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Non-Ownership Principles as Understood by Lay Practitioners of Jainism and Quakerism

David St John
stjohnd999@gmail.com

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

NON-OWNERSHIP PRINCIPLES AS UNDERSTOOD BY LAY PRACTITIONERS
OF JAINISM AND QUAKERISM

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

by

David St John

2017

To: Dean John F. Stack
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This thesis, written by David St John, and entitled Non-Ownership Principles as Understood by Lay Practitioners of Jainism and Quakerism, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

Iqbal Akhtar

Erik Larson

Steven M. Vose, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 27, 2017

This thesis of David St John is approved.

Dean John F. Stack
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2017

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this work to my wife, Kimberly St. John. She has been nothing but amazing over the past two years so that I could pursue this research. From working two jobs to support us financially to listening to my crazy rants and ramblings about research. she was always there to support me in my pursuits. Without that support, I don't know how I would have made it through with my sanity as intact as it is.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS
NON-OWNERSHIP PRINCIPLES AS UNDERSTOOD BY THE LAY
PRACTITIONERS OF JAINISM AND QUAKERISM

by

David St. John

Florida International University, 2017

Miami, Florida

Professor Steven M. Vose, Major Professor

This thesis examines how lay members of the Jain and Quaker traditions understand and navigate ideals of non-ownership. The tenets of aparigraha (non-ownership) and the testimony of simplicity are explored to show how interpretation of sacred texts leave open the possibility for financial success.

Through interviews with members of Jain and Quaker communities in the US, and textual research, I assert that proper methods for earning, maintaining and using capital in each tradition transcend prohibitions against excess accumulation. Following Foucault and Weber, I show that proper ethical ways of earning and spending money depend on community-based interpretations and self-policing.

My research suggests that lay members focus on ethical ways to earn and spend money rather than the amount of wealth they possess. Due to these foci, transgressions of ideals are viewed within community-established norms, which maintain high levels of engagement with both the capital world and their own religious tradition.

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This work explores the ways in which modern Jains and Quakers navigate the ideas of *aparigraha* and the testimony of simplicity, respectively, in a world that holds consumerism and capitalism in high esteem. There is a sense of judgment within Jain and Quaker societies toward those who have less and who do not typify their lives through a lens of financial success. This stands in strong contradiction to the ideals of non-ownership of objects, a value both traditions uphold. Yet, within each community there is a history of financial success and a close connection with material wealth. This seeming contradiction, between the ways their ascetic ideals and the ways laypeople live their lives, can easily be misunderstood or misrepresented.

I am looking to illuminate the unique ways in which lay members of each community understand and interact with wealth in light of the ideals set forth in their traditions, and the ways in which they choose to live their lives to fulfill their understandings of these ethics. Through this investigation, I will show that the ideas of ownership and success in the lay communities are not considered transgressions of the ideals, as they are communities that have chosen to engage with the world in unique and important ways. The individuals I interview, members of both communities, give a range of ways of understanding and engaging with material wealth in light of their traditions' ethics in a world seemingly typified by capitalism.

Identification

Before I address methods and the communities that I engaged with, I wish to self-identify who I am and why this project was something I chose to pursue. I identify as a member of the Quaker faith myself, and have grown up in the Quaker meeting and attending Quaker elementary and high schools. Regular attendance at Meeting for

worship, and direct engagement with Quaker communities and people, has been consistently part of my life. I would not say that I have not had a crisis or questioning of practice of faith at any point in my life, however. I was not an active member of any Quaker community for much of my early to mid 20's; the eventual decision to begin actively attending and practicing again was the beginning of this project.

So, why compare Quakerism with Jainism? I discovered Jainism when I was 19 years old in a class titled “Religions of South Asia” at Elizabethtown College. The frame through which the original ideas were taught can be summed up in one word: *ahimsa* (non-violence). Jainism immediately drew me in. Here was another religious community from another part of the world that had similar structures and ideas of non-violence that I had. My desire to learn more was immediate and profound. I began to press my professor for more information in every way I possibly could. As I delved further into research and learning, I discovered a tradition that was ethically rich and similar to my own. I saw parallels everywhere and at this age wanted to know how a community so similar to my own in these ethical ideals could be unknown to me till this point in my life. I questioned why I had been introduced to Hinduism and Buddhism as Indian religions in high school, but, regrettably, even the word Jainism had never even been mentioned, as there was so much richness to their beliefs and practices. This seemed especially onerous, as I had come from a Quaker high school and a world religions course was required.

For me Jainism did not seem foreign at all, apart from the differences in methods, practices, and goals there was a clear and distinct ethical parallel. I could easily see myself in the Jain tradition; over the years, through opportunities presented both through classes and my own personal travels, I have attended many Jain ceremonies and services and been an active participant. These visits have helped

shape who I am in profound ways. *Darśan* (seeing) holds an important place in my own Quaker practices as I aim to see aspects of God (the inner light) in everyone and I hope to see that aspect looking back at me.

Why Ownership?

The idea of ownership was something that I began to think about in my own personal life and my questions were framed through my personal analysis of my own life and the living out of the ethics that I learned as a child. I began to analyze my life through the testimony of simplicity. I questioned what impact I was having upon others and, more importantly, myself through the things I owned and regularly consumed. To say I was fully bought into a capitalistic system would be an understatement regarding the way I was living my life. I came to the realization that I could not come up with an answer for myself as to whether I felt that I was living a simple life or not, and to this day I still consistently self-analyze. To say I have found an answer for myself would be woefully incorrect and I do not know if I ever will find a true answer at any point in my life. My desire to understand changed into something academic; I wanted to explore how others choose to understand simplicity, possibly to help my own personal understanding.

I did not expect others to have complete answers for themselves and this is something I discovered throughout the research. There is a broad and substantial set of questions that many people did not consider for themselves until the intrusion of the outsider. I frequently heard my informants state that my research was important simply due to the importance they give to minimizing possessions for the sake of spiritual gain and purity, but that they did not even think about these ideas in their personal lives until they saw my announcements requesting volunteers. I found that to be a curious statement the first two or three times I heard it; but as many more

informants intimated the same thought, I began to see it as a clear indication of how deeply embedded these principles could be in people's lives, playing out in ways that seem simply ignored on a day to day basis. Here, I will show that they are not simply ignored, but for many people they had made decisions in their lives that fit within their personal ethical definitions. The cumulative effect has been to create a community in each tradition who enact profound and important ideas about ownership in their personal lives.

