy who shifted his support to the Populists in the 90s.

396 Altschuler 1982, 19

397 Kazin 1995, 40-41

398 Erik Åsard has recently studied this dual face of American populism in his *Janusansiktet*, 1994. See the classic texts of Hofstadter 1955 and Nugent 1963. In the numerous studies that have been produced on Populism in the last decade, most critics seem to finally side with Nugent. See Clanton 1991, esp. 129-143

399 *National Party Platforms, 1840-1972,* 1973, 89-91. The platform included governmental ownership of railroads, telegraphs and telephones, graduated income tax, currency inflation, a governmental Postal Savings Bank, the abolition of private antilabor armies, the election of senators by direct vote, the initiative, and referendum. The agenda was followed by ten resolutions, even more radical (secret ballot, graduated tax, pensions for the veterans, immigration restrictions, an eight-hour law for government work, an end of the Pinkerton armies, initiative and referendum, one term for the President and Vice-President and direct elections of the senators, an end to subsidies to private corporations, sympathy for a Knights of Labor strike. Notably the St. Louis convention's support for female suffrage was omitted. See Clanton 1991, 82-83

On the contrary, the cooperation with trade unions failed on a larger scale. The old Greenbackers had successfully cooperated with the workers' party in the election of 1880. Although not willing to unite with Debs' socialists, Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), for example, held that "amalgamation" with the People's Party was as impossible and unnatural as it was with the socialists.[400] As a political movement, Populism remained a rather heterogeneous and ideologically weak protest of common men against the faceless, urban society of iron industrial capitalism and big money. The practical experiences in the cities did not persuade the losers, although Social Darwinism, in theory, could place both small and large-scale enterprises in the same world. In reality, the Populists had to confess that in the senate they had as many alternative plans as they had delegates.

In the elections of 1896, Populism was mortally wounded. William Jennings Bryan, a Democratic congressman from Nebraska, captured both the Democratic and Populist party nominations for the precidency. He had great oratory skills and he made use of them by delivering almost six hundred speeches to more than three million Americans. Bryan was surely not the best but he was suitable as a candidate for the Populists who defended silver coining.[401] From our angle of vision he had an especially conspicuous motto: "You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold!".[402] This moral pathos – that consisted of the intensity of a social gospeler and a baptist preacher, too – referred to business corruption and to the ostentation of the rich, the items of Populistic agitation.

Bryan was defeated, and the People's Party began to perish. Their votes had increased to almost a million. But, beside the silver question, there was nothing left to unite them. "The sentiment is still there, the votes are still there, but confidence is gone, and the party organization is almost gone.", a Populist agitator, Tom Watson, said only a week after the election. "Our party, as a party, does not exist any more."[403] The Party shrank from the pioneer of a social movement into a little sect before it expired in 1908.

400 Gompers 1925, 117;Trachtenberg 1982, 176
401 It has been stated that Bryan's nomination de facto saved the Democratic Party. The People's Party could well have replaced it forever. Miller 1994, 213
402 DeWitt 1982, 29-30
403 Cited from Åsard 1994, 48

The populist program survived, however, in the more moderate form of progressive persuasion, and was factually adopted by 1920.[404] Reformism was then in vogue. "To stand for a programme of reform has become one of the recognized roads to popularity" wrote Croly in 1909. He devoted himself continuing the radical democrat aims of the Populists. And often the loudest progressives were labelled as "populists", "Bryanites", or "socialists".[405] Although contemporary foes often tried to lump them together, Populists, Socialists and Progressives, none was as extreme as its conservative opposition imagined them to be. To be sure, the Progressives had not forgotten the strife of the Gilded Age; in some sense the opposition had become even bolder and more radical. One indication was the muckraking journalism that could not let people forget the abuses of corruption. Thus far, progressives had been able to work within the existing party organizations. And surely a number of frustrated radicals began to wonder whether America could be restored without a true revolution. According to Croly, the Progressive Party especially appealed to such radicals to whom progressivism meant much more than did Democracy or Republicanism.[406]

Progressivism in its political ideas and reform program gradually turned the Populist and socialist ideals of the 1890s into an American version of state socialism or social democracy. In this process, both Populism and socialism were vital forces in encouraging the impulse towards reform.[407] Again, historians' views differ from each other. Two different interpretations have been established: according to Robert Cherny, the Populists had more differences then similarities with both Republican and Democratic progressivism.[408] Socialism could not emerge as a more significant force upon progressivism until most of the existing small socialist groups put aside their doctrinal differences and united in July 1901. Progressivism included elements from both Populism, goo-gooism and routine reform. Not all progressives were radical. The great bulk of the citizenry did not wish to accept it in terms of radical ideology or academic argument. More appealing was the message of the Social Gospel and the sensational, muckraking literature published in popular magazines.[409]

404 On the connection between populism and progressivism, see Clanton 1969, 231-232
405 Croly 1914, 3
406 Croly 1914, 334
407 Here we agree with Kocka and Ekirch. Ekirch 1974, 34
408 Cherny, 1994, 200-201
409 Ekirch 1974, 50

All in all, besides Bryan, only a few of the established Populist reformers fought their way back. One of them was the leader of the Pullman boycott, Eugene Debs, the future premier socialist of America. In fact, we can say that the Populist tradition was divided in two directions. The progressives and the Progressive Party of 1912 sucked the other part of it, the socialists the other, perhaps the more radical part, but nobody should pass over the radical tendencies of the progressives, either.

5.1.2. Socialistic Agitation in America

Usually, the socialist and populist tendencies have been carefully segregated in American intellectual history, but recently there has emerged the same kind of interpretation that we have taken above. According to A. Esposito, the American Socialist Party formed a potent combination of Marxism and republicanism (or conservatism). The outcome was distinctively American, and it made the party ideology far more adaptable to larger groups of people than simple Marxism would have done.[410] The main American forerunners of socialism, Bellamy and Gronlund, did not give a role to class struggle as a means of achieving this goal. Esposito surprisingly finds that the attempt to reduce class conflict stands some distance down the list in the ideology of the Socialist Party. It was strengthened by the Populist producer ideology that was supported by the Knights of Labor.[411] From this point of view, American socialism was entirely different from the European. One of the major differences was the above-mentioned producer ideology, *producerism*, adapted from the populist tradition. It was continued by the Socialist Party and it did not get unison with the doctrine of class struggle. This conception has been denied by John P. Diggins, for example.[412] In his opinion, the first American Left of the 20th century obviously failed to find true revolutionary proletarianism in the organized farmer movement which had, thus far, been the cradle of radicalism, and started to prefer Marxism as the revolutionary ideology.

After all, the socialist movement in the United States consisted of many distinct parties of revolutionaries. A whole dictionary of abbreviations could easily be filled with various socialist unions and federations. These were more often

410 Esposito 1997, 3
411 Esposito 1997, 17, 27
412 Diggins 1992, 64

than other American radicalist organizations occupied by immigrants. Each nationality had its own unions, and even parties. The first large society to adopt and propagate socialism was composed of the German Gymnastic Unions, *Turnvereine*, in the 1850s. Germans were first in socialism because their immigration to the United States was primarily a 19th-century phenomenon. Polishes and Greeks, for example, took their place much later, during the twenties.[413] The Gymnastic Unions were still the Germans' national unions as well as socialistic societies. For a time many of the labor-spirited journals, for example, were published in German.

In the late 1860s the labor was still searching for viable institutional forms. The real labor parties were founded at the beginning of our time span. In 1886 Richard Ely identified three distinct socialist groups in his pioneer work "The Labor Movement in America". The Workingman's Party was organised in 1876, and in 1877 it became The Socialist Labour Party (SLP or just "blues", for short). It was the largest socialist party organization thus far. It was soon dwarfed by other sections, but, interestingly, it is the only one which still exists.[414] In addition, there were also sections of the International Working People's Association (IWPA or "reds") and of the International Workingmen's Association (IWA "blacks", founded in 1881) for which Karl Marx was a leading spokesman. The blues were moderate, but the other two were composed of more fanatic men. No union in this period could recruit one third of any given trade, not one of them had over fifteen hundred members.[415] Eugene V. Debs reviews these parties in his brief history of socialism in America.[416] The parties also published newspapers with enthusiastic names like *Alarm, Truth* and *Cooperation*. The first popular propaganda paper was *The Coming Nation* published by J.A. Wayland in Greensburg, Indiana in 1893. Debs' paper, *Appeal to Reason*, was the first that numbered its subscribers in hundreds of thousands.

The root of Debs' successful Socialist Party, however, was none of these groups. It was developed from the labor union of the railway workers. In 1897 the American Railway Union changed itself into a working-class political party. At the same time, its paper, *The Railway Times*, became *Social-Democrat* and later *The Social-Democrat Herald*. Soon the Socialist Party was organized in

413 On Gymnastic Unions and on the preceding forms of labor radicalism see Nadel 1996, 45-76
414 SLP recently published its 125 years history: Girard and Perry 1991
415 Trachtenberg 1982, 94
416 Debs 1908, 95-118. On organizations in the 1870s, see Nadel 1996, 52-58

almost every state and territory. In February 1900, the dissident wing of the SLP, then led by Daniel DeLeon, held its national convention in Rochester, New York and declared its willingness to join with the Social Democratic Party. When Debs founded the Party's modern form in 1901, the Rochester-SLP joined[417]. And now its success was notable: in 1888 the Socialist vote was 2000, 1892 21,000; in 1896 36,000; in 1900 131,000; in 1904 442,000. In 1912 Debs got almost one million votes. Radical politics seemed to be at least a temporary challenge.

The golden age of American socialism lies in the period 1905-15. The political activity of the socialists reached its peak in the presidential elections of 1912, when Debs collected his largest number of votes. And that was also the year when the progressive agitation for Theodore Roosevelt was its hottest. In regional elections the socialistic boom climaxed a little bit later, in 1916. By that time the socialistic intellectual movement was strongest, too. In its writings, the Socialist Party of the America mixed Marxist analysis with traditional American values. The new members of the SPA, however, were motivated by social gospel and were much less interested in class struggle.[418]

The Socialist Party was never as militant as the labor unions that organized boycotts, lockouts, strikes and even sabotage. There were more than 20,000 strikes in the United States in the 1880s and 1890s alone, according to a report by an industrial commission in 1900.[419] The artificial obstruction and the loss of production power resulting from it was a problem that made Americans regard with envy such countries as New Zealand, who had, in practice, no strikes at all.[420]

The mightiest early industrial union in America was Uriah Stephens' Knights of Labor.[421] It had 600,000 members in the 1880s,[422] but it suddenly disintegrated after the Haymarket riot of May, 1886. This year of great upheaval meant protracted striking against Gould's railway company, too. 72,000 employees altogether were killed on the tracks between 1890 and 1917, and close to two million injured. This caused a deep wave of unrest; almost 700,000 workers went out on strike in 1886 alone.[423] In this connection Samuel Gompers organ-

417 Girard and Perry 1991, 24
418 Cashman 1988, 221
419 Cited from Kinnersley 1982, 7
420 Lloyd 1900
421 Knights of Labor was founded in 1869; it was preceded by Sylvis' National Labor Union, NLU.
422 DeWitt 1982, 31
423 Trachtenberg 1982, 89, 91

ized the most successful of all the American labor unions, the Federation of Trade and Labor Unions, later renamed The American Federation of Labor (AFL). It soon rejected the utopian idealism of the Knights of Labor. It simply tried to achieve better working conditions and higher wages for its members. Later on, the AFL lost the confidence that it had enjoyed on the part of the radicals.[424] And indeed, Gompers was not favorably regarded even by the foreign socialist leaders during his European tour in 1910. The other collaborators were addressed as "comrades", Gompers as "a colleague" only.[425] The true labor union was taken to be more radical, much like the communist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The power of the Wobblies lay in the fact that two or three million workers must have been passed through their ranks between 1908 and 1918. This created a true radical subculture that was felt in the more moderate AFL as well.[426] The AFL was accused to be corrupted by businessmen. Gompers alleged that the position of labor in America was doubtlessly high above the European level of consumption.[427] There was no need to jeopardize the position attained by fraternizing with the radicals.

The success of the Debsian socialists was notable. They had got two representatives into Congress, and 28 representatives and five senators in thirteen states altogether before the First World War. In the labor unions they never got power. The Socialist Party lost its significance little by little after declaration of the war, 1915. In 1919 the most radical faction was led by John Reed to organize the American Communist Party on the Russian model, and four other communist parties were launched at the same time. After a decade they finally affiliated into what became to be the Communist Party—USA (CP).[428] It never reached the Debsian position as the loudspeaker of workers.

