

## **Society's Visible Patrimony. A Sociological Approach to Understanding Consumption and Material Culture** *Francesca Setiffi\**

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# *Society's Visible Patrimony. A Sociological Approach to Understanding Consumption and Material Culture*

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## **Abstract**

This essay explores the unique advantage that a sociological approach to the study of consumption and material culture can provide. While in anthropological literature objects, goods, things, exchanges and gifts are treated with the same weight as values, ideologies and collective beliefs, in sociological literature the amount of analytical and interpretive attention given to material culture has been the result of a longer process of coming to understand the symbolic nature of the *world of objects*. The increasing prevalence of consumption processes in everyday life merits an investigation of material culture's symbolic and explicatory potential as an area of symbolic mediation. An area in which the subject constructs social ties and relations and activates processes of self-identification and mutual recognition.

Keywords: material culture, sociology of consumption, social relationships.

## **1. Introduction**

This essay examines Domenico Secondulfo's book *Sociologia del consumo e della cultura materiale* (The Sociology of Consumption and Material Culture) [FrancoAngeli, 2012], framing its contribution to the field of sociology within contemporary debates. The volume expands on observations made in earlier

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books by the author, *La danza delle cose* (1994) and *Ditelo coi fiori* (1995) while standing alone as its own work for its distinct theoretical framework, its conceptual layout, and Secondulfo's discussion of the content and line of argumentation. The work adds to a body of sociological literature which investigates the expressive, communicative and aesthetic power of material culture and the symbolic implications of consumption. With regard to the Italian context, there are numerous works which underline the symbolic and semiotic function of objects and the communicative potential of consumption processes (for example, see Leonini, 1988; Di Nallo, 1999; Paltrinieri, 1998; Bartoletti, 2002; Di Nallo e Paltrinieri, 2006; Sassatelli, 2007; Viviani, 2008; Mora, 2010; Setiffi, 2009, 2012, 2013; Magaudda, 2012; Marzella, 2014). In international literature, numerous studies have adopted a socio-anthropological approach to the investigation of themes related to material culture. Among the most recent of these works, we should cite: Dant (1999, 2006) on the social significance of products and objects of everyday use; Warnier (1999) on the embodied practices of material culture; Woodward I. (2001) and Molotch (2003) on the social significance of domestic objects; Warde (2005, 2011) on the application of theories of social practice in the study of consumption; Woodward I. again (2007) on the pair objects-social relations and the interdisciplinary nature of the concept of material culture; Desjeux (2006) and Shove, Trentmann and Wilk (2009) and Gregson and Crewe (2003) on material culture and everyday life; Crane and Bovone (2006) and Mora (2006) on fashion and material culture; Miller and Woodward S. (2010, 2012) and Sassatelli (2010) on the body, social practice, processes of identification and the social uses of objects; McClain and Mears (2012) on the materiality of gratuity in consumer culture as well as the numerous articles published in the *Journal of Material Culture* and *Journal of Consumer Culture*.

Secondulfo's volume can be divided into three parts: the first reflects on the 'forefathers' of sociology - Marx, Weber and Simmel - and their recognition of the symbolic mediation role played by goods and products while providing a summary of more recent sociological literature on consumption and material culture; the second part discusses the concept of material culture and its circulation in society through the different "stages" of the *Cycle of material culture*; the third part proposes Secondulfo's conceptual model, the *Spheres of consumption and the spheres of social communication*, framing it within the cycle of material culture and demonstrating the dominance of consumption in capitalistic society.

The work concludes with a series of reflections intended to outline the principle characteristics of today's "consumption society", among them: the relationship between production and consumption, the theme of citizenship, sense of time, and the processes of individualization. What is consumption

society? (Secondulfo asks). “It is a society of objects (all experiences are transformed into goods or services). The relationship with objects is incredibly important, consumption society is a society of objects, symbolically objects contain the experiences and desires of people [...] it is a society of individuals (not groups)... It is a society of the present, not of the past or the future.”