At a surface level both Jainism and Quakerism present ethics that appear to be the same. Common ideas presented on non-violence, non-ownership and honesty seemingly show that each community would develop similar presentations of ethics. Here I choose to focus on concepts of non-ownership since at a cursory level they appear to be the same. However, once we look deeper we see various mechanisms to engage with material wealth across both communities that are alive, evolving and vibrant. Once we push past those initial assumptions we can see how a religious community or an individual develops and understands their own personal ethics. These ethics are informed, evolve and are influenced by religious communities and external forces that interact with the tradition.

This evolution, both in text and practice, shows us the ways that multiple traditions evolve and the changing ways their ethics inform both individuals and communities. Within both Jainism and Quakerism, we see this evolution occurring, but in diverse ways. Jain communities present a different ideal of minimization due to the ascetic class where an individual would not own anything. While Quakers, who do not have an ascetic ideal or community, are all expected to fulfill a similar ethical ideal of ownership. Many Quakers expressed that there is a minimum level that must be maintained for comfort to maintain proper communion with the divine. These differences inform individual decisions and help to support the subtle differences in practice expressed in the interviews.

Texts

One key aspect of this project is a textual exploration of the ways in which these ethics were formed at their inception and the ways they are understood in modern texts. Through the exploration of the ways in which members of each community understand these principles, I looked to discover sources that they themselves were accessing, and to explore early literature to develop a historical perspective on the ethical principles to show that they have evolved over time into what we see today. My intent is to show the ambiguities that lead to change. This leads into an investigation of the texts that are both historically relevant, based on foundational writers in each tradition, and an exploration of modern writers whom individuals source for their own study and reflection. I was surprised that there was a distinct hierarchy of texts being sourced. In each community, there tended to be a person with a position of power (typically within the religious education aspect of the community) that was looked to as an authority, who set an example, if not an agenda, for what others would study. My task became to read such texts to see what earlier sources that text may be citing. This resulted in a means of tracing the information in interesting ways. I was able to explore what modern thinkers were using to develop commentary and exegesis of earlier, foundational texts. I then read the source text as well. These means of tracing intellectual lineages illuminated many ambiguities in early texts that gave me insight into how people are living their personal lives in modern times. I note interpretations that may result in what could be seen as infractions of these ethical ideals, but which lay Jains and Quakers reconcile by the basic need to engage and live in the world. The aim is to show that there is an evolution that occurs in each community in ethical ideals, which are not as fixed as some Quakers and Jains might believe them to be. Individuals develop unique, personal understandings and create

communal understandings that develop further interpretive registers in their communities.

Ethnography

The second source of material for this project is the ethnographic interviews that I was able to perform. My exploration of the ways in which people follow their ethical ideals in the world is critical to show the constant evolution of ethics. My interviews centered on questions regarding the sources my informants used (if any), what *aparigraha* or the testimony of simplicity means to them personally, how they determine the appropriate amount of wealth or property they should own, how they express the respective ideals in their personal lives, how to resolve perceived transgressions of their own ideals, and what key takeaways there might be when applying these ideals to larger communities and society at large. Through these I was granted the opportunity to explore a variety of definitions and personal experiences that directly showed the vibrancy of the lived communities. The responses ranged from individuals taking formal vows to actively try to minimize material gains in their lives to individuals who engage with material for the sake of personal or familial comfort. Every answer tapped into different aspects of the ethical frames presented in texts and each individual had a profoundly different way of understanding these texts and principles even within their own community.

There were five communities that I reached out to when looking for informants. There were significant limitations placed on my ability to visit locations for both time and transportation reasons. Due to this, I chose to talk with the Jain communities in South Florida and metropolitan Chicago, and the Quaker communities in Madison, Wisconsin; Ithaca, New York; and Sandy Spring, Maryland. These were all chosen due to their proximity to locations where I was staying during the research

period in the summer of 2016. Each site was chosen either due to my ability to get to the site on a given day with reasonable accommodation or that the site was on the path when driving between cities. This introduced a factor of bias, since every Jain community is one of diaspora Jains living in the United States and their access to the religious authority presented by *sadhus* (monks) and *sadhvis* (nuns) is limited due to being a diaspora community. The Quaker communities were all ones I had had previous experience with, as I attended each meeting for the sake of my personal worship at different times of my life. This presented a factor of some individual member's knowledge of who I was as a person and as a Quaker.

The common experience that came from these issues was the fact that I was perceived as an outsider whether that was as a non-Jain or as an academic coming to the community. I consistently had to break down walls to show that this was not someone looking to judge them or identify ways in which individuals were religiously wrong in their practices. I chose to share my own story in the interviews in order to break down walls and show that I saw value in individual interpretations. Once that initial piece was broken down I was able to explore with the assistance of the interviewee the ways in which these ethical ideals are alive and changing every day.

The sites also presented unique challenges as I needed to get my message out and be able to visit at an effective time for those who were volunteering. Before visiting each site, I contacted people in positions of authority in the community who would be able to help me get a message put into a newsletter or community email to identify who I am and what the purpose of my research would be. The announcement also contained my personal contact information and encouraged any potential volunteers to contact me prior to my visit. Once these initial announcements were out, I partnered with someone in each community who could aid me in picking an ideal

time to visit where there would be a large number of people present. This created a two-tiered approach, as I was able to communicate with some members through email and some interviews in person. This strategy helped me to increase the sample size of informants despite my time and travel constraints.

The locations of the interviews were varied as I chose to offer the respondents the opportunity to choose the location. This resulted in a varied series of locations that themselves showed a diverse set of understandings of ownership principles. Some people chose to allow me into their homes and others their places of work. One site even invited me during a *mela* (bazaar) that was occurring so that there would be more people who were able to respond. The sites provided an interesting range of attitudes, from minimizing ownership to direct capitalism at the *mela*.

