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MATERIALISM AND LIFE SATISFACTION
A SOCIOLOGICAL AND CHRISTIAN COMPARATIVE APPROACH

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Abstract: This paper discusses the similarities and differences between sociological and Christian approaches (focused on the Bible and the Church Fathers' teachings) regarding the relationship between materialism and life satisfaction. The theoretical analysis gives reasons that advocate the view that there are resemblances between the two perspectives regarding materialism (greed or avarice in theological language) features and the impact of these values on life satisfaction. Both approaches argue for a less materialistic way of life in order to become generally happier. Nevertheless, if science gives research-based proofs to this relationship, Christianity states that worship of God, and not material goods, is the only way to get true happiness. Finally, the paper attempts to give some possible explanations for these similarities between sociology and Christianity. First, similarly to the Christian religion, some sociologists (i.e. Marx, Veblen, and Beaudrillard) criticise materialism and consumption society. Second, the scale construction can rely on popular notions of materialism, thus some items can have religious backgrounds. Eventually, the Bible and the Church Fathers' special concern with the human nature lead to some thoughts about man that have been confirmed by researchers.

Key Words: materialism, commodity fetishism, consumption society, life satisfaction, happiness, sociology, Christianity, Church Fathers, greed, sin.

1. Introduction

In the pursuit of happiness, man has considered, along the centuries and in different cultures, that acquisition and possession of goods can bring life satisfaction. At the same time, many religions and theologians have criticised the attachment to material goods and have advocated for focusing on the spiritual and moral life. The rise of sociology in the 19th century happened in the context of the development of capitalist society that brought the “commodity fetishism” (Marx, 1960) and “conspicuous consumption” (Veblen 1965). Later on, Baudrillard (2005, 29) criticised the “formal liturgy of object” because people that have an opulent life are not anymore surrounded by other people, but by objects. Advertising promotes goods and services that offer happiness, the equivalent of redemption in a consumerist society (Baudrillard 2005, 29).

Thus, religion is not the only one that has had a critical approach to happiness-seeking via consumption, some scientists that study society have had similar positions regarding this issue, as well. This paper aims to analyse comparatively the relationship between materialism and life satisfaction from sociological and theological points of view. The discussion is focused on three aspects: the definition of materialism, the relationship between materialism and life satisfaction, and the solutions offered to people by sociology and theology to manage the relationship with objects and particularly with money. Consequently, the paper has two sections dedicated to the sociological and theological approaches and ends with discussions about the differences and similarities between these two perspectives, and about the relationship between religious morality and scientific measurement.

The paper analyses only the Christian approach to materialism by two reasons. First of all, the diversity of religions makes it difficult to present in a few pages their richness of the critical discussions on materialistic life. Moreover, this paper aims to examine the Holy Scripture and the Early Church Fathers’ writings. Second of all, the scientific literature examined in this paper is generally from countries where Christianity is the main religion. Therefore, choosing Christianity allows us to compare how the relationship between materialism and life satisfaction is presented by sociologists and by this religion.

This theoretical paper tries to present objectively the relationship between materialism and happiness, one of the main topics in the history of Christianity and a subject of study of capitalist consumerist society in social sciences. The paper does not present true or false considerations regarding the Bible or what theologians have said. At the same time, it tries to avoid having critical analyses which are not value-free, because the neutral axiology is needed in order to distinguish between ascertainment of facts and value approaches (Weber 2001, 139).

2. Materialism and life satisfaction. A sociological approach

2.1. Materialism definition

The paper aims to approach materialism that, in the most widely accepted conceptualization, is defined as a higher concern for acquisition and possession of goods instead of non-material sources of life satisfaction. Thus, in this perspective, materialism does not refer to philosophical theories that explain the ontological reality through the existence of matter, but it makes mention of materialistic values, of what people consider useful or important.

Belk (1985) conceives materialism as trait aspects of living in a material world and examines the human and social impact of this feature of consumerist behaviour. For this author, overall materialism resulted in items from three subscales: possessiveness, nongenerosity, and envy. Therefore, materialistic people do not like to lend things, even to good friends and do not enjoy donating things to charities. The third dimension, envy, is about the desire for others' possessions, no matter if they are objects, experiences, or persons. The displeasure in others' superiority in happiness, success, reputation and possession makes people bothered when they see others who buy anything they want and when friends have things they cannot afford. We can see that possessiveness and envy are attitudes toward one's own and toward others' possessions. Thus, materialism is more than the desire of material goods that are believed to provide high satisfaction, it is about feelings regarding others' possessions, as well.