## **2. A Long Road: the Evolution of Sociology**

The volume begins with a necessary introduction of the *long road* which led sociology to recognize “initially almost unconsciously, and with time in an ever more precise fashion, the symbolic mediation role of social relations” (Secondulfo, 2012: 11) embodied in the social nature of goods and products. This first section reviews the contributions of sociology’s forefathers, such as Marx (1867) and Weber (1922) before moving ahead to discuss the works of Baudrillard (1968, 1972), Bourdieu (1979) and the more recent works of Alberoni (1964), Leonini (1988) and Di Nallo (1999). The volume also dedicates particular space to citations illustrating the anthropological origins of the concept of material culture, recognizing the importance of the work of Tylor (1871), Boas (1938) and Malinowski (1944) - the first scholars to have used the concept of material culture - as well as the more recent works of Lévi Strauss (1958, 1964, 1966, 1968), Sahlins (1976), Douglas (1970), Douglas and Isherwood (1979), Geertz (1983) and Miller (1987). On the relationship between the history of the discipline and the role played by material culture, Secondulfo notes that anthropology itself marks its birth from the moment in which it began considering archeological finds not only as descriptive indicators of the past but also as indicators of the culture of a population (Fabietti, 2001). Similarly, we could say that sociology begins its own use of the concept of material culture when it recognizes its symbolic and communicative value and its capacity as a mediator of social relations. From the beginning of the book, the concept of material culture is tied to the behavior of consumption, showing us the communicative and symbolic relevance of objects and the various relational structures they are increasingly called upon to mediate. It is thanks to Alberoni that we come to consider the concept of consumption independently from the sphere of production and that a first connection is made between the cultural values expressed by a society and its consumption processes. And it is thanks to Secondulfo (1994, 1995, 2012) that we understand the trajectory of the circulation of products and objects to be anchored to the macro and micro structures of the social relations which are mediated by consumption processes.

According to Secondulfo (2012) there are three main areas in which sociological thought can provide us with a unique perspective on material culture.

1) social differentiation, in which the use of goods embodies social stratification and differences in social status.

2) the self and hetero-identification of groups in which goods are linked to social stratification and the code of a class, demarcating the identities of groups;

3) the boundary lines of relational networks, of structures of belonging and of emotional support are expressed through the use of goods.

The first relational area - social differentiation - investigates the connection between goods, consumption and material culture, which finds its analytical focus in the example of fashion. Secondulfo cites Spencer (1896), Weber (1922), Simmel (1890, 1905) and Veblen (1899). In this area of social relations the role attributed to goods and consumer habits is based: “on a vision of fashion as a social institution aimed at creating homogeneity of behavior through imitation and differentiation; on the existence of a connection between cultural and communicative processes in which goods and the consumption of goods play an important role; the role of goods within this relationship can essentially be defined through theories of social stratification” (Secondulfo, 2012: 28).

The second relational area - the hetero and self-identification of groups - is also rooted in the study of social stratification, but as Secondulfo (2012) maintains, the processes of social differentiation are activated within the social group and not between the different social classes as in the case of the first relational area discussed above. In this section the author frequently references French sociology, in particular the works of Baudrillard (1968, 1972) and Bourdieu (1979). The influence of a structuralist approach which leads sociologists to consider objects and consumer habits as a *system of signs* is enriched by the addition of the concepts of *habitus*, taste and social space which establish the boundaries and the modes of action of a symbolic and communicative area that only goods are able to embody.

The third relational area - the boundaries of relational networks - illustrates the connection between goods and relational networks, referencing gift (Mauss, 1923-24; Godbout, 1992) and social network theories (Di Nicola, 1986, 1998). In this relational sphere goods and consumption rituals “symbolically mediate inclusion in or exclusion from groups based on their socially attributed significance - as evidence of belonging or not” (Secondulfo, 2012: 33). Through their circulation goods and products delineate the “boundaries of relational networks, making clear and visible both their boundaries and the relational networks that form their internal structure”

(Secondulfo, 2012: 35). The circulation of gifts embodies parental and friend structures as well as the level of acceptance in social circles. Gifts are exchanged through specific, socially determined rituals which assign form and content to a relationship. The movement of goods and products allows for relational structures based on reciprocity to function and give them visibility.