The *mela* was the most interesting choice of settings; respondents challenged my original thoughts about what people would be willing to reveal. The *mela* was being held at the Jain Center of Metropolitan Chicago, which is a beautiful structure located off a minor highway in the Chicago suburbs. As I drove up to the site I noticed that it was designed to be hidden from view from the road and the nearby neighborhood. The Jain center itself could easily be mistaken for a temple structure located in India, however, as it was covered in figures of the *Jinas* and other Jain figures. The internal space was designed to be functional and directly support the community. The worship space was filled with images of the *Jinas* and deities that directly supported the *Jinas*. The central image was built of marble and there were about a half dozen people performing *darśan* at the image at the time of my visit. I myself performed my own worship while I was there, as it was the first chance I had had to visit this site and my first visit to a Jain temple in a few months. After this I toured the Jain center with the current president and saw the facilities they had. He

enthusiastically showed me the education spaces located in the basement and the library that they offered to the community. During this time, I was quizzed on what my knowledge of Jainism was and we held a conversation about various texts, their importance to the community and which translations they used and had in the library. The Jain center was vast and clearly designed to support any type of worship or education initiatives that the community desired; I was getting to witness this personally, as during the time I was there a local community college had students visit to learn about Jainism.

As I entered the auditorium space at the Jain center of Metropolitan Chicago I was greeted by booths filled with clothing, jewelry, information packets and food. The quality of the items appeared to be high and the pricing backed up that thought as many of the items were priced in the hundreds of dollars. Everything was bright and colorful as it was being set up as a means of drawing consumers into the stand to make purchases. Outside the auditorium space the sprawl of the market continued with the food stands. Here you could purchase tickets that could be used to purchase various food items at each of the stands. These were heavily advertised and supported by the people in positions of authority throughout as the food purchases directly supported the Jain center. I frequently witnessed people in the *mela* advising others to go outside and get food to support the Jain center and enjoy the difficult-to-locate dishes from various Indian regions.

The preparation was just the beginning of what I was to experience at the *mela*. Once the stands were set up and ready for customers the real beginning of the commercial day could begin. The space became populated with people looking to purchase items. It was hard to move around in the space provided since so many people were ready to make purchases for themselves and their family. The space

became more like a commercial mall than a religious space almost immediately. Cries from vendors were constant, convincing people to make purchases. All of this immediately stood apart from what I was potentially researching and the people I had talked with knew this. However, to both myself and them, the sample size and ability to reach people was more important and over time I began to see how this was integrated into making the *mela* uniquely Jain and their own.

These stands were just the beginning of the market. There were also shows being put on by the children of the community that were designed to integrate Jain teachings into the festivities of the day. There were stories of the *Jinas* being told on stage, children showing off their language skills in Hindi, and a strong focus on the way in which the educational facilities at the Jain center supported proper learning of Jain ethics and tenets. This was all tied back into the way in which the *mela* itself directly supported the financial aspects of the center as well. The opportunity to support the center was not the only charity being offered that day as there was also blood donation solicited from those in attendance. The ability to donate blood was something that was stressed by the community through frequent announcements by those in positions of authority as well as showing off the bandages from donation. With simple statements of “I can do it, so can you!” being made, there was a strong attempt to show that this was not simply a capitalistic endeavor for the sake of money, but a means of providing the community with an engaging, fun way of supporting the Jain center, which comes back to the ways ownership and capitalism are understood by the community.

What I found particularly engaging about this site was the way in which people chose to engage in the interviews with me. As I gave each individual the opportunity to choose the location within the Jain center, most of the informants chose

to use the office at the Jain center since it was quiet and provided a semi-concealed space to talk. One person chose to use the lecture space that is employed by the community to teach others about Jainism, and one person chose to talk right on the *mela* floor at a stand that they were supporting. The one who utilized the school space was interesting since it was secluded, provided no visual or auditory clues that the *mela* was going on; they seemed content to stand aside from the event going on nearby. On the opposite end was the person who chose to stay right in the middle of the *mela*. They were comfortable engaging and talking while supporting the stand that they needed. The conversation was one that stood contrary to what was happening right in front of us as we talked and this provided an interesting contrast and showed the unique way this individual approached *aparigraha*.

The Jain Center of South Florida is much smaller in both physical size and community size. This did not prevent the space from being equally adorned with fantastic images and teachings. The space itself on the outside was not one that could be quickly identified as a religious space other than the sign identifying the Jain center. It was placed in a business complex and easily fit in with the surrounding businesses as well. The central images were comparable in every way to those of the larger Jain center in Chicago. While the space was much smaller this did not change the central function and it was clear that this was intended as a worship space first and a space for communal gathering second. What I found interesting is the way donations were presented in the Jain center. In the hallway between the community space and the worship space was the list of donors and the amount of donation from past celebrations. There was no particular order based on name or donation amount on the list. The important part was that it was displayed and easily accessed by everyone in the space. Behind the podium in the worship space was another similar sign that was

smaller. As the *paryushan* holiday had just ended, they had publicly placed the list of donors from the recent animal rescue project up in a very public space for all to see. These very public declarations of donation were something I found profound. The worship space was also being used to show how the community was engaged with their capital. Everyone at this location chose to speak with me in the meeting space of the Jain center. This was a small room dedicated to the organization structure meetings that were held in support of the Jain center.

The Quaker meeting houses in both Ithaca and Madison were converted house spaces in residential areas of their respective cities. Both spaces utilized minimal signage at their location to identify the space as religious in nature. In Madison, the clerk asked me upon my first visit how I found the location and my somewhat joking response was, “I am Quaker and knew what to look for.” While joking, my retort does have an element of truth since the space was hidden from view from the major roads, which is common for Quaker worship spaces. It is easy to miss the signs that might be at the site due to their minimalist, simple nature. Within the actual spaces, both had simple square setups of chairs for worshippers to choose. There were no clear markings or trappings of traditional Christian worship, as the designs are generally simple and functional in nature. Both locations had a library right next to the worship space where various publications were accessible to the members. The space was designed to be functional as a worship space first and the community gathering areas had a very secondary feel to them. In both of these areas no interviews took place in the worship area as each person chose to have the interview at a different site.

The sites chosen were varied in nature from commercial coffee shops to personal homes. Each space was individually chosen and at times fit into the nature of the conversation and at other times stood in strong contrast to their personal beliefs.

These contrasts provide an interesting dualism of ideas and practices that I look at in this work.