424 Nadel 1996, 60. On radicals' impressions on AFL and Gompers, see Steffens 1936, 244-245; on Gompers' impressions on socialists and radicals, see Gompers 1925, 115
425 Gompers 1910, 133
426 Cashman 1988, 227
427 Gompers 1910, 222-235
428 Georgakas 1996, 214-215; Dietrich 1996, 55

5.2. The Populism of Ignatius Donnelly

The most read Populist, Ignatius Donnelly, was one of the most impressive personalities of his time. He was a real fountain of ideas and this loaded him with nicknames and epithets,[429] Donnelly grew up as an anti-slavery Democrat, and became a Republican 1858, when to do so marked a man as having radical tendencies.[430] He ran twice for the Territorial Senate, and tried then to found an ideal community, Nininger City, but the enterprise collapsed in the panic of 1857. He held bankers responsible for the loss of his guiding principle, and henceforth he rose against them at every opportunity. In 1862 he began the first of his three terms as a Congressman. He firmly supported the Radical Republicans which meant that he would clash with President Andrew Johnson. Donnelly was the most vigorous Radical Republican in Minnesota.[431] But his political carieer was weedy: he lost the next elections, tried to get the Democrat ticket, then Republican again, and finally Independent before, at the end of the 60s, he was identified as one of the front figures in the Granger movement that flared up successively across the Midwest, and in the South.[432] In Congress he labelled himself as a liberal and a supporter of the farmer against the banks and railroads.

By his enemies Donnelly was referred to as a "base opportunist", for he seemed to be able to change a party unhesitatingly in order to keep on top, or "to be ahead of his time", as he expressed it. In the 1870s he was campaigning for the "Have-Not's" against the "Have's" with the Liberal Republicans in the Minnesota state Senate.[433] And when he decided to engage for farmer protest movements he suddenly and painlessly stopped preaching about *tight money*, fluidly substituting it with *easy*. Donnelly now attempted to lead the Anti-Monopoly-Democratic Coalition, but because he soon found himself being unable to unite the Grangers with the Democrats, he withdrew from the coalition. And he still found time to join the Greenbackers in 1875 before finally arriving at the

429 The Prince of Cranks,The Apostle of Discontent,The Great Apostle of Protest,The Tribune of the People,The Sage of Nininger

430 The Democratic Party of the 1830s and the 1840s was the party of Jacksonian Democracy, the party of immigrants, largely German and Irish.To Donnelly in 1852, the Democratic Party strictly opposed the prejudices of the Know-Nothings, and was still the party of the people, and he was one of them. In 1858, he cast his first Republican ballot. The change was based in aversion of slavery. Anderson 1980, 20-21

431 Ridge 1962, 72, 94-95

432 Ridge 1962, 132-134

433 Ridge 1962, 145-148

People's Party.[434] The drifting may seem aimless, but there can be recognized a systematic tendency to coalesce with people.[435]

The same flowing, in a somewhat amusing form, may be seen in the subjects of his literal works. Donnelly started his literary career quite late, in his 50s. He wrote eight books altogether, four of them non-fiction. In the first, he attempted to verify the existence of the ancient realm of Atlantis (Atlantis, the Antediluvian World, 1882). Another propounds the theory that there never have been glacial eras on the earth, but rather a huge comet has struck it in prehistoric times, causing the earth's great deposits of sand, gravel and clay (Ragnarök: The Age of Fire and Gravel, 1883). In his third book, Donnelly used up one thousand pages to assert that Sir Francis Bacon had written the plays usually attributed to Shakespeare (The Great Cryptogram, 1888). The very last of Donnelly's books reviewed this Baconian theory, but it did not meet with great popularity (The Cipher in the Plays, and on the Tombstone, 1899).

Donnelly's greatest success coincided with the culmination of the People's Party. For two decades already, third party movements had been contesting in elections, Prohibition, Greenback, Anti-Monopoly, Labor Reform, Union Labor, United Labor, Workingmen, and hundreds of local parties. But it was only the prolonged protest of Grangers, Greenbackers and Farmer Alliances that formed a successful, efficient voice. Why? The literary talents in the Party's leadership serve as one explanation. Donnelly was one of their most skilful geniuses.

A reader can easily find a lot of similarities with Jeffersonian and Jacksonian rhetorics in Donnelly's preamble to the conference platform in the Populist convention in St. Louis. "Wealth belongs to him who creates it." "If any will not work neither shall he eat." "The interests of rural and urban labor are the same; their enemies are identical."[436] No doubt, a farmer may find the text unifying and impressive. No wonder, the document soon became the most widely circulated statement of the Populist credo. The People's Party based its hope upon a coalition of small farmers, bimetallists, prohibitionists, and socialist voices in all their variety. All these movements that rose during the Gilded Age used a similar terminology that was directed against the elite. Donnelly himself was carried away by the radical tendency that was able to easily address the people's foe.

434 Ridge 1962, 167-169
435 Anderson 1980, 20-21
436 Cited from Kazin 1995, 29

He came to Washington during the war as a Republican congressman but left several years later, denouncing "the waste, extravagance, idleness and corruption" of the federal government.[437] Jacksonian expressions, like *money power* and *monopoly*, were promptly adopted. The moral terms by which Jacksonians had viewed the two poles of American society (*producers* versus *consumers, the rich, the proud, the privileged*) found their way to Donnelly's vocabulary. *Plutocrat* was a new one, just like the metaphores *octopus, leech, pig,* or *fat cat.*[438] It was the fight against *the Have's*, for *the Have-Not's*.

Donnelly never defined his political thought in corresponding scholarly volumes. On the contrary, he hid his opinions in novels which often had but a slight air of a novel. One of them, the first of his books of fiction, "Caesar's Column" (1890), was a real success by whatever standards. By 1906 it had sold 260,000 copies in the USA. Of this kind of socially-oriented novels, only Bellamy's "Looking Backward" and John Hay's "Breadwinners" sold better. Donnelly's other novels concerned racial prejudice (Dr. Huguet, 1891), Populist principles (The Golden Bottle, 1892), bimetallism and monetary policies (American People's Money, 1895).

Also the Populist program as presented in the Omaha Platform is almost completely drawn up by Donnelly. His political career did not end with the Populist agitation of 1896. In 1900 Donnelly stood successfully for the presidency under the Populist ticket until, at a New Year's celebration in 1901, he died of a heart attack.

Populists, in their rhetoric, did not separate people into various social classes, but into two opposing factions. Richard Hofstadter called this social dualism. On the one hand, there were the common men, *the people* to which everyone should have belonged, in principle, at least. Then, on the other hand, there were the bankers, the usurers, the plutocrats, the millionaires, the exploiters, *the elite*. In a word, the nation was demarcated into the robbers and the robbed.[439] Populists did not usually utilize other kinds of class concepts. Donnelly's rhetorics is a perfect example of social dualism.

437 Kazin 1995, 31
438 Kazin 1995, 16
439 Åsard 1994, 39

5.2.1. The Position of Wealth in Donnelly's Non-fictional Works

Donnelly wrought out all but one of his non-fictional books during the 1880s. They do not include many paragraphs dealing with our subject of interest. Donnelly notably indulges himself everywhere in pseudo-scientific interests. He found it impossible to maintain a clear distinction between fact and fiction. Besides the great themes of his non-fiction – impact by comet, Baconian cipher, the Atlantis myth –, the inclination to draw sudden conclusions is strongly present in his other works, too.[440] A notable part of the content of the old Atlantis myth is the affluent life enjoyed on the isles. In Donnelly's study, however, the issue is touched on only briefly in the chapters considering gold and silver as Atlantic sacred metals and the colonies of Atlantis.[441] Certain conclusions of Donnelly's attitude can naturally be drawn even from these scarce extractions.

His contribution to the Bacon–Shakespeare dilemma reveals interesting features considering his attitude not only towards William Shakespeare's person but also towards luxury. One of the most crucial critiques that Donnelly presents applies to Shakespeare's lifestyle, especially his presumed mammonism. In the critique, almost everything in Shakespeare turns out to be vicious and false in nature and is deserving of disapproval. His hand-writing was awful, he did not care to teach his child to read, and so on. And, what is of importance to us, in Donnelly's study all Shakespeare's faults seem to be traceable to his love of money.

> Nothing is clearer than that Shakespeare was a money-getting man. He achieved a very large fortune in a pursuit in which most men died paupers. He had a keen eye for profit. He was ready to sue his neighbor for a few shillings loaned. I have shown that he must have carried the business of brewing in New Place. He entered into a conspiracy to wrest the right of common from the poor people of the town, for his own profit.[442]

440 Such are his attempts to explain the backward condition of the blacks by bacteriological reasons in Donnelly 1891, 56-58. Such is also the last one of his novels, Donnelly 1895.

441 Donnelly 1882, part IV. VI, part V. *Ragnarök* was a logical successor to *Atlantis*, but it does not serve our purpose neither.

442 Donnelly 1888, vol. I, 83

The emphasis of Donnelly's criticism is here clearly in the deprecative nature of Shakespeare's lifestyle. Shakespeare is a greedy, cunning, unscrupulous, and money-seeking man, while Bacon, on the contrary, is shown to be a noble, honest and gentile genius. After opening the "cipher"[443] in the "so-called Shakespearian plays" Donnelly reads out verses like the following, for example.

> His [Shakespeare's] purse is well lined with the gold he derives from the Plays. The Plays are much admired, and draw great numbers, and yield great abundance of fruit, in the forms of groats and pence. (Donnelly 1888, vol. II, 784-785)

Obviously Donnelly's interpretation of the cipher also reflected his own monetary relations. He had lost fortunes in land speculation, his whole utopian community (Nininger City), and in his books laid the blame for his misfortunes on big business. But, this can be seen more profoundly in his works of fiction.

5.2.2. Millionaires and the Plutocracy

On January 19, 1889, the night after he was not elected senator, Ignatius Donnelly started writing a book for which he is usually remembered. The book was addressed to the able and the rich and it attempted to foretell the future of American civilization. In "Caesar's Column" the author asks why "the rich, as a rule, despise the poor, and the poor are coming to hate the rich"?[444] It is a book of hate and antagonism. It depicted a degraded society with the rich in complete control. More than Bellamian utopia, therefore, "Caesar's Column" is anti-utopia in the spirit of George Orwell and Aldous Huxley, for it shows the future as an awful nightmare, totally corrupted by wealthy plutocracy. Its leisurely idling members may amuse themselves with whatever they please. The anti-hero prince Cabano, may insult or injure a person without juridical consequences, or he is also able to buy girls to be his concubines. The book ends with disastrous

443 Of course, it had been evident almost from the beginning to Donnelly's critics that his cipher was no cipher at all. To make his system effective, Donnelly had to count backward as well as forward. According to his biographer "Just as neither *Atlantis* nor *Ragnarök* is good science, neither is *The Great Cryptogram* good cryptography". Anderson 1980, 63-64

444 Donnelly 1890, 3-4

massacres and human slaughter in the proletarians' world revolution. All this, of course, is a result of the maintenance of the social and administrative abuses of the 1890s. The most significant element in the book is Donnelly's extreme attack on those who reject Christian values.

Amalgamating fiction with fact was typical to the 1890s literature. Utopias, like Bellamy's "Looking Backward", were widely read. The most well-known Populist novel is probably Frank L. Baum's "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" (1900), although its later popularity does not rest on its merits as Populist allegory, allegory that is not without doubts even today.[445] Topeka's Mark Twain, Gaspar C. Clemens, was among Populist novelists with his "Parable of the Old Grist Mill" (1894) as well as Thomas Proctor with his "The Banker's Dream" (1895). The genre of novel eminently suited Populist preaching: the credo had to be expressed so clearly that people perfectly understood. Novel and tract did this well, and Donnelly saw that.

In "Caesar's Column", Donnelly makes frequently excursions back to his own time either in the conversations of his characters or by old journals, newspapers or books quoted in his text.[446] He also comes to grips with political thought by paraphrasing the workingmen's meeting and plutocratic sermons, and by representing his ideal state that is inaugurated after the world war. The most momentous quotation is taken from the sermon of Episcopal Bishop Henry C. Potter, preached before President Harrison in the centennial anniversary of the first inauguration of George Washington, April 30, 1889. In his centennial sermon Potter heightened a voice of warning against "the era of plutocrats", and "the omnipotent power of money". Donnelly's book is a kind of further extension of the deterrents in Potter's preaching. His future utopia is a quasi-democratic realm of plutocrats.

Donnelly's analysis of money and getting rich is presented in Chapter XII by the hero of the book, Gabriel Weltstein. The root of unearned wealth is in usury. "Usury kills off the enterprising members of the community by bankrupting them, and leaves only the very rich and the very poor."[447] The fifty or one hundred million properties of the Gilded Age had enlarged up to one thousand million (i.e. billion) in this future utopia. Such a large fortune cannot be trace-

445 See Clanton 1991, 149-150, 168
446 See esp. Ch. XI, 86-100
447 Donnelly 1890, 103

able to an actor's labor or his abilities. Usury is the factor which perverts money relations in society. Again, we may notice the embitterment over the fortunes lost by Donnelly in soil speculation.