Materialism is the desire of objects that are supposed to offer happiness in a consumption society, where people consider that "goods are a means to happiness; that satisfaction in life is not achieved by religious contemplation or social interaction or a simple life, but by possession and interaction with goods" (Richins 1987, 353). According to Richins's scale, materialistic people consider that they would be happier if they could afford to buy more things and it is really true that money can buy happiness. Thus, Richins's operationalization of the concept is more focused on the need of money to buy things that should bring happiness. Therefore, for materialistic people, life satisfaction can be obtained, in their opinion, more through possession of material goods and less with non-material sources of happiness. People buy goods not only for their practical utility, but because they think that these can bring them happiness and prestige, as well. Therefore, people in a consumption society tend to be surrounded more by objects, and less by other people (Baudrillard 2005). Moreover, their lives are not only focused on having instead of being, but "it would seem that the very essence of being is having; that if one has nothing, one is nothing" (Fromm 1976, 13).

To sum up, materialistic people desire more things considering that acquisition and possession of goods would bring them happiness, prestige, and social identity. People who share these values are more surrounded by objects than other people, have lower generosity, and are more envious. Because materialistic people look for life satisfaction in possession of goods and not in non-material sources of happiness like religious contemplation or social interaction, materialism has a negative connotation in popular opinion. Nevertheless, when researchers constructed materialism scales they tested the social desirability bias and proved that the questions of the scales do not trigger desirable answers.

2.2. Materialism and life satisfaction

Numerous studies have shown that materialists are less happy in general than people who scored lower in materialism (Richins 1987; Sirgy 1998; Nickerson et al. 2007; Atay, Sirgy, Husic, and Cicic 2010; Otero-López, Pol, Bolaño, and Mariño 2011; Baker, Moschis, Ong, and Pattanapanyasat 2013). Because these authors use the terms “happiness” and “life satisfaction” to name the overall satisfaction with life, these concepts are used interchangeably in this paper.

Due to the fact that “for materialistic people, material possessions are frequently characterized as an addictive drug of which consumers need larger and larger doses to maintain happiness” (Richins 1987, 353), there is a higher probability for these people to negatively experience the gap between what they have and what they need and consequently to feel a lower overall life satisfaction. Sirgy (1998) has a similar position, considering that the satisfaction with the standard of living spills over to overall life satisfaction. Materialistic people have affective expectations influenced by social comparisons and not cognitive expectations influenced by real situations or opportunities. The comparison with people that have a higher quality and quantity of goods can generate feelings of inequity, injustice, anger, or envy. Therefore, materialistic people are less happy not only because they have less than what they want, but because they have less than what other people have.

Another explanation for the negative relationship between materialism and life satisfaction is that materialistic people have higher positive emotions before purchase, which are followed by hedonic decline after that (Richins 2013). Due to the fact that materialistic people believe that acquisition of goods will make them happier, they have higher positive feelings before purchase than their lower-materialism counterparts. Anyway, for high-materialism consumers the positive emotions of the acquisition of a product fade quickly after purchase and experience more worries about these objects (i.e. they can break) than other consumers. Therefore, Richins' (2013) findings underline the evolution of

satisfaction in acquisition, showing that materialistic people are happier before but less satisfied after purchase.

These explanations for the relationship between materialism and life satisfaction stress only the unmediated connection between these two variables. For religious and materialistic people, materialism can be a source for life dissatisfaction not only because of the gap between what they want and what they have, but also because of the stress determined by the morality of religion. The findings of a study on Malaysian people suggest that “materialistic values in such cultures are in conflict with religious beliefs and such values tend to create stress that adversely affects one’s well-being” (Baker et al. 2013, 559). Therefore, the results suggest that the impact of materialism on life satisfaction can be mediated by stress and moderated by religiosity.