The final site is the Quaker meeting in Sandy Spring. This site is one of the earliest established Quaker meetings in the United States and this is frequently pointed out on plaques and signs at the location. The site is invisible from the main road and is only found after driving a short way down a small road. Once you arrive at the site the first thing you see is the communal house where the First Day School and hospitality spaces are. Immediately beyond is the large and well-documented graveyard that stands in between the communal house and the meeting space. The final building and largest by a fair margin is the actual meeting house. The meeting house is designed to house approximately 200 families; by Quaker standards, it is exceptionally large. Once inside it matches the description of other Quaker meeting spaces. The chairs were arranged in a rectangular pattern and the only deviation from the others was the inclusion of the second-floor balcony. The main area was under construction at the time of my visit and a much smaller satellite location was used at the local Quaker school. This was a much more modest space and matched the internal description of the larger space. From the outside the meeting house that was being used could easily be identified as a church and the only reason it could be identified as a Quaker space was the sign out front.

The informants in Sandy Spring chose to interact with me in the communal space as my time was very short at the site. The conversations were all much more informal in nature as the community was small at the time due to the August visit. This resulted in a much more communal conversation and the individuals chose to talk more on the importance of the testimony of simplicity. This was a case where

reflection was very important to each individual as they worked through similar questions for themselves.

Throughout this work, you will notice that there is minimal information that can be used to identify the informants. I felt that due to the sensitive nature of capital and material wealth that it was important to maintain informant confidentiality throughout the process. Many informants agreed with this concept due to the personal information that was being revealed to me. Therefore, throughout most of the stories and interviews are intermixed and I use simple pronouns to identify the informants.

Theory

The historical analysis will focus on *aparigraha* and simplicity in the formal structures of each tradition, and the changes that have occurred through communal development and social shifts through history. I will be utilizing the theories of Weber and Foucault. Weber (2002) explores the link between ascetic ideals and the flourishing of capitalism in the Protestant tradition. I will apply this theory to explore the link between the ethical principles and the way in which members of the communities engage with capitalism in both the Quaker and Jain traditions.

Foucault's (1995) genealogical method aides my attempt to trace the historical evolution of these concepts, focusing specifically on the importance of communal mentality in their interpretation. The importance of focusing on communal interaction is to understand how each community interprets both consumerism and the ideals of non-ownership, which in turn helps us to understand how individual members of each community navigate these interpretations as they practice them in their daily lives.

These theories will be explored further throughout the body of this work.

Chapters

Each chapter will focus on a different element of the questions presented. Chapter 1 will focus on the historical understanding and framework presented for both *aparigraha* and the testimony of simplicity. I show how these ethical frames are presented and understood in both early and contemporary writings. Chapter 2 focuses on the way individuals understand appropriate accumulation of capital and the appropriate amount of capital to have. Chapter 3 focuses on the way in which people navigate perceived transgressions of these principles and the appropriate ways to utilize capital. I focus on how respondents in both traditions are clear that there are means of properly using money. Chapter 4 gives stories of how individuals choose to follow these principles in their personal lives. The intent is to bring life to the ideas and show the practices of those who choose to engage with them. The conclusion will put Weber's ideas of how Protestant religious ethics led to commercial success into conversation with the two traditions' ideas about the appropriate way to earn wealth. I also put Foucault's ideas of communal policing into conversation with both traditions' ideas about proper earning and giving of capital to show that there is a strong communal way of understanding what wealth and ownership mean in each tradition.

CHAPTER 1

A History of the Ethical Concepts of *Aparigraha* and the Testimony of Simplicity

Introduction

The exploration of the ideals of *aparigraha* (non-grasping) and the testimony of simplicity in modern times must start with a historical perspective of how each tradition saw their respective ethical ideals at their inception. Were they simply something intended for the ascetic classes or was this something that could be applied to members of the laity? How did the communities see these ideas fitting into the everyday lives of the average practitioner? What needs to be done with material goods when they are acquired? These important questions arose when talking about applying ascetic ethics to a lay class that demands engagement with the world. We must also explore ambiguities both in canonical texts and modern interpretations to look for the ways in which communities and individuals can develop their personal ideals in which to live by.

While exploring the concepts of *aparigraha* and the testimony of simplicity it is important to identify which members of each community are monastics and who are the laity in each tradition due to the challenges of applying monastic based ideals to a portion of the community that must engage with and be part of the world. With regards to the Jain community the lines between monastic, and laity are more clearly defined through a formalized structure or renunciation in which aspiring mendicants and mendicants have defined lines based on vows that have been taken. This project is exploring members of the Jain tradition who have not taken these formal vows and are still engaging with the world in regards to familial, financial and material relationships. Quaker communities present a challenge when defining monastic and laity due to the lack of a monastic order and the idea that all members are held to the

same standards regardless of station in life. Therefore, within this project every person who self identifies (this is important since not every practitioner formally applies for membership to a Quaker meeting or community) is considered both monastic and lay within the Quaker faith.

The Historical Concept of *Aparigraha*

The Jain ideal of *aparigraha* is defined around this idea of monastic life and the capacity of non-ownership that can be lived out in an ideal state. To begin with defining what this concept of *aparigraha* means I look to the *Yogaśāstra* written by Hemacandra. Hemacandra is important in Jain literature and history due to his writing of the *Yogaśāstra*, which is a text on the nature of Jainism written with the intent of educating King Kumārapāla which gave Hemacandra an elevated status within the Caulukya dynasty but within Jainism. In his chapter the proper conduct of a mendicant he describes the *mahavrata* (great vow) of *aparigraha* as “Propertylessness consists in abandoning obsessional desires with respect to any object, because obsessional desires contribute to the mind’s bewilderment, even when nothing is present” (Hemacandra 2002, 25). The translator in this case has chosen to use the term propertylessness for *aparigraha*, which I choose to use non-grasping or non-ownership. What we are seeing in this idea behind the concept is that ownership or material possessions bewilder the mind and cause problems of attachment. We also have strong lines around what is to be abandoned, which is described as “any object” or material possession that one can claim ownership over. It is very important to note that Hemacandra is addressing this towards mendicants and this is the ideal that I will be showing is not always applicable to lay communities.