These three areas of social relations are further investigated by Secondulfo in his model *Spheres of consumption and the spheres of social communication* (2012, 1994). Secondulfo's interpretive model forms part of another of his models for understanding social reality: *the cycle of material culture* (Secondulfo, 2012). The uniqueness of Secondulfo's approach to the study of consumption - understood through the interpretive lens of material culture - emerges when the two models are examined together. Although he observes consumption's central role in processes of self and mutual recognition and the construction of personal and social identity (Setiffi, 2013), Secondulfo considers it to be only one part of a larger process of the circulation of goods and objects: "material culture is more than just the sphere of consumption habits and the products intended for the consumer market, it encompasses architecture, processes of production, waste, art etc., everything material that man produces as part of the imprint he gives to the world in which he lives" (Secondulfo, 2012: 35).

The paragraphs that follow analyze these two interpretive models. Both models are a testament to the originality of Secondulfo's sociological approach, which is able to contextualize consumption and material culture within a relational perspective, which includes both the micro-social structures which affect subject identity as well as the macro-social structures that govern the relationship between individuals and society. In my opinion, material culture is central to all of Secondulfo's (1994, 1995, 2012) theoretical and interpretive arguments. The very action of consumption acquires social significance because it is mediated by a certain type of relation with the world of goods and objects, which represents a place for the affirmation of the subject as well as his annihilation.

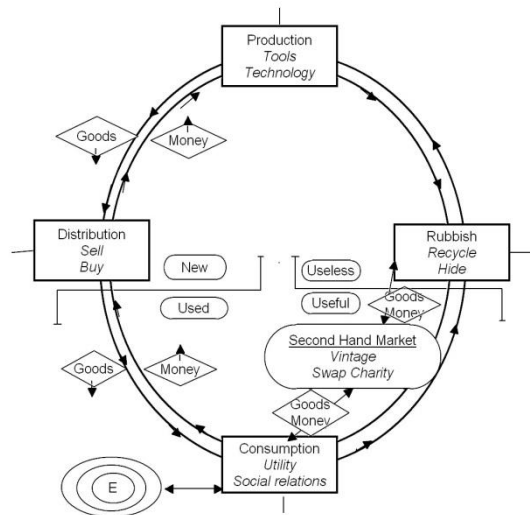
### **3. The Cycle of Material Culture**

Consumption represents one phase of the cycle of material culture (fig. 1), the starting block for understanding the communicative role of objects. As goods circulate within the network of relations they define these relations. If we agree that the consumer constructs the social (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) and material reality that surrounds him, consumption becomes the interpretive crux for understanding processes of exchange. Material culture is

a symbol for the expansion of the physical confines of man as well as a prosthetic used to construct and maintain social relations with others. At the same time it is structure for the symbolic mediation created and experienced by individuals in order to interact with society. Material culture is the prosthesis that individuals use to interact with one another. The concept of the “prosthetic body” (Maldonado, 1997) is central to understanding the mechanisms governing social relations. This is evident for example with regard to studies on clothing. Central to understanding the phenomenon of fashion, clothing represents a means of interpreting material culture where the clothes act as a “prosthetic for the skin, for its ability to protect from the elements of nature, but also its power to seduce and communicate” (Volli, 2002: 236).

The cycle of material culture (Secondulfo) is defined by four cardinal moments, which like the points of a compass orient the scholar in his or her analysis of the stages of material culture in society: production, distribution, consumption and rubbish. As noted earlier, consumption represents the starting block of the cycle of material culture from which we begin to understand the communicative role of objects, connecting it then with the sphere of consumption and social communication (E in the figure, 1).