Moreover, materialism can lead to loneliness (Pieters 2013), work-family conflict (Promislo, Deckop, Giacalone, and Jurkiewicz 2010), negative job satisfaction (Richins and Dawson 1992; Sardžoska and Tang 2012), or psychological traits like narcissism, Machiavellianism, right-wing authoritarianism, hedonistic values, lower agreeableness, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Nickerson et al. 2007). Due to the fact that all these can be mediating variables between materialism and life dissatisfaction, we presume that the explanation for this relationship goes beyond the deprivation felt because of the lack of material possessions.

To resume, the gap between possessions and expectations is higher for materialistic people that are consequently less satisfied with their standard of living. Due to the fact that materialists have unrealistic expectations and are more tempted to compare themselves with people that have more goods, they have negative feelings of inequity, anger, and envy. Before purchase they are more enthusiastic but, after that, the positive feelings decrease quickly, thus wanting is better than having. These are arguments only for the direct relationship between materialism and life satisfaction. There are numerous studies that underline the mediated connection between materialism and happiness.

However, materialism is not the only cause of unhappiness, and people who look for happiness in acquisition and possession of goods can feel disappointed by the feeling that these are only a substituent for what they really miss.

2.3. How to spend money

One item of Richins’s scale (1987) is “It’s really true that money can buy happiness?”. According to the author of the scale, people who agree with this sentence to a higher extent are more materialistic, therefore money cannot buy happiness. Dunn, Gilbert and Wilson (2011) bring many arguments from social researchers that money can make people happy if it is spent rightly. Money can be a source of happiness if it is spent according

to a set of recommendations that are derived from scientific findings: “(1) buy more experiences and fewer material goods; (2) use their money to benefit others rather than themselves; (3) buy many small pleasures rather than fewer large ones; (4) eschew extended warranties and other forms of overpriced insurance; (5) delay consumption; (6) consider how peripheral features of their purchases may affect their day-to-day lives; (7) beware of comparison shopping; and (8) pay close attention to the happiness of others” (Dunn et al. 2011, 115).

Some recommendations are for an altruistic behaviour, some of them are about what kind of goods to purchase and others are about how to behave with these possessions. Spending money for other people while paying attention to their happiness is a prosocial behaviour that brings joy to the giver. Materialistic people are more interested in financial security and less in developing warm relationships with others, and they are less satisfied with family life and friends (Richins and Dawson 1992). Thus, Myers (2000) underlines the positive role of the investing more in relationships and less in material possessions. The author argues that the close relationship between feeling of belonging and well-being stresses the importance of social bonds, friendship, and social support to / from others.

Investing resources in life experiences makes people happier than investing in material possessions because experiences are more open to positive reinterpretations, less prone to disadvantageous comparisons, and more likely to foster successful social relationships (Van Boven 2005, 132). Compared with material possessions, experiences are more socially bonding because they are usually realised with others (family, friends, etc.) and are more socially desirable due to the fact that materialistic people are negatively perceived by others (Van Boven 2005, 139).

Some recommendations are about altruistic ways to spend money (for other benefits or to share experiences with others), while others are about enjoying goods alone (buying small pleasures or delay consumption). Thus, materialistic values can be seen as not inherently bad, they can have a positive influence on one's life (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1978). For people who share this “instrumental materialism”, acquisition and possession of goods serve goals that are independent of greed and that are a means to an end, as when someone aspires to a bigger house in order to offer a higher comfort to his / her children (Richins and Dawson 1992). On the other side, “terminal materialism” is when acquisition is for owning possessions and materialistic people see goods as important as an end per se. Nevertheless, Richin and Dawson (1992) argue that this distinction between “good” and “bad” materialism is difficult to operationalize, i.e. when someone desires a good not as an end but as a means to generate envy and admiration. Therefore, the distinction between instrumental and terminal materialism can create confusion regarding the term materialism.

Against this background, we can presume that some of the Dunn et al. (2011) recommendations, regarding how to spend money, are against the development of a materialistic behaviour. Researchers suggest that the desire of goods for oneself does not bring happiness, but sharing them with others can be a source for life satisfaction. This idea corresponds to the operationalization of materialism. Due to the fact that materialism leads to life dissatisfaction, a solution to increase happiness is to decrease materialism, thus people to be less surrounded by objects and more by people, to consider less that acquisition and possessions bring happiness and prestige, to be less possessive, more generous (i.e. to donate), and less envious.