In "Caesar's Column" Donnelly is completely aware of the mechanisms of conspicuous waste ten years before Veblen. He tells us about Americans of the 1890s who wasted years of valuable time in the study of languages that were no longer spoken on the earth – one of Veblen's favourite themes.[448] The habits of expenditure and social valuation are analyzed in a similar vein. Those who consume the most constitute the plutocracy. Donnelly's prince lives in a palace with

> ... costly books, works of arts, bronzes, jeweled boxes, musical instruments, small groups of exquisite statuary, engravings, curios, etc. from all quarters of the earth. It represented, in short, the very profligacy and abandon of unbounded wealth [...] (Donnelly 1890, 61)

His hero, Weltstein

> ... could not help but contrast this useless and extravagant luxury, which served no purpose but display and vanity with the dreadful homes and working-places of the poor [he] had visited the day before. (Donnelly 1890, 61-62)

If the rich are living in conspicuous display, also the abilities which Donnelly calls the most important in "the world of wealth" remind us of Veblen's theory of the business enterprise. "*Muscle* is the world's slave, and *Cunning* is the baron – the world's master."[449] It is the cunning who keep up with the Joneses, and even beat them. The Joneses are literally among Donnelly's millionaires.

> The man who is worth $100,000 says to himself, 'There is Jones; he is worth $500,000, he lives with display and extravagance I cannot equal. I must increase my fortune to half a million.' Jones, on the other hand, is measuring himself against Brown, who has a million. He knows that men cringe lower to Brown than they do to

448 Donnelly 1890, 34
449 Donnelly 1890, 111; his italics

him. He must have a million – half million is nothing. And Brown feels he is overshadowed by Smith with his ten millions; and so the childish emulation continues. Men are valued, not for themselves, but for their bank account.

'And thus, under the stimulus of shallow vanity,' I continued, 'a rivalry of barouches and bonnets – an emulation of waste and extravagance - all the powers of the minds of men are turned - not to lift up the world, but to degrade it. (Donnelly 1890, 114)

Donnelly connects himself with the same admiration of progress as Veblen and Bellamy in their writings, ten years before the Progressive Era. The most problematic points about consumption seem to be its allocation not only among different groups of goods but also among groups of men: people strive to consume futile and idle articles, not the items that would bring the most utility. On the other hand, consumption of mere quantities seems to grant social power, i.e. it has a certain, positive effect on social status and citizenship. Thus it serves exactly as the Veblenian super-value that we distinguished in a previous chapter (2.2.). The people who consume the most items are the most appreciated and powerful citizens, too. Prince Cabano is a mighty man and this is manifested by the conspicuous display of those jeweled boxes, bronzes, and works of arts. The true relation between consumption and might is obscure. Is Cabano consuming to show his power? Or is he obliged to consume in order to maintain his social position?

The social problematics of millionaires has a complicated nature. Donnelly clearly understands the obvious fact that mere consumption is not a problem at all, even of large amounts. It only means more wages to share for employees. Donnelly's millionaire is, therefore, a merely political and economical problem to society. Political, because of graft, economical, because of his inability to circulate his wealth. In other words, he is not able to consume enough. This is a Ricardian – or later Keynesian – thought of under-consumption. Donnelly's perspective lies in trade and commerce. If millionaires could spend all their incomes, the community would get the money over and over again through the transactions circulating in the economy. But they cannot. The social problematics of luxury lies in these faults. Actually, the mere life style of the rich does not have any deprecatory role in Donnelly's utopia. He does not attribute detrimen-

tal influence to the luxurious life in itself. There is no mention about mammonism or luxurism in his book. Instead of a moralistic denunciation of consumption it is the populistic greenbacker point of view that is voiced in the next citation:

> The millionaire cannot eat any more or wear any more than one prosperous yeoman, and therefore is of no more value to trade and commerce; but the thousands of paupers have to be supported by the tax-payers, and they have no money to spend, and they cannot buy the goods of the merchants, or the manufacturers, and all business languishes. In short, the most utterly useless, destructive and damnable crop a country can grow is – millionaires. (Donnelly 1890, 112)

Donnelly pictures the problem of economical depression as a chronic state of under-consumption. Conventionally, the angle of vision in economical crises is the opposite: depression is seen as a temporary over-production in the industrially produced output. In fact, as Ely and Veblen point out, in this kind of crisis, it is not usually a question of material insufficiency or extravagance that consumers are wrestling with. No industrial community produces such an enormous quantity of goods that it would totally exceed its capacity to be consumed, if only distributed evenly. In good faith Donnelly makes a proposal for a simple improvement: nobody should be allowed to accumulate a fortune so large that he cannot consume it. In fact, he tends to reach equal possibilities for the distribution of consumable goods, but, though the target be acceptable, it surely is hard to attain.

If Donnelly gives a precarious vote for the high standard of living in his utopia, the case of inherited wealth, however, seems to differ from the normal luxurious life in its tendency to move into immoral debauchery. To the millionaire of the second generation, wealth easily "becomes only a vehicle in which to ride to destruction".[450] An excess of money can be an immoralising factor resulting in "a reckless, drunken, useless spendthrift, with no higher aim in life than wine and women".[451] Thus, the immoralising influence of money can finally be found also in Donnelly's book, but the arguments he has put forth do not validate the given impression. The main line of argument goes for a millionaire only because he is incapable of consuming his money.

450 Donnelly 1890, 213
451 Donnelly 1890, 213

Another clearly Populistic suggestion is the request for paper money as a solution to people's aptitude to cumulate treasures. "The adoration of gold and silver is a superstition of which the bankers are the high priests and mankind the victims. Those metals are of themselves of little value."[452] Donnelly's "international greenbacks" would have a fixed value related to population, and only the smallest debts could be paid in metals.

In the workingmen's meeting the last word is not given to the leader of the labor union, neither to the Christian socialist. Donnelly puts forth his own, Populist theses in the mouth of Gabriel Weltstein. The plutocracy is to be superseded by people; civilization must not be destroyed; the individual's rights to life and freedom must be secured; democracy must be guaranteed.[453] Weltstein's turn to speak is violently interrupted, but Donnelly completes his ideas in succeeding conversations, and especially in an extract of an imaginary journal of Weltstein. The departure from socialistic conceptions is a notable border line in Donnelly's critique. He describes the antagonism between the rich and the poor,[454] but the proletarian reply to plutocracy is pictured as a disastrous upheaval demolishing civilization. In Donnelly's ideal world bribery and corruption are ranked as high treason, for he sees them as more dangerous to people than open war. No interest on money is accepted.[455]

5.2.3. The Ideal Populist

In the fall of 1892, Donnelly was hectically working with the Populist Party propaganda. During the four-year-period till Bryan's defeat, the Populists published articles in over 150 local newspapers, most in the South and the West. They wanted to win. Donnelly was but one of great Populist orators. Another was Texas lecturer James "Cyclone" Davis who carried the complete works of Thomas Jefferson with him around the states.[456] Between his campaign speeches, in railroad cars, and at country hotels, Donnelly hurriedly wrote his third novel. It introduced an ideal populist, Ephraim Benezet, in order to explain and defend the ideas of the Populist Party as he saw them.

452 Donnelly 1890, 106
453 Donnelly 1890, 171-173
454 See e.g. Donnelly 1890, 209
455 Donnelly 1890, 302-303
456 Kazin 1995, 39

In "Golden Bottle", Donnelly made for the first time the demonetization of silver (the crime of 73) a campaign issue. The program was, again, made in the very thin disguise of a story. In his book Donnelly made use of his own speeches and political propaganda, and the arguments of his enemies, as well. Like Dante, he also used notorious persons as characters; railway millionaire Jay Gould, for example, hangs himself in Donnelly's book soon after the imaginary collapse of his fortunes.

Donnelly's ideal Populist begins his adventures as a poor country boy with a little farm totally mortgaged. The boy is lucky to get a golden flask, full of liquid that has the power to convert all metal into gold. Donnelly's personal problems of usury and land mortgage thus serve, again, as a point of departure to his Populist theory. We have met the problems already in "Caesar's Column" above, and they are present in "Doctor Huguet" as well.[457] Hence begins poor Ephraim Benezet's road from rags to riches and up to the presidency of the United States. The Horatio Alger myth, however, does not get its fulfilment, for the hero attempts to exercise his strength over virtually all of the people, not for his own satisfaction only. This time, Donnelly does not finish up with frightening atmosphere, as he did in his first utopia. At the end of the story, Ephraim presents a program that has been compared to that of Wilson's nearly a generation later.[458] Like Wilson in his Fourteen Points and in the League of Nations, Ephraim had a plan, the New Christianity, and the two have much in common.

In "Golden Bottle" we can distinguish many different attitudes towards money. In the thoughts of the common people of Kansas, there is a strongly visible undertone of mammonism. This is how a new, uncertain millionaire is advised by his father, a poor Kansas tenant.

> You couldn't get a mob of average American citizens to hang a rich man. They worship money more than they do their God. It is the Moloch of their idolatry. (Donnelly 1892, 35)

The fresh millionaire may discover the power of money. He is used to being a humble man but suddenly journalists, common men, bankers, and even scientists seem to respect his every move and breath. The following citations, as they

457 Donnelly 1891, 147-159
458 Anderson 1980, 99-100

appear in Donnelly's representation, tell much about the presumed attitude of common Americans towards riches:

> I was the most talked-of man in the nation. The newspapers chronicled my slightest movement. Ten thousand scientists were engaged in all parts of the world searching for 'the philosopher's stone.' The business class were literally down on their knees before me; the bankers worshiped me; the newspapers glorified me as never king or emperor had been glorified before in all this world. (Donnelly 1892, 121)

> The touch of gold had beautified our faces, our dwelling, our characters, our pedigree, our stock, and even our poultry. (Donnelly 1892, 41)

> The rich man should never forget that the honors which accompany him are not paid to him, but to his money; and without it he would not be of any more account than a half-naked tramp. If they could get that idea into their heads it would knock the nonsense out of them. Of themselves they are nothing. (Donnelly 1892, 43)

The top of society, the 'cream of the crop', are imitated by the rest of the society in models of consumption as well as other social models. Donnelly's hero attempts to influence the very best people. The example of "the first families" is important because society, unlike religion, moves from the top downwards. In these figurative populist meetings ordained by Ephraim Benezet, every social class is represented at their best. "Every working-woman was also present, arrayed in her poor best."[459] The "well-dressed, handsome, happy women" of the rich classes are pictured as "idle and useless" decorations who "had frittered away their lives in the competition of shallow vanities and the empty chit-chat".[460]

These are the faults of Donnelly's society; solutions are given soon in the speeches of the hero's campaign for his monetary policy. Benezet manifests the familiar Populist agenda: keep the land in the hands of the many, issue paper currency, etc.[461] In order to abolish the pauper, it seems, they had to abolish the millionaire, too.[462]

459 Donnelly 1892, 93
460 Donnelly 1892, 104-106
461 Donnelly 1892, 125-131
462 Donnelly 1892, 251

Donnelly's ethic is peculiarly directed to work. The world is not for consumption but for working. "The universe is nothing but *work*, and we all of us – you and I, and the rest – have no place in it but *workers*."[463]

5.2.4. The Silver Issue

The silver issue, thinly extracted in the "Golden Bottle", was more profoundly discussed in Donnelly's last Populist book, "American People's Money". It is not a pure example of Populist silver tracts that were produced for common men to learn the economic principles of the Party. There surely are many similarities between this book and William H. Harvey's "Coin's Financial School" (1894) which sold enormously well and drummed bimetallism in the beginning of the 1890s.

The type of argumentation was widely characteristic of the Populists in the 1896 campaign. Bimetallist or greenbacker arguments were frequently presented in tracts, the most best-selling of which was Harvey's above-mentioned booklet of "Coin's Financial School". The book rode on the wave of an unbelievable money mania. The presidential campaign of 1896 dominantly hung on financial issues. Hofstadter has called Harvey "the Tom Paine of the free silver movement". Estimations of "Coin's" sales vary from 750,000 to one million.[464]

Harvey has much to say about *money* but almost nothing about *consumption*. His vocabulary does not include the word *luxury*. The free silver movement did not level its criticism at expenditure, but at bankers and businessmen. The last-mentioned are but marionettes, brainless puppets, regulated by bankers.[465] The very same opinion was popularly presented in the tracts of the time. Proctor depicts trusts as a world wide conspiracy led by unscrupulous bankers.[466] We must note that Harvey's tracts on silver were far more simplistic than the real Populist platform.