Figure 1. The Cycle of Material Culture



Source: Secondulfo, 2012

A model of the circulation of material culture must express a temporal evolution, a *diachronic cycle of objects*, which in many ways reflects the evolution and the transformation of the individual and the species. Secondulfo's model of material culture, which reconstructs the birth, development, death and eventual regeneration of objects (through recycling), draws on Appadurai's (1986) analysis of the lifecycle of goods and Kopytoff's (1986) study of commodification and decommodification. The "social life" of objects is represented within an analytical map which considers the meanings embodied by material culture in each of its stages (production, distribution, consumption and recycling) and in the circulation of goods/money, which defines the passage from one phase of the cycle to the next. The cycle is an evolutionary clock for the stages of goods and products, whose hands move from one phase to the next marking society's actions of construction and reconstruction: "the constant construction and deconstruction of objects allows material culture to follow and reinforce society's social transformations and changes" (Secondulfo, 2012: 58).

Movement through the cycle's stages is represented as bidirectional; goods and objects flow in an "obligatory" direction from production to rubbish, moving through the phases of distribution and consumption. Money flows in the opposite direction, from consumption to production, preventing the cycle - for the time being - from closing by leaving open the passage between rubbish and consumption, which is usually mediated through a gratuitous exchange rather than an exchange of money. In other words, rubbish is usually gratuitously passed along to the recycling phase, "gifted" in some way by the consumers (Secondulfo, 2012: 58).

The presence and circulation of objects in the cycle of material culture is dependent on their actual or social utility, once they are useless they immediately exit the cycle. The force of the goods/money passage defines the "real" existence of the exchange value. If they are considered useless the objects will be disposed of, without any chance of entering a later recycling phase. This means that individuals always associate some form of utility to material culture. This form of utility constitutes its entry pass into the cycle. An object's life and death depends on its social utility, as it is recognized by individuals across the various stages of transformation and circulation.

The circulation of goods/money represents a crucial juncture, marked by a "point of no return" in which goods, in the hands of the final consumer, stop being new and transform themselves into used objects. Here one witnesses an irreversible passage of transformation from the exchange value - which characterizes the distribution phase - to use value, which marks the consumption phase. As recently noted, the phase following consumption is the rubbish stage, in which objects reach the "zero state" of social utility.



Some form of utility remains, however, if the object continues to circulate as part of the used market (the so-called 'parallel market') in which "relational structures similar to those of goods and exchange value" coexist alongside "relational and exchange structures which function according to a gift paradigm" (Secondulfo, 2012: 60).

With the inclusion of the rubbish phase within the cycle of material culture the circulation of goods is concluded. On the other hand, money's passage from consumption to rubbish remains suspended as there is not a reward for the consumers for their rubbish. "The circular movement of objects inversely reflects the movement of money [...] with regard to goods, however, these only move in one direction, from production towards consumption and recycling, from exchange value to use value, any movement in the inverse direction is difficult if not impossible (Secondulfo, 2012: 62). This demonstrates that the "waste of production" is heavily threatened by the dominance of production and the distribution of the "new".

The cycle of material culture is separated into two parts: the birth and the death of goods. The dividing-line is marked by the transformation of new goods into used goods: "we can imagine that the first part of the overall process sees the good traveling sealed in its newness, moving as exchange value alone, distant from its true use value [...]. And a second part in which the good loses its virginity and begins moving according to the law of usefulness, reaching the climax of its trajectory in its own destruction, when it comes in contact with the human needs that will transform it into something used and as such no longer sellable, destined for the short-circuit used goods passage or the world of rubbish" (Secondulfo, 2012: 68).

The new-used dichotomy represents the most important point in the life of goods. Newness is a value in itself which goods embody, "it is one of the constitutive values of modernity, tied to the idea of progress, purity, strength and ultimately life" (Secondulfo, 2012: 64). This is in contrast with the used, also embodied by material culture, which indicates poverty, dirtiness contamination and ultimately death. The new is the mystique of goods (Setiffi, 2011; Secondulfo, 2012) while the used is the breaking point for the practice of consuming the new (Marzella, 2014).