3. Materialism and life satisfaction. The Christian approach

3.1. Materialism in Christianity

In the Scripture the term “materialism” is not used, but there are other words, such as greed and avarice, that refer to it. Throughout the whole Bible we can encounter words that essentially relate to avarice or greed, respectively to materialism, like covetousness, cupidity, love of money or possessions, and attachment to money. Due to the fact that these terms have similar meanings to a certain extent we use them interchangeably. Generally, they indicate the tendency to want more than you need, emphasizing on over-indulgence and desire to gather material goods (Saint Maximus the Confessor 1982, p. 50).

The Scripture teaches us that “greed is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:5), which is unfaithfulness to God and worship of foreign gods. Jesus Christ referring to the exaggerated concern for worldly goods tells us: “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon” (Matthew 6: 19-24; Luke 16: 13). Mammon is a Syrian word which means wealth or treasury money earned dishonestly referring to the rival god whom greedy people love, trust and serve, showing obedience and service to him (Saint John Chrysostom 1994, 272). That is to say a sort of idolatry, which is contrasted in Hebrews 13:5-6 and Proverbs 18:10-11 with the genuine faith in God. Therefore, avarice is considered to be a sin because it effectively replaces God in some sense, as the worship of God presupposes love, devotion and obedience to Him. Whereas greedy people trust, love and serve money or material possessions instead of respecting the first commandment, the Bible does warn to stay away from the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10; Hebrews 13:5) and, moreover, encourages people to stay away from attempts to “get rich quickly” (Proverbs 13:11; 23:5; Ecclesiastes 5:10).

The Apostle Paul considers the love of money the root of all evils because people commit sins and make other people unhappy by causing

troubles or injustice in order to obtain money or other material things (1 Timothy 6: 6-10). There is a whole chain of negative behaviours related to avarice that people resort to in hoarding money: theft, robbery, simony, trickery, manipulation, vanity, malice, envy, mercilessness etc. which separates avaricious people from the divine grace. So, love of money is a sort of engine that causes other undesirable attitudes which are detrimental to one's own relationship with people and even salvation (Saint John Chrysostom 1976, p. 817).

Money and possessions are not evil in themselves but the perverted attitude towards them when they are put above God. The Bible does not specifically condemn the possessions, jewellery or the big houses, the Bible condemns the anti-divine or anti-social wills that lead to corrupted relationships with people and God Himself. It condemns the enslaved will that uses the wealth in a selfish and wrong way against the poor, one's own soul and to the displeasure of God (Saint John Chrysostom 1976, p. 819). In this regard, Job was blessed with wealth twice more than he had had before he was put to trial by God who took away everything he had (Job 42: 12).

Considering all these, we can say that Christianity considers that greed or avarice is idolatry because instead of serving God, greedy people are devoted to the desire of material goods. This sin can bring other immoral behaviours, such as: theft, trickery or vanity, therefore it can be a cause for anti-divine and anti-social wills. Nevertheless, the material possessions are not a negative thing per se, but the love of them is the replace of God with the worship of wealth.

3.2. Materialism and unhappiness in Christianity

In the Christian tradition there are two meanings of happiness: as an eternal peace in the presence of God, and as a particular joy and pleasure encountered along life's journey (Schori 2014, 57). In the first perspective, the Christian happiness does not concern the acquisition of material goods, but spiritual ones, and not anyone achieves it, but those who acquire the likeness to God are worthy of happiness (Radu 1981). Regarding the second perspective, the role of pleasure to acquire happiness or "good life" is accepted in the Christian ascetic ethics. Nevertheless, based on the writings of monastic leaders of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Fatić and Dentsoras (2014, 535) bring reasons that advocate the view that Christian religion encourages "to find pleasure in the right kinds of things and care less for pleasures that are either harmful or hard to come by...". In this regard, the Apostle Paul states that people who love money "pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:5) and the Ecclesiast warns that money does not bring happiness: "He who loves money shall never have enough. The foolishness of thinking that wealth brings happiness!" (Eccl. 5:10). If the

love of money fosters unhappiness, Jesus Christ clearly says that blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the merciful, pure in heart, the peacemakers because they will obtain happiness (Matthew 5:3-12). For these people, God is the Lord, thus happiness refers to the relationship with God, an intense spirituality on the way to heaven (Psalm 144:15, John 1:14, Romans 5:2). When people ignore the spiritual side they have, and their family, relationship with friends or other people, rotating around the idea of money, they feel unhappy or have a sense of nothingness (Saint Joan Cassian 2003, 4). This happens because avaricious people seek in money (a materialistic, finite good) the wholeness and contentment that can be found only in God (an immaterial, infinite good) (Saint Thomas Aquinas 1948, 2, 118).