Donnelly's tract takes a form of discussion between Hugh Sanders (Ignatius Donnelly himself?) and James Hutchinson (a Chicago banker) on a train going west. Donnelly states that under the current metallic system, silver money should

463 Donnelly 1892, 311; his italics
464 Hofstadter 1963, 3, 5
465 Harvey 1894, 116
466 Proctor 1895, 38-63, 185

be as readily usable as gold. The only source of permanent, universal prosperity is money readily available for all. This was the Populists' common economic doctrine in the 1890s.

None of Donnelly's books is a conventional novel. He sees the novel form essentially as a vehicle for ideas whereby social change may be brought about. His non-fiction can be labelled pseudo-science, his novels are pseudo-novels. As we have noticed, luxury and waste do have a crucial place in the Populist social criticism as Donnelly represents it. Next we shall attempt to show the continuity of Populist themes in later progressive criticism with the aid of the Herbert Croly's technocratic agitation. Croly's political theory is centered around the ideas of expertism and efficiency in administration. He was one of the prime figures in the formation of the Progressive Party and the editor of the progressive journal *New Republic*.

5.2.5. The Technocratic Agitation of Herbert Croly as Inheritant of the Populist Program

The longing for specialists in government is an old theme in American social philosophy. It reached the commonsense thought in the technocrats' idea of scientific management. The theme was successfully wrought by Fredrik W. Taylor and Herbert Croly in the beginning of the twentieth century; soon the Tayloristic ideas were executed in practice by young engineers, exemplified by Henry Ford and his famous assembly lines. Also the populist wave called for specialization in administration, instead of the money power. In progressivism, technocracy and efficiency had an essential place. *American Magazine,* for example, ran series like "The Gospel of Efficiency" in the 1910s. However, efficiency cannot be equalled with progressivism.

The ideal of scientific administration can also be identified in the goals of Social Darwinian authors. In his comprehensive study Herbert Spencer tended to show that everywhere those who rule really were the most fitting ones. The conclusion drawn by the leading American Social Darwinian, William Graham Sumner, was that this is just the reason for things to remain unchanged; laissez faire was the best policy. Those who were naturally selected to govern people

were, prima facie, the best among us to rule.[467] At the same time the most sharp-sighted critics of Sumnerian laissez faire longed for the scientific experts as well. Social scientists, such as Frank Lester Ward, supported these "elitist" ideas of administration by specialists. Many professional officials were already qualified in some branch of production; it was only natural that they should make the appropriate decisions, too. Such legislation would only be "in the true sense scientific".[468]

The Taylorian technocracy was directed strictly at scientific improvements in working habits, methods and working conditions of laborers in factories and workshops; it was also interested in reforming businessmen's views by introducing scientific management into the daily business world. Taylor introduced his ideas in 1903 in "Shop Management", but they scarcely caught on until 1911 when the "Principles of Scientific Management" was published.

Taylorism had a direct connection to the common wave of progressivism, and especially to conservationist economics. Wrong working methods, carriages, equipment, etc. undeniably diminished the potential output of work; this incurs waste and no waste is to be accepted by modern business life. Under the new scientific management people are able to conserve scarce resources and to produce a larger output. Taylor believed that his advice could score for the benefit of both workmen and employers.[469] Scientific management was drawn up to bring more wealth for everyone. In practice this meant that the most fitting men should be selected for each task. With a stop watch, a tape measure, a pair of scales, and a mass of flow charts Taylor measured and organized the fastest possible moves and orbits of a workman, the optimal load on a shovel, and so forth.

There also emerged a more political direction in the technocratic movement. It has usually been exemplified by the political philosophy of Herbert Croly, but the more radical wing of the movement was managed by William Smythe, an able engineer by whom the very name "technocracy" was originally coined in 1919.[470] He agitated technicians to participate in politics and in unions. Science serves good as well as evil. To avoid autarchy the engineers should form "Coun-

467 Sumner 1883, 98-105
468 Ward 1893, 310. In fact, the idea of expertism did not disappear from American discourse. As an illustration, see Lippman 1922, 31
469 Taylor 1911, 72
470 Bell 1973, 349n

cils of Scientists", for science is dangerous, save in the hands of specialists.[471] In Smythe's works we also find the familiar, populist lamentations against the trusts – Smythe even gives us a four-page list of dangerous monopolies in alphabetical order from "agricultural implements" to "writing paper" in his "Constructive Democracy".[472] The worst of all monopolies was railroad trust because it was able to control and dominate other lines of business. Political parties, even revolutionary socialists, were unable to repair the corruption that flourished in America. Smythe put in a claim for a scientific solution. It included such things as "complete governmental ownership", "scientific production", "industrial consolidation", and "national control of corporations". The real golden era of technocracy was situated between the World Wars. It has even been called the Age of Machine.[473]

Perhaps the most extreme version of the position of the administrative councils of experts is, however, manifested by Veblen in his book "Engineers and the Price System" (1921). It was originally a series of articles that was published in his own journal, the *Dial*, 1919–21. The articles were re-edited by the author and the last chapter "A Memorandum on a Practicable Soviet of Technicians" was attached to them. Among technocrats, labor unions were generally seen as a premise for good government. Croly was even willing to go farther and totally reject non-union industrial laborers as undemocratic "weeds in flower garden".[474] In the "Engineers" Veblen presents an interesting combination of technocracy and the idea of tripartite *soviets*, councils he named after the Russian model. Veblen could not count much on the class consciousness of labor; he clearly ignores the Tayloristic form of technocracy.[475] The specialism of engineers, geologists, and material scientists seemed to be adapted from the works of Bellamy. In "Looking Backward" and in its sequel "Equality", Bellamy thoroughly explicated the new society that was governed by "councils" or "boards of technicians".[476] This may also be the source of elitism in another social classic of the time: Lippmann's "Drift and Mastery".

471 Smythe 1905. Smythe's political technocracy is briefly introduced in Stabile 1986, 49
472 Smythe 1905, 159-163
473 American technocracy and the age of machine has scarcely been introduced in literature. See Burnis 1992, 28-31 and Fischer 1990, 77-86
474 Croly 1909, 387. The new unions of Croly would tend to enlargen the welfare of the whole economic civilization, not to "change a minimum of work for a maximum of cash". Croly 1914, 388
475 Veblen 1917, 162-164. For another denunciation, see Croly 1914, 402
476 Bellamy 1888, Ch. XVII

Between 1918 and 1921 Veblen had interacted with Howard Scott, a radical engineer. In 1919 Scott formed the Technical Alliance in order to apply Veblen's ideas in practice.[477] The alliance failed but different technocratic movements survived and nominally some of them still exist today.[478]

In the same peak of technocracy, Herbert Croly made an attempt to explain American problems as being, in part, the result of an erroneous democratic theory.[479] According to Croly, American society did not longer need the Jeffersonian slogan of "equal right", but a novel kind of technocratic conception of problems. *Consolidation, efficiency, experiment, expert, management, mechanism, organization, progress, reconstruction, responsibility, specialization, and specialists* were the new key words that Croly heaved up as signs of the new technocratic system.

Why, then, did the American people need a new order? In "The Promise of American Life" Croly enlists a number of reasons, but all of them seem to be related, in one way or another, with the most central evil in the old system, the "morally and socially undesirable distribution of wealth", "the excessive money power", as he calls it.

> [...] the prevailing abuses and sins, which have made reform necessary, are all of them associated with the prodigious concentration of wealth, and of the power exercized by wealth, in the hands of a few men. (Croly 1909, 22-23)

The reason to analyze Croly in connection to Donnelly, lies in their terminological similarity. *Money power*, or *the power of money*, is an old expression suggesting the socialistic agitation in Tompkins Square in New York in 1876. The power of money was an expression of class privilege, the domination of wealth; the rich as the class enemy of the people.[480] At the end of the 1870s, it became a favorite slogan of the populist movement; at the 1900s it emerged in Smythe's analysis of the industrial disease. Croly clearly continues the tradition transmitted by the populists, but in his analysis money power was not the prime mover of society. Corrupt organization as the final output of the American life style was induced by the "erroneous democratic theory" and the "chaotic individualism",

477 Burris 1992, 28
478 Fischer 1990, 86
479 Croly 1909, 26
480 Trachtenberg 1982, 72

i.e. the excessive freedom which the American tradition had granted to the individual.

Croly usually starts his studies from political history and fades then into the analysis of the current political order. Thus, in the "Promise" he traces the progressive crusade against Money Power back to the old Western Democrat dislike of the possession of any special power by the men of wealth.[481] So far the menace offered by money power had nevertheless been a somewhat hypothetical one, for there had been no class of the very rich people in the USA, until recently. The new tendency towards specialization now led to the absurd circumstances in which the American people began to recognize that they were, in fact, ruled by the financiers, captains of industry and the *bosses*; the last term is favored by Croly.[482]

> The rich men and the big corporations have become too wealthy and powerful for their official standing in American life. They have not obeyed the laws. They have attempted to control the official makers, administrators, and expounders of the law. (Croly 1909, 116-117)

Croly, however, did not see the big corporations as completely detrimental, nor even totally ineffective, parts of the economy. In very much the same way John Kenneth Galbraith, fifty years later, maintains that the huge corporations, and the bosses as well, have contributed to American efficiency with their better organization of industry and more advanced methods of production.[483] And much the same can be said of the millionaires' habits of consumption. "The best type of American millionaire seems always to have had as much interest in the work and in the game in its prodigious rewards..."[484] But who was the best type of millionaire Croly is referring to? Rockefeller? Carnegie? No specific man of wealth; he was the common millionaire of the first generation. Again, we can find a similarity between Croly and Donnelly. Just like Donnelly, he convinces us that it is possible to be rich and still give the greatest public gifts, but there is a certain limit to this. Men who inherit great wealth, and are brought up in extravagancy, nearly always spend their money on themselves.[485] As a remedy,

481 Croly 1909, 58-59
482 Croly 1909, 104-105
483 Croly 1909, 358-359
484 Croly 1909, 371-372
485 Croly 1909, 382

Croly supports George's proposal of a strictly progressive, graduated inheritance tax.

> Many millions may, at least in part, be earned by the man who accumulate them, but they cannot in the least be earned by the people who inherit them. They should not be inherited at all, save by the intervention of the state [...] (Croly 1909, 383)

Where a newly-risen millionaire had got his money – the favorite subject of revelations in the muckraking texts of Lloyd, Russell, or Tarbell – is not the hot topic for Croly, at least not in "The Promise". The system should not encourage anybody to get "easy money",[486] it is true, but fortunes, once legally obtained, are to be accepted. What a millionaire is to do with his money, is a like question. His life style belongs to his privacy. The possible conspicuous waste which was suspected by Ely and received so much attention from Veblen has nothing to do with Croly's reasoning. A self-made millionaire has a legal and moral right to his propensity for earning money.[487] Croly recognizes, however, the condemnation with which moralists treat rich men's "ostentatious waste and conspicuous leisure". They are visited with the same deprecation as the poor man who does not let other people live in peace. But they are labelled by this condemnation only by a few moralists. Croly cannot take self-restraint as an essential part of the Christian moral code at all, it merely belongs to Stoicism.[488] The whole theology for the social gospel seems to be totally unknown to him. "Live-and-let-live" is an unbroken rule in each direction.

Croly saw the progressive movement, on the one hand, as a sequence of reforms in an unstable world where everyone had suddenly found himself likely to be a reformer. On the other hand, it was a continuity of populist radicalism. The former resentment against individuals, and the attention confined to local and specific items, had become a theoretical discussion of the abuses of the system.[489] Progressivism was both diagnosis and its remedies. There were different types of progressive politicians, but Croly takes four of them to picture

486 Croly 1909, 415
487 "The multi-millionaire cannot possibly spend all his income save by a recourse to wild and demoralizing extravagance, and in some instances not even extravagance is sufficient for the purpose." Croly 1909, 382
488 Croly 1914, 419-420
489 Croly 1914, 3-9

the whole American situation: William J. Bryan, William Travors Jerome, William R. Hearst and Theodore Roosevelt; the last named received the most sympathetic attention from Croly, Wilson's "New Freedom" did not receive any at all.[490]

The existing system had some undeniable advantages, but in order to become more enlightened, it should be directed by the ideal of social democracy and it should be connected with expert administrative officials.[491] If new methods and forms were not supplied the federal states of America would disintegrate. Because both individualism and socialism in their dogmatist forms are condemnable to Croly, his natural direction has to be radical democracy.[492]

5.2.6. Summary: The Populist Pathos against Luxury in Donnelly's Works

Ignatius Donnelly was a prominent figure in the People's Party, organizing the crusade of the "Have-Not's against [the] Have's". He found the basic conflict in society in the antagonism between the rich and the poor, but in Donnelly's reasoning the conflict showed itself mainly in an individual's possibilities to enjoy goods.