Every stage of the cycle material culture represents: a world of "ideas and habits", the professionalism of different social groups, and a "specialized subculture". The circulation of material culture within society allows us to reinterpret the organization of society marked here by the various evolutionary phases of goods, which represent a mirror of the social life of individuals. The processes by which the used is stigmatized - currently altered by economic and cultural changes (Setiffi, 2011) - offers us a key example of

material culture's symbolic, communicative and aesthetic capacity to elucidate the rules of what's right or wrong, correct or incorrect, pure and impure.

#### **4. Relations, objects and the construction of social reality: Spheres of consumption and spheres of communication**

The conceptual link between individual and consumption society is represented in Secondulfo's model, *Spheres of consumption and spheres of social communication* (2012). In the model material culture plays a projective role of self and mutual recognition in consumption society, through its visible and symbolic mediation the consumer makes his personal and social identity visible (Setiffi, 2013). Consumption is an act of social communication which takes form through the world of objects and goods, and material culture is an area of symbolic mediation which "is capable of transmitting a potentially infinite number of messages, regulating their communicative and symbolic actions, according to the type of relation it is called upon to mediate" (Secondulfo, 2012: 186). The interpretive model is made up of three elements: objects which are "a socially organized repository of meanings"; actions of consumption which "organize objects as communicators" social relation structures, "to which objects and consumption are hinged" (Secondulfo, 2012: 186-187). It is based on his analysis of the social function of material culture that Secondulfo (2012) defines consumption as an essentially communicative social action. From this perspective "defining the relationship, through the significance of the object which is used to mediate it, in addition to the rituality which is associated with consumption, allows not only for the relationship itself to be negotiated, contributing to its construction, but also for a remodeling of it with regard to the modifications which it has undergone but which have not yet been interiorized by the subjects involved" (Secondulfo, 2012: 187). In support of this theory, Secondulfo cites the example of adolescents who more often act out their emancipation from the family through "the world of objects" by claiming their own domestic space rather than through the "world of words and verbal negotiation".

The five spheres which make up the model (Secondulfo, 2012) provide for two different perspectives: one macro-social and the other micro-social. The macro-social dimension concerns the relational structures based on use-value, exchange-value and status-value; the micro-social dimension concerns the relational structures determined by the bond-value and the identity-value. The connecting thread between these two dimensions is the presence of relational structures: "while in the marketplace, individuals interact as strangers, and the tie is defined by the equivalency of the exchange and in the social stratification

they behave like enemies with status symbols telling us who the winners are, in the community they behave like friends, and gifts establish the personal, particular, intersubjective tie” (Secondulfo, 2012: 236). The body of the consumer belongs to the micro-social dimension, allowing for the process of self-recognition anchored to identity-value to be socially functional. The body represents the last level of analysis in the model, with the code of self-representation serving as the explanation for the functioning of the social sphere. This social area is made up of goods immediately connected with bodily expression which, in addition to supplementing and sometimes substituting verbalization, maintains the stability of the identity of subject.

Now let's move to the level furthest away from the body of the consumer: the macro dimension. The first sphere analyzes the transformation from a 'natural entity' into a social entity; the second sphere details the birth of goods, represented by money (Simmel, 1984); the third sphere details the circulation of goods in the market and the distribution of social wealth. The macro-social dimension is made up of the following values:

1) Use-value: “allows for the good to detach from the undifferentiated backdrop of its surroundings and interface with the needs of that certain social group” (Secondulfo, 2012: 198). This involves the transformation of the natural environment through work and technology systems with the objective of fulfilling the 'material' needs of society. Use-value represents the space forming the well-known distinction environment/society while at the same time representing the moment in which objects enter the culture of a society. The dichotomy useful/useless becomes the binary code governing the possibility of the existence of a relationship with the environment: utility which in Marx assumes a role as the anthropological foundation for the relationship between man's needs and the ownership of objects as property, is itself a social relationship, just like the equivalences of exchange.