Greed can bring unhappiness because it can take the form of the worry about keeping money, the arduousness of breaking up with it, the inconvenience felt when giving it to other, the desire to acquire new goods and to have as many as possible, and the sorrow after the lost goods (Saint Maximus the Confessor 1982, 50). Greedy people are not happy because they constantly show a constant fear and a sense of insecurity (Ciudin 1997, 226). Due to this angst the individual will obsessively covet the needed “thing” and s/he will also tend to envy those who possess it. Therefore, greed can bring negative feelings like the sense of nothingness, the anguish, the fear of material loss, or the sense of insecurity, and all these make people unhappy.

Finally, we can say that greed is more than a sin (choosing mammon instead of God), it is a foolish belief that money can bring happiness because it is finite and the more you have the more you want and you will never have the feeling of wholeness and contentment. Moreover, material possessions can lead to negative feelings determined by the fear of losing or breaking up with them. Thus, the love of money can be a source of unhappiness even if people illusorily believe in happiness-seeking via consumption.

3.3. Christian perspective on how to relate to material things

For many people avarice is a very heavy burden to carry, since it is not a chance to relax and enjoy life, but rather a cause of unhappiness and anxiety, owing to financial worries and insecurity. For this reason, there are some guidelines given by the Church Fathers that can make us avoid, overcome or eradicate this deadly sin in accordance with the Christian tradition.

One way to deal with this problem would be to effectively overcome greed by showing compassion for the poor due to the fact that it can be cured through love of one's own fellows. However, helping the poor should be done according to some rules, like giving alms to the poor without affecting one's own family (Saint Joan Cassian 2003, 7) and

empathizing with those in need in a sincere and helpful way, at the same time respecting the Christian rule of love (John 13:34-35). Therefore, showing off by offering material things or money to the poor does not solve the problem of greed; on the contrary, this is a way of expressing vanity or pride.

Another solution is for the people to be pleased with what they have and not to aim at acquiring wealth and assets; instead, they should trust God in His care about them (Saint Maximus the Confessor 2005, 137). Thus, healing the love of riches, through faith in God's power, the awareness that material things are transitory and focusing on imperishable spiritual values, entails the acquisition of virtues that are born from the love of God and fellows through good deeds. This leads to a further solution, that people should be meek and humble toward God, that is an attitude of willingness to submit to God's will (Saint John Chrysostom 1994, 690).

Apart from these, healing this passion depends heavily on one's own faith in God because genuine faith ceases all worries, despite desiring material goods that causes unhappiness (Saint John of the Ladder 2011, 323). The fact that people worry and experience anxiety illustrates the idea that they do not trust God to take care of their lives, instead of obeying to His word and seeking His kingdom to some extent. Saint Augustine in *Confessions* deems that the joy in God is the only happy life because He is the truth and a happy life is joy in the truth: "this is the happy life, to rejoice to Thee, of Thee, for Thee; this is it, and there is no other. For they who think there is another, pursue some other and not the true joy" (Saint Augustin 2010, 332). Thus, people are not happy because their flesh lusts against the Spirit and they are vulnerable to the material things of this world. The only true happiness comes from the light and the redemption from God.

One final solution, strongly related to the previous one, is to change the attitude towards material things, money and wealth, and accept that nothing belongs to us (1 Cor. 6:19-20), which is actually in favour of responsible behaviour and cultivating virtues. For instance, the desire to acquire money or material things should be excluded from one's own heart first, even though the person is poor, because greed takes root and causes restlessness or even unhappiness. Besides, embracing poverty willingly and accepting that happiness is spiritual make us avoid the rich man's behaviour, whose soul was required by God, and also avoid storing possessions vainly (Luke 12, 20). What is more, imposed poverty is not a virtue, owing to the fact that voluntary poverty cultivates humility and patience, whilst wealth cultivates pride (Dumitraşcu 2010).