Important to understanding the difference is Umāsvāti’s text the *Praśamaratiprakaraṇa*. This text is the first recognized text on the way in which laity

should approach the *vratas* (vows). In the introduction section *ācārya* of the householders the challenges of applying mendicant ethics to householders are noted briefly through the statement “the austere life of a monk is indeed extremely difficult and rare souls dare to observe it. It is practically not possible for laymen to adopt this path. Thus, for the benefit of the laymen, another easy path is shown and it is known as Śrāvakadhara-duties of householder” (Umasvati 1989, 23). This is important to note as in many cases the vows of a householder are just a minor interpretation of the ascetic vows and members of the laity rather than being identified as an important aspect of the Jain community are simply seen as a set of lower monastics who have not reached that level of practice yet. This text commits to this idea in an interesting way as there are only seven total verses dedicated to the practices of laity. Umāsvāti states “(In this world) the house-holder who has firm faith in Jainism, knowledge of Tattvas, and whose heart is tinged with Right Faith, vows of conduct and principles of reflections (*bhāvanā*) and who has completely shunned gross injury, un-truthfulness, theft, adultery, greed” (Umāsvāti 1989, 70). Note that here householders are shown as needing to be tinged with the nature of ascetic vows, which signifies that they are to showing these ideals on some level. The section continues with “fasting and putting limitations to the enjoyment of worldly objects” (Umāsvāti 1989, 70). Note here that householders are looking to put limitations on their possessions to live out *aparigraha* in a manner that does still allow for some possession as it is important to engage in the world in support of family and community and therefore would be physically impossible to abandon all ownership as a householder.

Another important text used when defining the nature of householder ethics is *The Householder's Dharma (Ratna-Karanda-Sravakachara)* as the primary purpose of the text was to define and describe the duties of householders or lay members of

the Jain tradition. This text still shows the life of a householder as one that is understood through monastic practices that have been redefined to allow for engagement with the world. It is stated “By the avoidance of subtle sins beyond the determined limits, [even] the minor vows of a householder are able to rank as the unqualified vows of asceticism” (Samantabhadrasvāmī 1975, 24-25). Important to note in this statement is that the householder living out the minor vows in perfection stands only as high as the unqualified major vows of an ascetic, which puts householders into a subservient stance to those as a monastic. The section continues with “Putting limitation, for the day, even within the limits are allows [*sic*] by the *parigraha parimana vrata* (the fifth vow), according to one’s requirements, and with a view to reducing the sense of attachment and the like, on the choice of the objects of senses, (is called) *bhohopabhoga pariman vrata*” (Samantabhadrasvāmī 1975, 28). and concludes with “that which is undesirable is to be given up, also that which does not become [the exalted], because deliberate refraining from the use of suitable (useful or sanctioned) objects is a *vrata* (vow)” (Samantabhadrasvāmī 1975, 29). Again the lines of definition are around what it means to give up and live in an ideal form that is defined by monastics. There is a strong focus on what to give up and not how to control, interact or live with ownership principles in the world as householders must interact in some capacity and through these ambiguous ideas of what to restrict or give up gives rise to individual lay interpretations of ownership and non-ownership.

Jaina Yoga by R. Williams surveys medieval Jain literature and through these texts we can observe more defined lines on what is to be limited and ownership principles, as it gives lines by which the householders can understand and experience ownership through their lives. In this text, he shows the objects in which a

householder may go over or exceed (*aticāra*) the appropriate amount as defined within the *śrāvākachara* texts. Williams states “in the traditional Śvetāmbara view the *aticāras* of this *vrata* are: (i) exceeding the limits set for land and houses by incorporation; (ii) exceeding the limits set for gold and silver by donation; (iii) exceeding the limits set for grain and other foodstuffs by packing together; (iv) exceeding the limits set for bipeds and quadrupeds by natural reproduction; exceeding the limits set for household chattels by combination” (Williams 1991, 96-97). Note that these are enumerated further based on these categories, but there are no clearly defined lines on the appropriate amount of each substance. Williams points this out and states “all these *aticāras* consist in using various expedients to circumvent the interdictions which devolve from a man’s self-imposed restrictions to the extent of his property” (Williams 1991, 97). This self-imposed moderation is an important way of understanding the concept of non-ownership as the clearly defined lines do not exist for the laity. This ambiguity again leaves space for the householders to expand their ideas both individually and in communal fashion. *Aticāra* (exceeding) of these objects fills a curious space in that is defined through a personal nature. This is important as the personal nature of these violations brings them out of a formal sphere and into one of individual or communal ethic formation. Williams notes “For those Śvetāmbara writers who are influenced by the *Tattvārtha-sūtra* – Siddhasena Gaṇin and Haribhadra – and in general for the Digambara authorities, the *aticāras* imply no more than willfully exceeding the limits set for the nine categories of possessions ranged under the five headings above” (Williams 1991, 97). Ideas of will and intention are important in determining whether there is a true violation or not as householders must have possessions to exist within the world.

The Tattvārtha-Sūtra is important in forming the identity of what *aparigraha* means as it is a canonical text authored by Umāsvāti that is accepted by both the Śvetāmbara and Digambara sects of Jainism. This gives the text an elevated level of importance when set as an authoritative text. Within the text, it is stated “To give up attachment to the agreeable, and aversion to the disagreeable, objects of the five senses” (Umāsvāti 1994, 171). The definition starts here with a focus on identifying what it means within a monastic community and then later identifies what it would be as a vow of householders and thus a lower level of application to that of the ascetics. This transition is identified through the statement “Observers of the vows fall into two classes: the householders and the homeless monks who have renounced violence and possessiveness. The householder is the observer of the small vows” (Umāsvāti 1994, 176). Umāsvāti is drawing an identifiable line between the monastic class and the lay class which becomes important in the analysis of what it means to understand possessiveness in the laity. He continues his definition of the small vows by defining the violation of the vow with the statement “The failure to keep within the set limits of tillable land and buildings, silver and gold, livestock and grain, male and female slaves, and of base metals, earthenware and wooden furniture” (Umāsvāti, 1994, 180). Williams has enumerated these items and violations in *Jaina Yoga* and pointed towards how the violation can occur. Both maintain ambiguity in their definitions however, which leads to a diverse communal and individual understanding of what the lay definition of *aparigraha* would be in real world application.