2) Exchange-value: represents the synthesis of the relationship between subjects and the 'sociality' of work. By way of the exchange-value the system of objects is transformed into a system of goods; the exchange-value is the product of an attribution that society assigns to the system of goods, or in other words, it is the exchange dimension of an object which makes it a good. To reference Simmel (1984), the good capable of representing the rule of equivalences is money, which aptly exemplifies the particular nature of material culture in this sphere.

3) Status-value: “is the quantum of access to wealth (socially produced by exchange-value) that awaits each social status, role and group.” (Secondulfo, 2012: 220). Social groups are positioned in this mutable cultural scene through material culture, whose embodiment of status-value constitutes the necessary pass for 'being in society', giving visibility to the process of

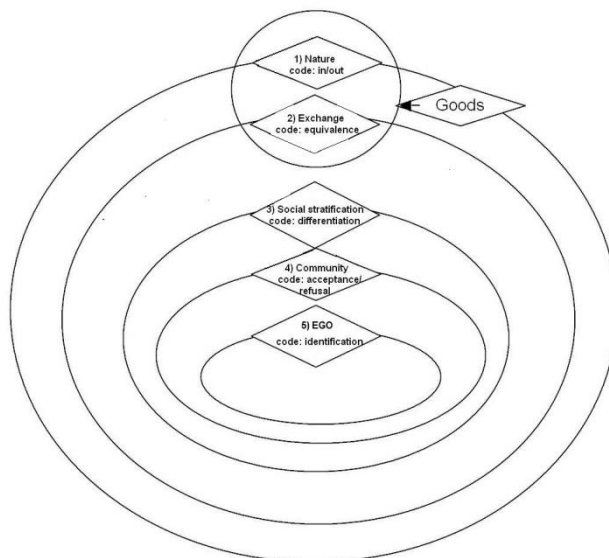
social stratification, exemplified by the concepts of social class, social group or lifestyle. Objects make one's belonging to a certain class, status or lifestyle visible, 'materializing' or embodying both the position assumed by the individual or social group and the stratification of society which is socially at work through fashion's process of social differentiation; fashion being a "code of distinction with various cycle lifetimes for different goods which are symbolic of status, like clothing, furniture, means of transportation, jewelry, technology, ideas, etc." (Secondulfo, 2012: 133). Moving from the macro to the micro level we move towards the structures of social relations nearest the sphere of the consumer's subjective expression: emotional recognition, mediated by the community sphere and self-recognition, and influenced by the processes of consumption. Approaching our analysis of Secondulfo's model from the perspective of the body, the passage from the macro to the micro dimension is akin to shifting attention from the social body, which is formed by the structures of macro-social relations to the body of the subject, which is formed by relational structures operating on the micro-social level. There are some groups of goods that are more illustrative of how these structures of consumption and social communication work, but this does not necessarily mean that any object cannot circulate in each of the five spheres. In particular, with regard to the structure of social relations, which regulates the self-referred relationship, objects work like "reiterators and amplifiers of an individual's personality, reinforcing it and representing its most private and significant characteristics, which are often only decipherable to the person reflected in them" (Secondulfo, 2012: 133). Secondulfo defines this relational structure *zero sociality*. The micro-social dimension is made up of the following values:

4) Bond-value: "summarizes the emotional dimension of the social relation" (Secondulfo, 2012: 135). The communicative logic which governs the community sphere is determined by the dichotomy inclusion/exclusion. Gifts, in direct opposition to exchange, reinforce community ties. Gifts demonstrate the existence of an emotional relationship, of reciprocity, and recognition between the two parties involved. The communicative register is expressed by the symbolic value of the gifted object, which represents the relation between the subjects. In addition to the Maussian concept of giving-receiving and reciprocity an oppositional concept is central to the sphere of ties: the potlatch as a destruction and manifestation of the power determined by belonging to a certain social rank. In particular with reference to food we see a perfect tripartition which manifests itself on an empirical level as well (Secondulfo, 1995), between relational circuits, types of food and rituals of group consumption: "a) the circuit of exchange and consumption of cooked foods on a domestic level, which overlaps with the more restricted parental

network; b) the circuit of group consumption of cooked foods (above all in public places), which overlaps with the friend network; c) the circuit of group consumption of liquid foods, which overlaps with the network of general social relations.” (Secondulfo 1995: 18-19).