To conclude, Christianity considers that greed can be overcome because greed is the intention that arises first in the mind, then it becomes the attitude adopted. Even so, once it is installed, it can be cured from one's own mind or heart by faith in God and developing virtues such

as generosity, sincere love and modesty, namely, spirituality instead of materialistic values.

4. Discussion

Against this theoretical background, we can consider that there are many similarities regarding how sociology and Christian religion present the relationship between materialism and life satisfaction. Even if the Scripture does not use the term „materialism”, other words, such as greed and avarice, name the desire of money and material goods that can lead people to immoral behaviours like theft, robbery, manipulation or envy. Both sociology and Christianity consider that materialistic people put material goods in the centre of their lives, are envious, not generous, and think that money can bring happiness. These people do not try to find happiness in religious contemplation, in social interaction, and spiritual experiences, but illusorily believe in happiness-seeking via consumption. In both perspectives, possessions are not an indicator of materialism, but the desire (or the love) of them, the belief that they can bring happiness, lacking consideration for others, and the envy for others' possessions are characteristics of materialistic people. Nevertheless, compared with the sociological approach, in the Christian religion, materialism is more than a value; it is a sin because it replaces God with the worship of material goods.

The idea that materialists are less happy in general than those lower in materialism can be found in both approaches. The fact that materialism brings life dissatisfaction is explained partially by the “effective expectations” (Sirgy 1998) or “the foolishness of thinking” (Eccl. 5:0) regarding money, fact that enlarges the gap between what we have and what we want. Another common explanation for the relationship between materialism and life dissatisfaction is that these values can stimulate negative feelings and behaviours, which can make people less happy. If in the sociological approach, materialism can be associated with envy, loneliness, and lower agreeableness, self-esteem, and self-actualization, in Christian religion, greed can determine worry about keeping money and sorrow after the lost goods, the sense of insecurity, or the sense of nothingness.

In both perspectives, acquisition and possessions can bring life satisfaction when people share material possessions and focus more on the spiritual and the interpersonal experiences. Sociologists and other social science researchers give other solutions like buying many small pleasures rather than fewer large ones or delay consumption. Nevertheless, similar with Christian prescription, the most important recommendations that come from social science studies are those that encourage the reduction of materialistic attitude. Materialistic people are rather interested in being surrounded by objects and less by other people,

are more envious, and believe more that possessions are sources of happiness. Considering this, researchers show that, to be happier, people should spend more time and money on interpersonal relationships, for experiences and helping others (being generous). Moreover, they should beware of comparison, so not to define their success by the number and the quality of possessions accumulated.

The most significant difference between sociological and theological approaches is that the last one has a rather moral perspective; people that do not respect these commandments sin because instead of serving God, they show obedience to wealth or treasury money. Moreover, beyond the joy and pleasure encountered along life, people should find real happiness in God, because He is the only truth and consequently they only can rejoice in Him, of Him, for Him (Saint Augustine 2010). Of course, this second meaning of happiness cannot be found in sociology. But a critical approach to materialism and consumption society can be found in the writings of sociologists like Marx, Veblen and Bourdieu. They mention how society should not be and their language corresponds sometimes to the religious one.

Not all the researchers mentioned in this paper have, at least manifestly, a critical (or an axiological) approach. Nevertheless, the methodology of scale building supposes generating items by individuals based on a popular attitude towards a specific topic. In our particular case, the items of Richins and Dawson (1992) scale relied on both popular and theoretical notions of materialism, were generated by a convenience sample and inspired by other studies and by social critics. The reliability and validity of the scale is done on common people (on non-specialists), as well. Therefore, even if authors tested the social desirability of the scale and proved that this kind of bias was not a problem, the scale is the product of people's opinions about materialism to a higher extent. Much more, the author specified that the items are the outcome of the characterizations of materialism mentioned by social critics, as well. Thus, very similar definitions of materialism or greed of sociology and religion can be explained by the fact that scientifically measurement can be influenced, consciously or not, by religious beliefs. Nevertheless, this common approach does not explain why researchers confirm the fact that materialism decreases life satisfaction. Moreover, some explanations given by the academia validate the religious arguments against materialism. Consequently, both researchers and theologians support the idea that people should be less materialistic in order to be happy. However, religion has a moral approach and sustains that real happiness can be achieved by living by or for God. And these imply a less materialistic, a more generous and a more spiritual way of life.

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