Contemporary Jain Understanding of *Aparigraha*

The first text for contemporary interpretation that I will draw upon is *The Economics of Lord Mahavira* by Ācārya Mahaprajna (1920-2010). While Ācārya (Leader of a Jain community) Mahaprajna was the leader of the Terapanth order, he supported the

expansion of the publication of knowledge about Jainism. Thus, despite their relatively small population within Jain society, Terapanthi texts are numerous and easily obtainable, especially in the West. In the text, *Ācārya* Mahaprajna explores the ways in which householders (*grhastas*) can use the teachings of Lord Mahavira to understand modern economic standards and ideals. In the Preface, he opens with the statement, “A family-moored person cannot wholly follow the principle of abnegation. He cannot lead a life of an ascetic who lives on doles offered by others. For him Mahavira laid down the standards governing desires and prescribed the limits of consumption” (Mahaprajna 2001). Mahaprajna’s clear statement on the difference between the life of a householder and that of a mendicant is important, as he pointing to the idea that monastic vows are not applicable outside the mendicant life.

In the same text, under the heading “The Undesirable Consumption,” we start to see the definition of limits that *Ācārya* Mahaprajna is formulating in his thought with the statement, “...any comfort, which does harm to our physical health is not desirable” (Mahaprajna 2001, 10). This section analyzes briefly what it means to bring comfort in as he tells a story on the problems of alcohol. He analyzes the way alcohol (note he is discussing moderated use and not overuse of intoxicating substances) makes life easier since it increases the capacity for relaxation, but recognizes that it also clouds the mind from the true needs of food and water. He calls the desire of relaxation from alcohol “the language of logic” as the person who is consuming is using logic to validate the necessity of alcohol, which can be used as a stand in for material substances, in their life. This analogy – of abstaining from creature comforts to prevent a distraction to the true necessities – shows his justification for what is appropriate without giving any hard definitions or lines. This becomes important when comparing Jainism and Quakerism, as in the latter it is

frequently noted that excess is defined as what distracts from access to the divine or the real problems of the world.

The chapter titled “Limitation of Individual Ownership and Personal Consumption” is where *Ācārya* Mahaprajna looks at the limitations of consumption and ways in which to analyze and define the limits. Throughout the chapter, he analyzes two types of society, one which has uncontrolled desires and one which has controlled desires, which gives rise to some important ideas around what it means to have uncontrolled desires or excess. He states “The wants may be uncontrolled social structure: In course of time, wants take the form of camouflaged needs, and they go on increasing. These can never be satisfied” (Mahaprajna 2001, 45). His focus on what is a want and what is a need takes us a good distance towards what might be in excess when placed in conversation with his alcohol example. For him wants are something that make life easier or more comfortable, but mask the true needs of life. This definition is important since it starts to give tangible ideas as to how excess can be understood for lay practitioners, while still allowing for enough ambiguity for individual understanding and interpretation within communities. It is important to note that throughout this chapter *Ācārya* Mahaprajna never attempts to or clearly defines what is the minimum, but simply gives ideas as to what a minimum may look like for some.

Ācārya Mahaprajna looks to interpret texts to supplement the ideas presented by Lord Mahavira while he explores the idea of control. The book states “Mahavira maintained that no rules could be prescribed for the limitation of earning or accumulation of wealth” (Mahaprajna 2001, 51). He explores Mahavira’s statements about the two levels of control, the first being proper conduct in earning wealth; the second being the limitation of personal consumption. The ambiguity is still persistent

in this definition as he gives examples of how an ideal householder might carry out the limitation of personal consumption through taking vows of only owning or using a set number of items at any given time. This is not formalized however and through both text and lived practice is open to substantial interpretation by communities and individuals.

Jaini's oft-cited *The Jaina Path of Purification* identifies the ways in which the path of the layman in Jainism has been historically understood and formulated. His first important note states, "Strictly speaking, then, the vows of the layman are really just a modified, relatively weak version of the real Jaina vows" (Jaini 1998 [1979], 160). This important note points to a thread running throughout many of the texts on lay conduct: the *mahavratas* are usually strongly defined, but when turning to the householder application of them, Jain authors frequently introduce a more ambiguous formulation that treats them as aspirational goals. Jaini calls attention to the importance of this strategy, as monks who write these texts depend on the laity for success and survival, as they must receive their food, financial support, etc. from lay communities. Thus, we see that it became important to leave a path open for the laity to support the maintenance of the monastic tradition while inculcating ascetic values that connected lay and mendicant praxis into a coherent whole.

When analyzing what *aparigraha* means, Jaini turns to texts to understand and interpret what the vow means. He focuses upon ways that *śrāvakācāra* texts not only open space for ownership, but even expand the limits of what lay Jains may ethically own. He sums up the tendency in these texts thus: "The Jaina scriptures often define *parigraha* as the delusion (*mūrcchā*) of possession – that is, harboring such false notions as 'this is mine' or 'I made that' and imagining that one can hold on forever to what he now 'has'" (Jaini 1998, 177). Jaini notes in the same passage that this is an

impossible ideal for the layperson to meet, since it involves completely giving up all possessions, which is only possible for mendicants. Broadly speaking, these texts define a layperson as one who limits possessions, distinct from the full renunciation of the mendicant path. This strategy of limitation is the key to understanding how the laity apply ascetic principles to engaging with and living in the world.

John Cort in his book, *Jains in the World*, further explores the way the Jain laity interpret and practice Jain vows. He utilizes the concept of wellbeing to develop a way to understand how lay communities live in their sphere of influence. Cort states:

“The realm of wellbeing is not ideologically defined, and is therefore somewhat more difficult to delineate. Wellbeing involves what Glenn Yocum has described as ‘how human beings negotiate and cope with life’s quotidian difficulties ... the mundane, ordinary stuff – aspects of everyday life that are probably shared by almost all human beings’. Whereas the mokṣa-mārg involves the increasing removal of oneself from all materiality in an effort to realize one’s purely spiritual essence, wellbeing is very much a matter of one’s material embodiment.” (Cort 2001, 7)

Cort further explains what he sees as the goal of the realm of wellbeing. He states “The ‘goal’ of this realm, to the extent that it is at all goal-oriented, is a state of harmony with and satisfaction in the world, a state in which one’s social, moral, and spiritual interactions and responsibilities are properly balanced” (Cort 2001, 7). For Jains, this involves balancing capital and material wealth with their religious life.

Lay communities must find ways to navigate methods to understand what they have obtained and their relationship with it when they look at the idea of excess.