5) Identity-value: the code of self-representation which constitutes the recursive and self-reflective relationship which the individual establishes with him or herself. We are talking about identity construction and the capacity of material culture, as an objectified entity, to represent the social position of the subject, his means of representing himself in society and the image that the individual has of himself. In this last sphere of the model consumption is defined as “self-referred and communicated as it seems to be formed and best interpreted according to a code which is grounded in the peculiarity of the subject” (Secondulfo, 2012: 265). Home furnishings are a set of goods which offer us an example of how self-identification through material culture works: the structure of the objects present in a house make up the self-image of the individual by creating a limited niche apart from the complexity of the external world.

Figure 2. The Spheres of consumption and Spheres of Social Communication



Source: Secondulfo, 2012.

The different relational spheres represent areas in which consumers express their personal and social identity through material culture. Looking back over the various “values” which characterize the relational and communication spheres one can recognize different social recognition demands that are mediated by material culture (Setiffi, 2013).

## **5. Conclusion**

The main strength of Secondulfo's volume is in having investigated consumption and material culture from a sociological perspective, exploring the theme of social change through the lens of consumption processes, mediated by material culture's patterns of circulation across different relational structures. The communicative function of consumption roots itself in the symbolic and semiotic dimension of objects, freeing material culture from its apparent triviality and transforming it into an 'area of symbolic mediation'. Approaching consumption and material culture as spaces for understanding social reality, from an exquisitely sociological perspective, opens the way for numerous lines of empirical inquiry; lines of research that will allow us to connect the behavior of consumption, the social evolution of material culture and the structures of macro and micro social relations within one investigative framework aimed at understanding social relations, identity construction and social change. Material culture and consumption play a central role in helping us to understand the construction of meaning produced by social actors by defining the relational structures that govern capitalistic society. The theme of social change which is present in other works by Secondulfo (2001) adopts a new perspective thanks to his model of the cycle of material culture, highlighting the communicative capacity of goods to embody, through their circulation, the relationship between individual and society, mediated by the market and consumption society, and the social organization of essential ambits such as production, distribution, consumption and waste, distinguished from one another by different forms of social recognition but united by the expressive force of goods.

Above all, studying material culture from an empirical perspective means discarding the long-held prejudice that goods, objects and products are inferior “objects” of research with respect to values, beliefs or ideologies. Adopting a material culture approach for studying processes of consumption, and more generally for exploring the forms which social change assumes, means considering culture as a unified whole. From a static perspective it means observing objects and goods in their semiotic and symbolic function. From a dynamic perspective it means observing them in their role as

'materializers' of social structures. It is along this line that Secondulfo's research (2011, 2013) on material culture and processes of consumption develops. His studies shed light on how the world of objects is a direct extension of an individual's body; how goods play a role which is socially ascribed and governed by use-value; how the circulation of goods and objects defines relational structures on the micro and macro-social level.

In conclusion, the volume offers much food for thought. It also opens the door for numerous avenues of empirical research while underlining the uniqueness of a sociological approach to studying society's artifacts and its processes for producing, consuming and destroying goods. There are numerous invitations to theoretically consider an overall shift from a consumption society to a purchasing society in which we could witness the prevalence of temporary possession over permanent ownership but in which objects and goods would not however lose their central role as a functional and communicative prosthesis for existing in society. Material culture, of which goods represent only a part, albeit a key one in capitalistic society, is by nature in constant transformation, as are the expressive and communicative meanings assumed by consumption processes. The numerous avenues of investigation opened by Secondulfo would serve as a good starting point for future studies, such as an investigation of the themes of crisis and social change, taking into consideration the recent economic and social transformations; or a comparative study on practice theory which shares many points of intersection with the theoretical and empirical approach of the sociology of consumption and material culture.

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