Those who consume the most constitute the plutocracy, a class of millionaires living in useless and extravagant luxury which serves no other purpose but display and vanity. But in Donnelly's world the social problematics of millionaires is complicated by the obvious fact that mere consumption is not a problem at all, even of large amounts. Donnelly does not condemn the consumption of goods. It only means more wages to share for employees. Donnelly's millionaire is menacing to society, but the menace is political and economical only. Political, because of graft, economical, because of the millionaire's inability to circulate his wealth. The mere life style of the rich does not have any deprecatory role in his utopia. The case of inherited wealth, however, seems to differ from the normal luxurious life in its tendency to move into immoral debauchery.

Donnelly, too, gives his acceptance to the imitation theory of consumption. In fact, he is one of the very first theorists who describes social models as

490 Croly 1914, 15
491 Croly 1914, 203, 355-356
492 Croly 1914, 217

dispersed from the top of the society to the masses. In this regard he is probably one of the earliest models to whom we may trace the general scheme of pecuniary valuation in twentieth-century American sociology.

Donnelly's ethic is peculiarly directed at work. The world is not a world of consumption but of work. The angle of vision in his writings is always the unbelievable power of money. Money alone does not destroy the rich nor endanger the peaceable social system. According to Donnelly's analysis, the prime factor perverting money relations in Western society is usury.

5.3. The Message for the Working Class in Eugene V. Debs' Speeches

As an illustration of the radical thought housed in the socialist labor movement, we will next study the conceptions of Eugene Victor Debs, the leader of the American Railway Union (ARU) and manifold presidential candidate of the American Socialist Party (ASP). The succeeding biographical notes we owe to the most recent and most crucial of Debs' biographies, written by Nick Salvatore[493] this also being the basis for the biographical essay in "Letters of EVD" by J. Robert Constantine.

5.3.1. Debs as an Agitator

Growing up in an Alsatian emigrant family in Terre Haute, Indiana, in a state overwhelmingly Democrat, Debs, naturally, got the Democrat ticket in his first elections, in 1884.[494] Long before his conversion to socialism (in the 1890s) Debs promoted "a system in which the worker shall get what he produces and the capitalist shall produce what he gets".[495] Debs had convinced himself of the significance of labor unions as early as the late 70s. He then communicated regularly with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen (BLF) while working as an employee, and wrote articles for *BLF's Magazine* over a period of twelve years.[496] Radicalism and radical tactics had yet to find their place in the future militant

493 Salvatore 1982
494 Constantine 1990, liii
495 Cited from Trachtenberg 1982, 74
496 Constantine 1990, lii

socialist's world. "Strikes are the knives with which laborers cut their throats," he wrote in 1883. Debs always remained in reluctant opposition to violent methods in labor movement. Still, by the dawn of the epoch-making Pullman Strike of 1894, he even hesitated to rely on socialist theorists. BLF membership had grown to nearly 20,000 in 1890, and *BLF's Magazine* had about 28,000 subscribers.[497]

The ferments of Debs' social thought can be found, again, among the same protest writings as we have met before. George's simplified analysis of the unearned increment of land value and Bellamy's visions of the future and the Populist propaganda were crucial, of course, but the real shock was Laurence Gronlund's "The Coöperative Commonwealth", "the first satisfactory exposition in English of Socialist and Marxian economics" as Debs put it in his magazine.[498] Marx, of course, had a strong impact on Debs' socialism, but the basic essentials of Marxist theory he probably learned from Kautsky.[499]

The Pullman Strike, perhaps the most famous strike in American labor history, made a change in Debs' views in many ways. He started to work hard for the Populist Party though he withstood serious pressure to become its candidate in the 1896 elections.[500] He clearly took the Populist Party as a radically reforming power, but became disappointed and soon made the accusation that it had lost its mission.[501] In Illinois, the Pops also included labor radicals – thanks to H.D. Lloyd's strenuous agitation. We should notice that Debs was not alone among socialists with his sympathy to Populism. Even such an extremist as Daniel DeLeon had supported George's single tax ticket in 1886.[502] After the Populist stage Debs approached further socialist conceptions, but could not be satisfied with various socialist parties, such as DeLeon's Marxist Socialist Labor Party, until the Social Democratic Party (SDP) was founded under Victor Berger's leadership in 1898.[503]

Much has been changed in Debs' thoughts after, and because of, the Pullman Strike. As a strike leader he was sent to the Woodstock jail for a year. He came out of it a changed man. The AFL leader, Gompers, now found him the advocate of revolt, impossible to understand.[504] Emma Goldman pictures the Debs of that

497 Constantine 1990, lvii
498 Debs 1902, 48
499 Cannon 1970, 13
500 Constantine 1990, lxv
501 Debs 1900, 66-67
502 Girard and Perry 1991, 13
503 Nadel 1996, 63-64
504 Gompers 1925, 123

time as a profoundly radical revolutionist who saw socialism to be only a stepping-stone to the ultimate ideal, which was anarchism.[505] On the other hand, one has to notice that Berger's socialist program closely resembled the reformist provisions of the Populist Omaha Platform. In 1900 Debs ran for the presidency under this ticket but received less than 100,000 votes.[506] The disappointment was controlled by forming a new political party, the Socialist Party of America (SPA), that was the only serious socialist party movement during the Progressive era. On this ticket, Debs was a candidate for President of the United States four times, in 1904, 1908, 1912 and 1920. The vote increased each time.

In 1905, Debs joined DeLeon and William (Bill) Haywood in founding a new Marxist labor union, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, the Wobblies) but later withdraw his support because of the excessive militant methods of the Wobblies (sabotage, assassinations and other violence).[507] Since 1907 *Appeal to Reason*, the magazine of the SPA, became Debs' regular forum for his attack on capitalism. In 1908 he cruised all over the states with his campaign train, the Red Special, but the real outcome of his propaganda could not be seen before the 1912 elections, when the socialist cause was promoted by 323 papers and periodicals altogether.[508] Debs received 897,011 votes, or six percent of the total vote.

The next great turn was a consequence of his speech in Nimisilla Park, Canton, Ohio, in June of 1918. The speech was recorded by the government stenographer, and the pacifistic emphasis of the speech in an era when war in Europe ruled the opinion of all respectable Americans, was then interpreted as a violation of the Espionage Act and become the basis of Debs' indictment and, ultimately, conviction under that law.[509] Nearly three years of imprisonment, however, also furnished him with the glory of martyrdom. The Presidential elections in 1920 were a special event peculiarly for the simple reason that one candidate sat in prison during the entire campaign. Debs received almost a million votes, the highest socialist vote in American history. Warren Harding released Debs on Christmas Day 1921. But the glamor of the Socialist Party was already declining. The most revolutionary faction had formed a new Communist Party in 1919, and the reformist faction had already joined the Progressives.

505 Goldman 1931, 220
506 Constantine 1990, lxvii
507 See Debs 1912, 191
508 Cannon 1970, 24
509 Constantine 1990, lxxvi

Many of Debs' comrades now joined these radical party formations, but Debs never admired the Russian way to communism. He stayed in his dwarfed SPA which declined by the 1925 convention in Cleveland to "as near a corpse as a thing can be".[510] In fact, the Party was nearly mortally wounded in the antiwar resolution, when 1/4 of the Party delegates and the intellectual wing almost entirely withdrew their support from their leaders.[511] The age of socialistic persuasion was over. Eugene V. Debs died in 1926.

5.3.2. The Capitalist's Prototype

Luxury, waste and consumption do not play a premier role anywhere in Debs' speeches, nor in socialists' writings generally. Usually, the poverty of the working class, and even lower classes such as criminals and beggars, is a more burning issue in them all. Naturally, Debs' own experiences of three American prisons made him an instinctive sympathizer of convicts.

The common stance towards luxuries among socialist radicals is pertinently illustrated by the anarchist leader Emma Goldman in her precious autobiography. She often brings up the unhesitatingly denouncing attitude of radical leaders; a doctrine that to her was hard to accept. Radicals had "the Cause" that had to supersede all other reasons wherever and whenever. Things like music, flowers, and theatre were thus cultivated as clandestine vices only. They were *luxuries*, not necessities. "[I]t is wrong to spend money on such things when the movement is so much in need of it. It is inconsistent for an anarchist to enjoy luxuries when the people live in poverty". This is what Alexander Berkman taught the young anarchist lady.[512] Even beauty was taken as a feature of this vicious luxury.[513] According to Goldman this kind of luxury was fostered within the "lazy class", causing "special privileges and physical and mental abnormalities".[514]

> I saw thousands of people who do not work, who produce nothing and live on the labor of others; who spend every day thousands of francs for their amusements; who debauch the daughters

510 Constantine 1990, lxxxii
511 See Diggins 1992, 102
512 Goldman 1931, 32
513 Goldman 1931, 45
514 Goldman 1909, 60-61

> of the workers; who own dwellings of forty or fifty rooms; twenty or thirty horses, many servants; in a word, all the pleasures of life. (Goldman 1911, 99)

Gronlund, in his "Coöperative Commonwealth", dissociated himself from Bellamite utopianism and committed himself to German socialism.[515] Goldman's and Berkman's suspicious attitude towards wealth had its paragon in Gronlundian socialism. One cannot reach millions by laboring. The really rich have always drawn utility from other people's misfortune.[516] We may hear an American accentuation in Gronlund's "German" socialism when he is discussing millionaires. His capitalism culminates in plutocracy. "Every millionaire is a criminal. Every one who amasses a hundred thousand dollars is a criminal." And: " [...] charity is nothing but *hush-money.*"[517]

In Debs' speeches, expenditure on luxuries is also regularly connected with the plutocratic life styles. And the luxurious life always coincides with idleness and leisure. This kind of conception of luxury is explicated in Debs' examples of characteristic capitalists, most of all in his famous Canton Speech (1918) which actually led Debs to prison. But, the same concept can be more or less implicitly found in his earlier writings, too. Such is his speech at Battery D, Chicago, on release from Woodstock Jail on November 22, 1895. Such is his obituary for a Catholic social gospel priest, Thomas McGrady. McGrady is pictured as a man who turned "his back upon the luxury of the capitalist class" and "cast his lot with the proletariat, the homeless and hungry, the ragged and distressed".[518] Labor can afford only rags, luxury is something characteristically capitalist, and morally denounced by the same token, because of its unequal nature. Concerning leisure and idleness, Gronlund had more nuances in his vocabulary. He made a difference detween *leisure* as rest from labor, and *idleness* that was simply an unpurposeful, inactive state of mind.[519] Leisure is "the incentive to all progress". The poor as well as the rich, the laborer as well as the boss, everyone needs leisure.

In Debs' speeches, luxury is connected to unpurposefulness, to idleness. Again, the conception can be read in the appeal to the Socialist Party in 1908. "Society can get along without the capitalist; it refuses longer to support him in idleness

515 Gronlund 1884, 101
516 Gronlund 1884, 28-29
517 Gronlund 1884, 58-59, 239, 241
518 Debs 1895
519 Gronlund 1884, 116-117

and luxury", and one day "the capitalist will be elevated from his present condition of parasitism to that of a worker and producer of wealth".[520]

The example of Marx's "Capital" behind this concept of luxury is obvious with certain reservations. In the "Capital" Marx himself did not explicate certain critique of luxury in the proper sense of the word. The critique of exploitation and of accumulating a hoard he definitely has but of *Luxus* Marx has not much to say. As we have already found in Chapter 2.2.1., the lack of concepts regarding the consumption of wealth is obvious also in Marx's criticism. Here the Marxist analysis still remains within the limits of classic political economy. Marx does not say much about consumption sector. Thus, when we talk about the Marxian conception of luxury it is the later tradition that we should expose in the first place. Naturally, the "Capital" has been the source of inspiration for all later authors who have called themselves Marxians, or Marxists. And this is the conception we face in the American as well as in the European discourse of consumption: luxury as a take off from the average level of daily consumption. It can be found in the texts of anarchists, the orthodox Marxists as well as of the left-wing socialists of any kind.

The capitalist class is typified in Debs' texts on Andrew Carnegie, Charles W. Morse and John D. Rockefeller, those enormously rich millionaires. In the very spirit of Marx, Debs mostly deals with the lower classes as simply labor power.[521] Regarding the working class the word 'consumption' is mentioned chiefly in the ancient meaning of exhausting things out slowly. In "Homestead and Ludlow"[522] Debs ridicules Carnegie's "Gospel of Wealth" (1889). The devout philanthropist and his deeds are pictured and opposed as a "hypocrite", "a Christian with Christ omitted", "a pariah", "a robber" and "a pharisee". And everywhere the accusations proposed in Debs' speeches suggest the old Marxist lamentation that we have already recognized in Marx's economic critique.