James Laidlaw explores this problem in Jainism in his *Riches and Renunciation*. In his ethnographic account of *punya* (merit, meritorious action) in lay Jain communities, he notes that donation or giving (*dān*) results in merit insofar as it is done with non-attachment in mind. He states, “To make a donation is more likely to

bring merit, and so luck and good fortune, but in so far as it is motivated by non-attachment to material possessions (*aparigraha*), or mercy (*daya*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*)” (Laidlaw 1995, 28). It is important to note in this statement that donation must be motivated by these ideals, of which *aparigraha* is a part. A donation made must not be missed or desired, as we must recognize that ownership of that item (whether money or another material object) was never truly our own and that ownership is a fleeting idea that leads only down a problematic path of attachment. Thus, even the giving of wealth is dangerous unless the ideal of *aparigraha* is held in mind by the giver. This plays out in examples of food donation to monastics by lay members of Jainism. The food cannot be prepared specially for the monastic (meaning no extra food is to be prepared with intent of feeding monastics) and the giving of the food must not be depriving another of the necessary needs that they have (missed by someone).

Laidlaw also calls out the problems of ambiguity in his own text as he states “The twelve restraints could in theory be construed so leniently that every lay Jain could formally adopt them” (Laidlaw 1995, 28). His exploration on the *anuvrats* (small vows or vows of the householder) show that they are broad and easily interpreted in a manner that is easy and stands as something that may not reliably put someone on the ascetic path in their current life time. This gives rise to taking formal vows of restraint for the most austere laity that will formally prepare them for potential mendicant life. This path of *baravrats* (restraints) is not practiced by every lay Jain as earlier texts might suggest or encourage through their ideal of reducing consumption and ownership to stay within limitations, which is important to note since the limitations may be set by the individual who is choosing to follow it. This open definition of excess creates a space in which identifying material wealth as

something that can result in merit as both problematic and important. The nature of earning merit is important, but problematic since the individual has become attached to both the idea of merit and the material that acts as the vehicle of merit.

Laidlaw ties the idea of restraint in possession back to the way in which Jainism explores inaction. He states, “Limiting the area of one’s activities means approaching by degrees the state of non-action” (Laidlaw 1995, 181). By applying the idea of restraint in possession to the idea of reducing areas of action (the less we consume the smaller the impact of both the creation of the product and the wealth used to procure the product), practitioners limit their overall action in the world and move towards the ideal of the *mahavratas* in their own lay life. Again, the material possessions are identified both as a positive and a negative interactions since the ability to reduce is dependent of the ability to also own or accept.

With *punya* in mind, we can turn back to the *Yogaśāstra* of Hemacandra and look at a section on the proper conduct of giving. Hemacandra enumerates this proper conduct around wealth donation, which is important due to the nature of who is states is appropriate to give the money to. He states, “Thus, one who is firm in [the twelve] vows and with devotion strews his wealth in the seven ‘fields’ including [images, temples, scriptures, male mendicants, female mendicants, laymen [and] laywomen], and one who out of compassion [strews his wealth on] the oppressed, [such as person] is said to be an exceptional layman” (Hemacandra 2002, 69). He organizes the distribution of wealth into a hierarchy starting with images and temples, which are central to maintaining a lay tradition. The establishment of what could be defined as the *axis mundi* of the community – the temple – is of the highest import here; he places the support of mendicants directly afterward. We will see this pattern of wealth distribution with the Quakers as well. This is important to note because of the

differences in the mechanisms by which texts have authority in each tradition, which I investigate later in this chapter.

Jaini's final statement in his chapter on the lay path points to his view that a lay Jain is simply a mendicant in waiting. He writes, "Thus [the layman] is ready for the exalted practices of the mendicant path, a path which may at last carry his soul to the brink of liberation" (Jaini 1998, 185). This points to an important idea in what it means to be a proper layperson as understood through ascetic ideals. The idea of *punya* becomes important and it prepares householders for the more rigorous path of asceticism and keeps an individual on the path towards liberation. Which gives new insight into the way in which the laity may choose to interact with their material possessions and wealth. The material is no longer a problem, but can be reinterpreted as vehicle for *punya* and moving towards higher births and eventual liberation.

The idea that a Jain layperson is a mendicant in waiting is not necessarily opposed to Cort's concept of wellbeing. If we accept that earning *punya* is a goal for lay Jains, then we can see how it would aid in the navigation of their religious and personal lives. *Punya* itself provides a balance between worldly activity and living an increasingly ascetic life by creating an ethic about, among other things, the proper use of money (as enumerated by Hemacandra and in other *śrāvaka-cāra* texts). *Punya*, then, links the pursuit of wellbeing to the Jain soteriology by creating a mechanism by which Jains pursue ethical action in the world. This idea will be explored further in chapters 2 and 3.

The Historical Concept of the Testimony of Simplicity

Before we explore the historical changes of the testimony of simplicity, the Quaker (also identified as the Religious Society of Friends) idea of the divine must be understood in transhistorical perspective. Quaker theology calls for people to perceive

the divine within every living being; individuals are challenged to discover their own ways to commune with the divine. The belief that everyone has access to God is important as there is no minister interpreting texts on behalf of the community; exegesis becomes an individual task. William Penn (who will be discussed further later) states this concisely in his *No Cross, No Crown*. He writes, “I tell thee then, first, he is the great spiritual light of the world that enlightens every one that comes into the world; by which he manifests to them their deeds or darkness and wickedness, and reproveth them for committing them, secondly he is not far away from thee.” (Penn 1853, 1.2.3).¹ Here, Penn directly declares that the spirit of Jesus is close and provides access to the correct path for the practitioner. This brings context another important term within Quakerism, light, which Penn refers to as “spiritual light.” Quakers today frequently called this “inner light” or “the divine.” This spiritual nature, always accessible, is the innate goodness in all living beings and is the purity of Christ that is recognized as important within Quaker thought and practice.

The Quaker testimony of simplicity has seen an evolution that strives to continually explore what it means to live simply. This evolution is important as the community must find ways to engage and exist within society rather than stand completely aside, as we see in the case of traditional Amish societies, which forsake modern conveniences such as electricity to live in isolated communities apart from modern living standards. Quakers chose instead to live in modern society rather than live out the testimony by separating from it.

To understand the evolution of Quaker thought on the testimony of simplicity, we must track it from its inception with the founders to contemporary times. We see a

¹ Since the edition I used does not contain page numbers, I have cited the text by Part, Chapter, and Verse.

changing understanding of what counts as materialism itself. I begin with George Fox and William Penn.