> The capitalists, who own the tools that the working class use, appropriate to themselves what the working class produce, and this accounts for the fact that a few capitalists become fabulously rich while the toiling millions remain in poverty, ignorance and dependence. (Debs 1905, 129-130)

520 Debs 1908, 167-168
521 For illustration see Debs 1905, 133
522 Debs 1914, 215-225

In his "Canton Speech" Debs paints a picture of a paradigmatic capitalist, and millionaires, such as Mr. Rockefeller, may serve, again, as an illustration. With his highly strong oratory skills, Debs shoots his arrows in order to make his audience laugh. In addition to being lazy, hypocritical, and immoral, the rich are even dull.[523]

> Give me a hundred capitalists, just as you find them here in Ohio – give me a pick of this plutocracy, and let me ask them a dozen simple questions about the history of their country, and I will show you they are as ignorant as unlettered school boys. (Debs 1918, 26)

The ultimate target of Debs' blame may be a bit remoter. We have to remember that Debs was preparing himself for the presidential elections of 1920 and in their very spirit the expressions above are populist and propagandist. At any rate, the hierarchic order of society can be taken as a serious interpretation of the world around. In Debs' world the means of consumption are not evenly distributed. "The Goulds, Vanderbilts and Harrimans are on the top, their slaves at the bottom."[524]

The reasoning is evidently clear. The ultimate purpose of production is wealth, but it should not operate with wealth to turn out millionaires. The working class should produce wealth in abundance for themselves.[525] In the socialist system no man would work to make profit for another or to enrich an idler.[526] Luxury belongs only to a millionaire's lifestyle. It is a part of the illegal privilege of the plutocracy which rules by the power of money. And it always has a counterpart in poverty. "Opulence riots in luxury" and "poverty rots in sweat shops".[527] Debs cannot see any possibilities for luxury without simultaneously inducing a fall in the proletariat's level of consumption. Whatever a millionaire wastes reduces the total cake that is left for others to share. And this is how Debs defines the luxurious life of a capitalist, in this case Jay Gould's life, in relation to the proletariat's daily necessaries.

> The people had seen this money power practising every art of duplicity, growing more arrogant and despotic as it robbed one

523 Debs 1918, 12-14
524 Debs 1906, 218
525 Debs 1905, 136
526 Debs 1927, 227
527 Debs 1899, 355

> and crushed another, building its fortifications of the bones of its victims, and its palaces out of the profits of its piracies, until purple and fine linen on the other side and rags upon the other side, defined conditions as mountain ranges and rivers define the boundaries of nations – palaces on the hills, with music and dancing and the luxuries of all climes, earth, air and sea-huts in the valley, dark and dismal, where the only music is the dolorous 'song of the shirt' and the luxuries rags and crusts. (Debs 1895, 337-338)

The same lament of unfairness in the distribution of wealth, the lack of trust in millionaires and luxuries, and the zero-sum-game interpretation of the accumulation of wealth can be seen through the quarrelsome group of leftist theorists from the right-wing reformist Berger to the most extreme anarchists. Also the early NLU leader, Sylvis, keeps to the scheme. He attacks on the millionaires by name.[528]

> Nowhere in the world is the labor more completely under the control of the money power, and nowhere in the world is all wealth so surely and rapidly concentrating in the hands of the few, as in the United States.
> It is a first principle that no man can become rich without making another one poor, and that all accumulations of great fortunes necessarily produce poverty somewhere. (Sylvis 1869, 17-18)

The same tenet can be found, as we have seen, from the platforms of anarchists, like Goldman, orthodox Marxists, such as Friedrich Sorge, and left-wing SLP-socialists, like DeLeon[529].

5.3.3. Prisons for the Poor

The demoralizing and pauperizing influence of the prison system is one of the most crying evils in American social policy that Debs brings up in his texts, especially in his sole full-length book, "Walls and Bars" (1927). The theme was manifoldly treated by American anarchists who often had personal experience of penitentiaries. Such books were "Prison Memoirs" by Alexander Berkman, and "Prisons" by Emma Goldman. Pioneers of the genre can be found among

528 Sylvis 1869 / 1973, 13-20
529 Sorge 1876, 30; DeLeon 1898, 113-114

the first muckrakers: Nellie Bly wrote her "10 days in Mad-House" in 1887. James Hopper's and Fred Bechdott's "9009" was written in 1908. Both were reports on the prison system. Thomas Mott Osborne's "Within the Prison Walls" (1914), on the other hand, was based on the author's own experiences in Auburn Prison for a week under a false name. Debs' experiences were not fake. His witness was real, authentic. The point of departure regarding to the distribution of wealth is the same as before.

> Those who work hardest have the least. (Debs 1927, 67)
> Capitalism is defined as the system in which the few who toil not are millionaires and billionaires, while the mass of the people who toil and sweat and produce all the wealth are victims of poverty and pauperism. (Debs 1927, 212)

> The many have had to toil and produce in poverty that the few might enjoy in luxury and extravagance. (Debs 1927, 218)

According to all the books mentioned above, the prison problem forms a major social disease in America.[530] Apart from all conspiracies, the prisons are in fact made for the poor and, indeed, the prisons are full of them. Most of the crimes that are punished under the law are committed against private property. Under the capitalist system it is protected much better than human life.[531] In addition to this, the poor man is usually unable to pay his penalties and does not have enough money for the best, first-class, and influential lawyers,[532] facts that are of great importance in the new world. As a consequence the penitentiaries and prisons are built for the poor.

> The rich man does not fit in prison. The prison was not made for him. He does not belong there and he does not stay there. (Debs 1927, 221)

> There are thousand ways in which the man with money who is charged with crime may escape at least the prison penalty from the moment that his bail money keeps him out of jail and through all the myriad technicalities his purse will permit him to take advantage of. (Debs 1927, 177)

530 Debs 1927, 68
531 Debs 1927, 210-211
532 Debs 1927, 73, 176

5.3.4. Summary: Luxury and Waste in Debs' Speeches

A more detailed summary on the Debsian conception of luxury and waste is not required here because we shall be summing up the conclusions of this study in the very next chapter. We may thus avoid some needless repetition when Debs' attitudes are still clearly in the reader's mind. May it suffice now to restate some points briefly.

The typical socialist conception of luxury and waste repeats itself everywhere in Debs' writings. Debs cannot see any possibilities for luxury without simultaneously inducing a fall in the proletariat's level of consumption; an interpretation that is here referred to as a Marxian conception of luxury. Consumption is seen, again, as a competitive zero-sum-game. But somewhat an original point in Debs' version of the socialist criticism of luxury is the view of prisons as capitalistic stocks for the poor. The rich man does not fit in prison; luxury for the rich, dungeons for the poor; in these phrases Debs surely reflects more the anarchist idea than Kautskian, Gronlundian or Bellamite ideas of liberty.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions

It is obvious that the conclusions to be drawn next will be partial and incomplete in nature. This is simply because the angle of vision above has been, for the most, in American radical thought, and the intellectual mainstream has been granted secondary attention only. In fact, most of the following conclusions have already been stated in the brief summaries concluding each chapter, but it will probably turn out to be useful to repeat the main aspects once again.

We have further to emphasize the fact that the time span of this study (from 1880 to 1929) does not comprise a certain self-explanatory age nor a historical era. The time span opens with the Gilded Age in its flourishing, well-developed form. It was the Millionaire's Era, the Age of Innocence with its decent manners and clear canons of pecuniary valuations. The following century, then, brings the new habits of thought with much more tolerant air to breathe. Many features of new marketing methods, mass media and the models of the modern consumer culture developed and seized areas one by one. This was the beginning of the modern type of democratic mass consumption. After the First World War we then face a bewildering and careless era of disillusionment, the time of a new liberal generation, of Charleston and jazz. Surely the passage from Twain to Fitzgerald is long, but still there exist enough similarities, related features of expenditure, the obvious remnants of the Gilded Age, at the very dawn of the great depression.

6.1. The Characterization of the Critiques

The seven radical authors on whom we have focused our discussion represent at least two different directions in American critical tradition. Debs, Herron and Sinclair fix themselves deliberately on socialist tenets and thereby on European intellectual discourse, while Donnelly, Ely and Veblen mainly move in the spirit of the 19th-century American radicalism of which the People's Party of 1892 was the last manifestation.[533] This kind of classification has always been of a necessarily more or less arbitrary nature. All the studied authors were, naturally, prod-

533 The radical party formation of the kind can be found frequently throughout the 19th century: the Anti-Masonics of 1831, the Liberty Party of 1840, the Free-Soilers of 1848, the Know-Nothing Party of 1856, the Prohibitionists of 1872, the Greenbackers of 1876 and the Populists of 1892. The country-spirited radicalism seems to be an essential and permanent feature in the American political climate.

ucts of their past and all of them were also familiar with European tradition. Steffens specifically proved the connections between both of the critical traditions when he gradually converted from American populist radicalism to orthodox Marxist communism. Much of the same is true with Ely, if he can be taken as a radical author at all. His critique is a notable example of the manner in radical economic thinking which absorbed ideas from everywhere. But Ely's critique has proven to be a useful doorway into our theme. Besides the demarcation between socialist and popular radicalism, we can differentiate a number of radical groupings according to the foundations on which the radical attitude has been based. Thus we find a group of Christian believers (Donnelly, Ely, Herron, Sinclair) and sceptics (Debs, Steffens, Veblen), although, in fact, both Debs and Steffens often do state their arguments in the Christian belief.

All the critics were of the same ilk regarding their main attitudes towards luxury and waste. The critical tone is strongest in the writings of confessional socialists and Christians, and most uncertain and precarious in the case of the one who studied the theme most carefully and with a purported objectivity (Veblen). We may thus maintain that it represents the line of radical conceptions of the studied era. At the same time the critical stance of our objects also reveals that somebody had to be favorable towards luxurism and to the wasting habits of expenditure. If not, why should anybody express his opposition?

Richard Ely's contributions to American economics took place at the uncertain period of change when the separate social, political and economical sciences were going to develop apart from the original science of political economy. That was a period of careful scientific definitions, too. In this metamorphosis the terminology of expenditure was not analyzed as minutely as we could hope. Of all the economists of the time, it was Ely who was motivated to formulate lexical definitions for the consumptive operations and phenomena in the economy.

Ely made some astute observations regarding our habits of expenditure. He noticed that the light, commonsense, every-day definitions were obstructed by some harmful aspects of our human nature. First of all, the satisfaction resulting from consumption is always subjective in nature. Secondly, it is possible that destruction can satisfy needs as well as any process of consumption. In order to solve the problem, Ely had to differentiate between social and individual utilities and detriments. In scientific discourse all the different cases must be kept carefully apart. The problem is solved by using a cluster of specific expressions. Ely

talks about consumption as a general term and with various attributes, such as harmful, excessive and wasteful, all of which were objects of deprecation for him.

It is to be emphasized once again that Ely denounced luxurism and waste merely as a Christian, not as a leading economist writer. Luxury could be seen – as it was by Sombart, in his writings of the early 20th century – as the cultivation or the elaboration of daily expenditure. It could be the qualitative aspect in the consumption of everyday usages. Ely did not find any qualifying factors in luxury. He interpreted it as a vertical departure from the average consumption level of the common man. And, as we know, this was the socialist view of luxury; well-recognized in Marxian tradition, often imitated in American textbooks on socialism, and repeated and recognized in the works of Debs, Goldman, Herron and Sinclair. Ely knew and adapted it from the socialist papers that he was studying.

The concept of waste was an object of a more profound and more independent discussion in Ely's works. He may be one of the pioneering theorists of the concept. With this in mind, his findings should have received much more attention from the historians of economical thought.

Ely underlined the fact that there exists no exact opposite for the simple concept of waste. Waste does not mean just the consumption of things, in the proper sense of the word. In Ely's vocabulary it consists of a further negative influence, so the precise counter-concept should imply not only the maintenance but also a further improvement of the prevalent conditions and even justice in distribution. Ely's proposal for a more exact opposite was *conservation*. Here we can identify the direct influence of a progressive group of conservationists among whom Ely soon obtained a leading position.

When Ely was rendering up definitions for all kinds of economic phenomena, Veblen's institutional economics focused mainly on the area of consumption. His theories were the most complete thus far; they offered a general explanation for the whole phenomenon of expenditure. We may sum up his economics of consumption as follows: (1) The incentive to consume is the spirit of emulation, a natural, instinctive aptitude in human beings. It works itself out through various forms of conspicuous, almost imperative consumer behavior. By the same token, this means that in Veblen's reasoning, social appreciation has been heaved up as a super-value which overbears all other possible motives. Veblen links this spirit of social emulation to his general conceptions of instinctive psychology

(e.g. aptitude for play, the predatory instinct, invidious comparison and so forth). If consumption is interpreted as a form of social emulation, we can also easily explain why consumption is always a visible act, a conspicuous act; it has to be, nobody can emulate in privacy.

Veblen is not content to describe the instinctual basis of the human habits of expenditure. He also makes (2) an attempt to unfold the mechanisms of the consumption processes. It really is justified to speak of mechanisms in this regard, for Veblen's conception of consumer behavior is thoroughly shaped by mechanic analogies and mechanic habits of thought. Society (or community) is taken to be a ladder-like climbing tree. The canons of taste spread downwards from the top of the society-tree via imitation. There always appears a certain social inertia, the cultural lag, which is inevitable in the imitation process. All the mimicry is exercised through the detailed principles of respectable decency. An example of which is the fact that everyone is supposed to make his comparisons with the next above on the social hierarchy of consumption only. Concerning emulation, Veblen takes into account both the consumption of material goods and of immaterial services (vicarious, derivative leisure). This also implies the tendency towards leisure; in modern economics the phenomenon is generally known as the backwardness of the labor supply curve.

We have also noticed that (3) Veblen made some attempts to apply his consumption theory on a broader sociological scale, too. Such an attempt was the elementary effort to derive due class concepts from consumer behavior. In Veblenian class concepts we can differentiate between the group of upper classes, the productive classes, and the lower classes, according to their habits of expenditure. The first-mentioned group consists of the leisure class, the vicarious leisure class and the spurious leisure class; they consume or purport to consume goods. In the middle group there are, for example, engineers; they mainly produce items for others to consume. The last one of the classes is a kind of residual of the people unable to consume, such as criminals and beggars.

In fact, Veblen does not literally operate with the concepts of waste or luxury but he comes to them through his own concept of conspicuous consumption – and, of course, through its broader version of conspicuous waste. Here we have reason to repeat some conclusions already drawn in a previous chapter. Conspicuous waste is, in fact, a concept which does not open directly from the concept of luxury; conspicuous waste (or consumption, or leisure) does not

necessarily mean a luxurious life. The main problematic lies in the questions of repute and status. All people waste, consume and are idle in order to appreciate these; it does not matter if they are rich or poor. It is impossible to dispute the real fact that, in his works, Veblen did not judge or admire the acts and persons that are liable sources for boasting. His systematic evolutionism gave him no ground to do that.

Pecuniary valuation itself and its normative revaluation is a general theme in the American literature of the time. It is a curious detail how peculiarly many novelists directed their attention directly at the phenomena of climbing to social favor and falling from it in social disgrace.

As a novelist, Upton Sinclair does not express his views on luxury and waste as carefully as the economists above. Naturally he has no specific theory of consumption; writers do not usually manifest their ideas in the form of declarations or theories. However, in our collection of Sinclairian points of view, we have plenty of details considering luxury and waste. First, money is one of his favorite subjects, and it is always big money and tumultuous luxury that he is interested in. Secondly, the consequences of money are always vicious in nature, deprecatory and condemnable with no exceptions. Thirdly, money often seems to have the form of secretly indoctrinated manipulation in society. Big money writes, persuades people; it creates our styles and designs our tastes; it corrupts our moral; it is the seed of graft in schools, in universities and in politics; it prostitutes the truth in publicity and misdirects the religious proclivities of laymen, priests and churches. The ground is stable enough to cause a deprecatory attitude towards big money. There is nothing heroical, no supreme virtue in being rich.

After all, it is to be noticed, again, that Sinclair usually does not direct his criticism directly at the habits of expenditure, consumption or leisure. The deprecatory denouncement of luxurious expenditure is strongest in Sinclair's novels, but the regular line of his more serious writings is oriented against the muckrakers' favorite theme, the corruptive power of money; and this is not usually included in the conventional conception of expenditure. On the other hand, in order to receive instruction in an establishment of higher learning, to listen to a sermon in a church, to publish a writing in a paper, all these acts do belong under the substantial concept of consumption in its larger sense. The power of money and millionaires, and the process of how it works are carefully

analyzed by Sinclair, but the inner circle of material consumption does not get as much attention.

Steffens' notion of wealth, his attitude towards the rich, has stood for an illustration of 20th-century radical journalism in America. In part it corresponds to Sinclairian criticism but, unlike Sinclair and most others, Steffens lacks the condemning pathos of antagonism.

In fact, we have here once again a writer whose writings do not concentrate on luxury, waste or consumption. However, these themes were distinctively present in the average muckraking critique at exactly the same time. Generally the muckrakers from Lloyd's "Wealth against Commonwealth" (1894) up to Sinclairs' "Money Writes!" (1929) include a strong moral stance against plutocracy. Instead of this, the strictest object of Steffens' critique lies in the corruption of the US-government – another vice that was deprecated for about twenty years. Steffens' criticism was open and, of course, big money was of great interest to this critique, too. In most of Steffens' muckraking articles, published as collections of texts in "The Shame of the Cities" and "The Struggle for Self-government", we are able to trace the evil influence of money, i.e. of big money and big business, to its backing force, the better classes, which thus are revealed to be the ultimate sources of graft in Steffens' notions, too. The better classes – especially the businessmen – are the prime sources of corruption. This corruption is direct in nature. Steffens does not pay much attention to the indoctrinating power of money.

There is a long tradition against money and wealth in Christian religious thought. Often the poverty-admiring doctrine has been set forth by prophetic dissidents and eschatologist demagogues. In the 1880s America it was preached by a respectable clergyman, Josiah Strong, and it consisted of the three different vices of mammonism, materialism and luxuriousness. There was something dangerous and frightening in the excess of earthly goods. In the case of Strong, this fear can be traced back to the puritanical concepts of wealth, and in the case of the Puritans, even further back to the earlier roots of medieval Christianity in the Assisian ideals of modesty and poorness. But, the radical social gospelers of 1880–1910 partially backed their criticism otherwise.

In addition to American Puritan tradition the most radical wing of gospelers mostly based their critiques of luxury and waste also in political philosophies. The abstention from all kinds of self-aggrandizements in the puritanical ideal of

modesty gave place, step by step, to the Marxist deprecation of luxurism. And here an item was classified as luxury if it was an exponent of a vertical departure from the average level of expenditure. Self-importance of any kind had already been condemned by the Puritans. Now it was the exceptional departure from the common expenditure that was doomed.

Herron found the high level of consumption hard to combine with Christian ideals. He saw wealth merely as a seductive trap that made its victims unable both to meet salvation and to save others. Behind this conviction we can find a new definition of sin, reaching its perfection later in Rauschenbusch's works. The basic meaning of sin to Herron is the general unevenness of the world, and in the distribution of wealth as a part of the whole. Thus the theological ground to condemn luxurism was affiliated with the Marxist definition. The differences in our standards of living were evil features, caused by sin.

In Rauschenbusch's theology the doctrine of evil luxury culminated finally in a new concept of public sin. There always exists in sin some form of exploitation, one appearance of which is social inequality with its morally ruining power. Riches always demoralize a man, causing waste and sufferings.

In the political thought of the era, we recognized radical tendencies among the left-wing social reformers. We followed the metamorphosis of radicalism from the populist critique of the 1880s to the progressive and socialistic critics of this century. Concerning our topics the accentuation of the critique remained the same.

As the front figure in the People's Party, Ignatius Donnelly exemplified the conceptions of populist radicalism considering luxury and waste. Organizing the crusade of Have-Nots against the Haves, he placed the basic conflict in society in the antagonism between the rich and the poor. Together with Bellamy he can be seen as the main theorist anticipating Veblen's social theories of the leisure class. In Donnelly's reasoning the conflict between the rich and the poor was to be seen mainly in the individual's ability to consume goods.

Those who consume the most always constitute the plutocracy in Donnelly's books. It is the class of millionaires living within useless and extravagant luxury which serves no other purpose but display and vanity. It is to be noted that, in Donnelly's world, proper consumption is not a problem at all, even if it includes consumption on large scales. Donnelly does not condemn the consumption of goods. Millionaires are socially problematic beings mostly because of their in-

ability to circulate their enormous wealth; i.e. because of under-consumption. The mere lifestyle of the rich is not worthy of deprecation. The case of inherited wealth, however, seems to differ from the normal luxurious life in its tendency to move into immoral debauchery, which is to be condemned on the basis of the Christian doctrine of love.

When Donnelly is discussing consumption, and the cases are not rare, the prime mover of his ethic is always elsewhere. His world is not of consumption but of work. The place of the individual in society is at work. But, through the prevailing excess power of money, his scrutiny grasps also at the sphere of expenditure. Donnelly shows a notable light of reasoning when he explains that a large consumption of things alone does not demoralize the rich nor jeopardize the peaceable social system. On the other hand, his tendentious convulsion to name usury as a root of the perverted money relations scarcely is pertinent at all. It mainly suggests his own unsuccessful experiments in the soil business in his city of Nininger.

The most peculiar point in Donnelly's reasoning is that he is surely one of the very first American intellectuals to mention the imitation scheme of consumption models. Shortly afterwards it became the paradigmatic pattern to describe all kinds of social values as dispersed from the top of society down to the masses. In this regard Donnelly is among the earliest models to whom we may trace the general scheme of pecuniary valuation in twentieth-century American sociology.

At the turn of the century the populist critique dispersed into two main directions. The radical fraction of the progressive movement absorbed the more moderate section of the People's Party, whereas the more fanatic wing found their new political home in the manifold socialist undertakings, the most enduring of which was Debs' Socialist Party.

Debs' economic conception of concepts naturally centers mainly on the familiar socialistic ideas of luxury and waste. Although not a deliberately Marxist theorist, Debs systematically repeats Marxian concepts everywhere in his writings. He cannot see any possibilities for luxury without inducing simultaneously a fall in the workman's standard of living. The national economy is a zero-sum-game. Whatever a millionaire is wasting reduces the total cake that is left for others to share.

From our point of view, a more original idea in Debs' critique is surely the

vision of prisons as a stock for the poor reserved by capitalists. General capitalist viciousness with its hypocrisy also got an emergence in the leisured "lazy class".

6.2. A General Typology for Consumption Critique

In conclusion, we may sum up five main categories of consumption critique in American radical discourse. In each class we may further distinguish many different bases on which the critique was founded. So, finally, we get fourteen different types of critique and three categories of targets. Generally, these foundations do not appear as such in any writer, but we can usually identify one or other of the main types of reasoning: thus, consumption (or luxury or property) is criticized on religious, politic, economic or esthetic grounds.

Further on, there emerged, by the virtue of these grounds, at least five genres of argument. (1) In biblical critique, the luxurious life has been condemned mostly by the evidence of the Holy Book. (2) The critique of inequality accuses luxury of being unfair and unjust and the habits of the rich of being mainly unequal and wrong. According to (3) corruption critique, there exists a mysterious money power that corrupts the moral of the people and of the nation. Some authors also accused consumption of being (4) dislocated. It was misallocated, misplaced, misdirected to wrong types of articles, or the level of expenditure was inaccurate (too low, or too high). The critics who defended their points of view with esthetic notions or some natural sense of beauty were faced with (5) esthetic critique. The consumption scheme of the rich is regarded as unnatural, perverted or ugly. Some critics constructed their denunciation of luxury or conspicuous consumption on the coexistence of many reasons. Let us take a deeper look at these genres of consumption critique.

6.2.1. The Nature of Religious Critique

The Bible has occupied an exceptionally central position in the American critique of consumption. The ideal of frugality has been an organic part of the classic paradigm of luxury from the ancient days of early Christianity. Contrary to America, it no longer had an explicit place in the critique of the European

social scientists at the turn of the last century. In the US., we could say, it was the premier argument. The theologians were arguing very hectically around such items as the social significance of Christ. The ministers who most polemized the relation between redemption and plenty, George Herron and Walter Rauschenbusch, eventuated in unilateral condemnation. It is the wealth, and most especially the great property, that corrupts and separates a human from God. A uniform denunciation was also proclaimed by Josiah Strong, Shailer Mathews and Washington Gladden among others.

The fact that luxury is solely condemned by the Bible should not surprise anyone. If a pastor or priest is preaching against luxury in his sermons, this should cause no surprise either. We may expect something like that. But, in America, the religious arguments were equally used by the leading economists (like Irving Fisher, Richard Ely), politicians (like George Howe, Ignatius Donnelly), even by socialist theorists and the very leader of the Socialist Party and its manifold presidential candidate E.V. Debs himself. This is an important difference to Europe.

In closer analysis, the biblical critique of consumption may be divided into three different sections. Consumption is to be deemed, first, because it leads to materialism, if it ever is something more than pure materialism in itself. Thus, a large property is ceaselessly driving people towards tangible facts and material values instead of the spiritual experience of the world. A man, hoarding wealth, is blinded to spiritual values. This kind of criticism is similar to the Assisian adoration of poverty. In the first hand, the critique is directed to large properties and their consumption.

Second, consumption is to be condemned because it drives a man into the seducing trap of luxurism, an illusory state of well-being propagated by wealth. It makes people idle, comfort-oriented esthetics, lazy gourmands who digest in leisure. Easy living is weakening and effeminating men and this must be wrong: God has called us to work. The critique is merely directed to luxury, to the dangers that are hidden in luxurious life.

The third biblical critique accuses consumption for mammonism. In mammonism money and wealth have occupied the position of God. Getting rich is seen as a self value which superposes and passes over all other values. In businessmen, corrupting authorities in order to acquire selfish profits, we have an illustration of mammonism. It is the large property, the treasury, that is under the blame of mammonism.

The warning discussion on the dangers of money and wealth was highly actual in America at the turn of the century. And there ruled a solid unity about the dangers. Materialism is dangerous because it separates man from spiritual values and, thus, from beloving God. Luxurism and mammonism, instead, merely signify ignorance and egoism in human beings. They are focused more clearly in cohabitants. Rauschenbusch called these kinds of abuses as social sins.

6.2.2. Concern for the Poor

Concern for the poor is another form of consumption critique. There we also face many variations which all share the common fear of running out of resources. In this critique, people's chances to consume are seen as emphasizingly limited. If someone is cumulating wealth around him, some other must have been robbed. A dollar cannot be kept in two pockets at the same time. Thus, consumption is a zero-sum-game in which one is losing, another winning, but the number of chips on the table is constant. Sometimes the game can be accused of being unfair: someone has got too many chips. This kind of criticism was performed by the European classic economists Karl Marx and David Ricardo, for example. They were worried about the poor, Marx especially about the labor. Luxurious life must be wrong insofar as somebody has to suffer from hunger and cold. Luxuries can only be accepted when they have shifted into the world of necessities in the pervasive process of raising people's standard of living. Society should not accept any distinctions, any take-offs from the average habits of consumption level.

This argument was used in the American discourse much more seldom than in Europe. In the radical critics now analyzed, it can be found quite easily in Sinclair's works. In America Marx's position was relatively weak. On the contrary, Spencer's Social Darwinist stakes occupied a crucial place and they usually lead to somewhat opposite conclusions: if an individual is beaten and humiliated by cruel competition it is only a part of natural selection. A beggar, lying in the gutter, is exactly where he deserves to be.

Of course, the Ricardian–Marxian critique of luxury is most visible in socialists' works. The socialist leaders' pathos is often similar to Marx's. Sinclair cannot see any other kinds of arguments. All the critics of capitalistic consumption fever

are equally socialist from his perspective. But, the fight against poverty was by no means the socialists' monopoly only. A good number of Protestant ministers were advocating the equal division of wealth in the spirit of the Galatians. Besides, sociologists such as Frank Lester Ward, argued for a more equal distribution because it added to the people's general welfare. They based the proposition on the latest results of marginalist economics. Marginalists had pointed out that the utility, enjoyed by a poor man from the last consumed dollar, exceeded manifoldly the utility drawn by an extremely rich man. In other words, the marginal utility of the last consumed unit of money was higher for the poor than for the rich. At the aggregate level, the moderate expenditure of necessities by all the consumers would result in more welfare for the society as a whole than the expenditure of precisely the same amount directed to luxury goods by the wealthy. In reality, the strictest point of this critique is not oriented towards the miserable position of the poor. Instead, the argument was based on the estimations of the maximal value of aggregate welfare.

6.2.3. In Defense of Civil Virtues

A third group of critics confronted numerous defenders of civil virtues. They were not as worried about the inequality in the distribution of wealth as about the social problems that were caused by the power of money. It thoroughly corrupted politics, religion, the university and culture. Big money ordained what was beautiful, right or good. Wealth should not have been allowed to cumulate in the few rare hands that it was, for it also seemed to have misled political, economic and cultural decisions in totally wrong directions.

This kind of problem was diligently analyzed by the yellow press. The Americans of the 1900s were crazy about hearing how they had been cheated. The period 1902–1906 seems to be the golden era of muckraking journalism. Revelations were made of whatever possible greed of sensation. And case by case it was the vested interest, the money power, the big money, behind these scandals. Tarbell's and Russell's critique of oil trusts was first escalated to the general deprecation of the totally corrupted business life. Steffens followed and connected economical decadence to political bribery. Sinclair continued the criticism through the 1910s and it resulted in the complete condemnation of all-

pervading power of money in his series of economical studies. Big money spoke everywhere.

The muckrakers' picture of America is not more than one-sided, black-and-white truth of a complicated society. Big money was also made by muckrakers' hands: these revelations must have been good business for the large publishing houses. We should also remember that democracy was criticized in Europe, too. In fact, the turn of the century was everywhere a great era for a critical attitude towards capitalistic institutions and democracy. But, in the United States the critique was directed to the imperfect nature of a democracy that already existed in practice. The multitude of revelations is in itself de facto evidence of the existence of institutions more democratic than elsewhere: the critics were able to raise their voices against the ruling circles in all safety.

Muckraking was more than anything a reason to make publicity for conspicuous items. The hunger for sensations in wealthy classes is of the same origin as the curiosity that was fed in the circuses performing supernatural tricks or exhibiting the abnormal freaks of nature. The basis of the critique, i.e. the real argument behind the words, remained in the shadow of moral deprecation. However, the ethical point of abhorrence is easily legible between the lines: millionaires, trusts, big businessmen etc. should not be accepted because they are the ruining citizens' moral. They damage it with the sorrowless and selfish spending of money. American democracy is not working, equality is vanishing and the ethical sense of the people is getting weaker.

The worry about diminishing virtues was also deeply felt by scientifically more serious authors, such like the economists Ely and Patten, but especially by Veblen. Big business corrupting politics is a ruling theme in his theorizing. "Theory of the Business Enterprise" is thoroughly penetrated by Steffens-like tendentious corruption critique. But, in Veblen we have also an exponent of a more developed, esthetic critique of consumption.

6.2.4. The Esthetic Critique of Consumption

Numerous arguments were levelled against the rich on the basis of the esthetic sense. The millionaires' habits of life and of consumption were seen somehow vulgar or ugly. Particularly, the Europeans with noble heritage were terrified by

the unstylish distastefulness of American newly-rich millionaires'. Werner Sombart, for example, presents this kind of argument: Americans cannot consume correctly, they are falling in overestimations and ridiculousness. They are showing bad taste. If a man has a lot of money to spend, it must be done decently. A cultivated man does know how to consume time or matter. Meat can be displayed in many forms, it can be eaten in many ways. However, only the meat which has been produced, served, and enjoyed in a certain, unique way can be classified as the real luxury. Literally sowing money around oneself, for instance, does not fill the cultivated criteria for decent manners. There has to be a general sense of good taste in consumption.

Veblen shares this esthetic critique. According to his theories, the monied circles, the leisure class, are situated on the strictest top of the social pyramid. They are seen by anyone, anywhere, at any time and they are highly appreciated and easily imitated. In other words, the community will quietly accept the pecuniary standards of appreciation as the criteria of decent behavior, etiquette and beauty. The common people begin to believe that expensive things are beautiful, and nothing else can really be. Even more: an expensive item has to be nice. The evidence of eyes has no place in pecuniarily determined standards of beauty. Nothing uncostly can be good.

Veblen was also troubled by the failings of esthetic critique: if the pecuniary principles cannot be accepted as the foundations of our modern sense of beauty where can we draw our standards? What can be defined beautiful, really? Veblen clearly tried to back himself in anthropological principles of natural beauty – in the conception that people commonly share a natural, natal sense of beauty – but a substantial evolutionist, as Veblen definitely was, does not harmonically fit into this kind of resolutions. Why should any of the standards that culture has produced be intrinsically false? He tried to remove the problem by some degrees, making a difference between pecuniary and industrial occupations. The core of the problem did not lie in luxury or wealth but in the hegemony that pecuniary occupations had in everyday life, Veblen explained. By the virtue of this hegemony, the most appreciated goods, products and activities involve in themselves plenty of pecuniary tasks. Nothing industrious, nothing purely productive can be really beautiful. And this idea of pecuniary appreciation, or its variant, can suddenly be found in the works of almost any American sociologist of the time. Albion Small, Charles Horton Cooley and others soon adapted a theory of social emulation as an essential part of their social science.

6.2.5. The Economic Critique of Consumption

Consumption has also been criticized from absolutely the opposite direction. There must be some place for disapprobation if riches are cumulated as a treasure, with no other meaning but simply sitting on the top of the treasure stock. Greed is not the only source for economic critique. There must be a more cultivated foundation.

Even the classical economists recognized the fact that over-production is one of the most central economic disturbances of modern economy. Looked at more deeply, the term appears to be unsuccessful. A disturbance does not conventionally signify that more goods would have been produced than were wanted. What it really does signify is, usually, that people cannot afford to obtain the desired consumption level. From this point of view, a more competent name for the phenomenon would be under-consumption. It is not possible to expend all the plethora of produced goods that should be consumed in order for consolidation, neither would it be possible to consume them in order to get better satisfaction. From this angle of vision the Uncle Scrooge-like collectors of treasure are dangerous: they should circulate their wealth. The whole economy and society would get an injection of the intensified industrial production. New jobs would be created, and the government would receive extra incomes in the form of increased tax deposits.

Most of the critics at the end of the 19th-century discourse made a clear difference between the propensity that was provided by one's own diligence and the one which was only ruled by the virtue of uncompensated chance, such as inherited legacy, for example. The President of the Populist Party, Ignatius Donnelly, accepted the millionaires of the first generation. There was nothing degenerate in acquiring a large property. It only revealed orientation towards economic activity. The millions, instead, which could not be consumed by the collector himself, i.e. the inherited wealth of enormous size, they should be repealed back to common stock by socializing it or selling it through compulsory auction. Henry George presented his model of heavily progressive inheritance tax in the exactly same purpose.

In the twenties, the same application of under-consumption thesis can be found in Lord Keynes' theory of economical consolidation which was adopted by Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression: Depression can be beaten

by increasing the public demand if the private consumption is not large enough. Every treasure maker is guilty of a serious prolongation of depression. This is a form of consumption critique, too: people are not consuming enough.

Another form of economic critique, analogical to under-consumption, is the critique reproaching the wrong focus. Expenditure can be directed to wrong items of goods, to somehow dangerous items or it can be intolerable for the whole economy in the long run. Each of these deterrents were foreseen by Ely. He defined three undesirable eruptions in consumer behavior (excessive consumption, dangerous consumption and waste). In all these eruptions we may observe a wrong kind of allocation, or, in fact: a dislocation. Thus, he condemns the consumption of liquor, for example, as dangerous even if it would be enjoyable for the demander. In waste (or over-consumption) someone is consuming more than he ever needs, leaving other people in want.

At the turn of the century Americans really argued for the modern model of development in their consumption critique, too. Ely, Van Hise and the conservationists defined the correct level of consumption in a way where the needs of future generations are taken into account as well. All consumption is not equally important: the demand for luxuries or dangerous things gives an efficient injection to the economy, but the social aggregate utility would be even higher if the demand of an equal amount would be directed to different kinds of goods. They were especially interested in the sufficiency of national timber resources, in other words in conservation.

The radicalists seem to have no common view on luxury and waste; the target of their critique varied. But, all in all, this study may confirm, at least, the fact that there existed a certain discourse of modernism in America in 1880–1929 and it also included a notable sub-discussion of luxury and waste that seems to have no visible counterpart in European modernism.

As far as the acceptability of luxurious life and waste is the matter in question, the radical authors seem to agree on the issue: all the men studied above embrace a highly critical attitude towards both luxury and waste. In part the critique was addressed to the institution of private property but, for the most, it was directed at the wrong habits of consumption. The main categories of consumption critique and the bases on which the critique was founded is briefly summed up in the following table.

The genre of the critique (What kind of critique was established?)	**The target of the critique** **(What was criticized?)**
1. The religious **critique based on the Bible**	
1.1. materialism	property
1.2. luxurism	luxury, consumption
1.3. mammonism	luxury, property
2. The economical or political **critique of unequality**	
2.1. worry about the poor	luxury
2.2. worry about labor	luxury
2.3. worry about gross well-being (marginalism)	luxury
3. The political **critique of corruption**	
3.1. the corruption of politics	property
3.2. the corruption of civil virtues	property
4. The esthetic **critique of beauty**	
4.1. the theses of natural beauty	luxury, consumption
4.2. the theories of pecuniary appreciation	consumption
5. The economic **critique of dislocation**	
5.1. under-consumption	consumption
5.2. over-consumption	consumption
5.3. natural development (conservationism)	consumption, luxury

Table 1.

Typology for consumption critique at the turn of the twentieth-century America

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