George Fox is regarded as the founder of Quakerism due to the vision he received of many souls rejoining Jesus at Pendle Hill, England. This led him to travel and preach his message of Christian reform that was heavily focused around ascetic practices. Since Fox is regarded as the founder of the tradition, the community places enormous weight on his body of writings to formulate their ethics. His conduct in life is considered very pure and thus sets the ideal for behavior even within some modern communities. His belief in simplicity in all action (e.g. ownership, speech, ritual practices) shapes the historical frame in which the testimony of simplicity was formed. Central to his understanding is the belief in simplicity in all aspects of life. For Fox, it was not simply a matter of materialistic concerns, but a complete way of life. Fox's journals, written during his travels, are the source material from which Quaker doctrine derives. The journals focus on his personal experiences and thus contain few if any doctrinal or dogmatic imperatives; rather, the stories of his personal life inform later dogma. Here, I focus on his own ideas concerning materialism.

Fox's first journal contains a conversation with an early Quaker by the name of Rice Jones, who expresses to Fox his desire to speak to the community in Nottingham. Rice begins with a statement expressing disappointment in the community there for what he perceives to be their vanity. Jones claims "that he had been the man that had scattered such as had been tender, and some that had been convinced, and had been led out of many vanities of the world, which he had formerly judged; but now he judged the power of God in them, and they, being simple, turned to him; and so he and they were turned to be vainer than the world: for many of his followers were become the greatest foot-ball players and wrestlers in the country"

(Fox 1852, 328). The two figures then explore what it means to follow this early ethical frame of simple living as there is a community that has converted to Quakerism and is thus being “judged by the power of God” and no longer by the physical materials of possession in the world (ibid.). However, Rice sees the problem of wealth through the idea that this community has become “vainer than the world” since they have amassed great wealth and success through professional sports (ibid.). Jones sees this as a problem of living out simplicity. Fox begins his reply by stating that “it was the serpent in him (i.e. Jones), that had scattered, and done hurt to such as were tender towards the Lord” (Fox 1852, 328). Fox is looking to explore the root of why this had occurred and looked to the message itself and the way in which it had been presented to the community. The conclusion to this conversation is where the strong line of definition occurs that leads to later understandings and actions around the testimony of simplicity as it concludes with “for they denied the inward cross, the power of God, and so went into vanity” (Fox 1852, 328). This is a powerful statement about what it means to engage with vanity; it is a statement about how vanity is a denial of the nature and power of God. Fox then makes a statement about the “internal nature of the cross,” by which he means that one should inherently deny materialism and live a simple life. To live out his ideal of simplicity would be to deny materialism at the core at this point of Quaker history.

With a short historical leap forward to William Penn we start to see some ambiguity introduced into ideas about materialism. Penn was a contemporary of George Fox and is considered a prominent and important figure of early Quakerism due to his success in teaching and expanding the Quaker faith. The most important of his contributions was the founding of the colony of Pennsylvania with its Quaker government focused on religious freedom and diversity. Pennsylvania was a physical

location for Quakers to escape the persecution occurring in England. Penn himself had frequently been imprisoned and persecuted for his strict adherence to Quaker belief and practice as well as his desire to speak the message of Quakerism. He was a prolific writer; his journals and articles illuminate the life of an early influential figure in Quakerism.

Penn's *No Cross, No Crown* is his most influential work, which he composed over many years. He is critical of the perceived excesses of Christian behavior in seventeenth-century England. The earliest sections of the text, which were originally written during his imprisonment in the Tower of London and published in 1669, stand as his harshest criticism of English society. A summary of the contents of the first chapter shows the contempt with which he held Christians in England at the time:

1. Of the Necessity of the Cross of Christ in general; yet the little regard Christians have to it. 2. The degeneracy of Christendom from purity to lust, and moderation to excess. 3. That worldly lusts and pleasures are become the care and study of Christians, so that they have advanced upon the impiety of infidels. 4. This defection a second part to the Jewish tragedy, and worse than the first: the scorn Christians have cast on their Saviour. 5. Sin is of one nature all the world over; sinners are of the same church, the devil's children; profession of religion in wicked men makes them but the worse (Penn 1853).

The chapter critiques the ways in which professed Christians choose to live their lives, which he considers excessive and lustful. They are worse than sinners; they are false Christians. He draws a hard line on the way in which people who are professed Christians must live their lives by offering moral and ethical imperatives which in turn inform the rest of the text. He further sets up his critique by stating,

This has been, is, and will be the doom of all worldly Christians: an end so dreadful, that if there were nothing of duty to God, or obligation to men, being a man, and one acquainted with the terrors of the Lord in the way and work of my own salvation, compassion alone were sufficient to excite me to this dissuasive [*sic*] against the worlds superstitions and lusts, and to invite the professors of

Christianity to the knowledge and obedience of the daily cross of Christ. (Penn 1853, 1.1.8).

Penn is directly addressing those that he perceives as standing outside the ideals of Christianity. Throughout this opening chapter, he only identifies Christendom and not any denomination or tradition, which suggests a perceived purity of the message that he is delivering. This perceived purity is important as later, when discussing his ideas of ownership, Penn himself introduces ambiguity and leaves the ideological frames open to individual interpretation.

Continuing in the early text, we see Penn's ideas of the testimony of simplicity in early Quaker history. Penn's strongest interpretation draws upon biblical texts, especially the sections on the rich and the Kingdom of God. He draws upon the following passage in Mark: "Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him and said unto him, "One thing thou lackest: Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven; and come, take up the cross and follow me." (Mark 10.21).² This passage concludes with Jesus asking how hard is it for people who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God, which leads to his famous response: "It is easier for a camel to through the eye of a needle, then for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God" (Mark 10.25). Penn's interpretation of this passage leads him to conclude that the "doctrine of self-denial is the condition to eternal happiness" (Penn 1853, 1.4.8). In short, the idea of simplicity is authorized by the purity of the message of Christ. Penn's hardline statement is based on his understanding of the necessity to abandon wealth in order to enter the Kingdom of God. He interprets abandonment of wealth as a moral prerequisite to the condition of eternal happiness. Therefore, he

² For consistency with the Quaker message I quote from the King James Bible, as this is the version of that is most commonly given to young Quakers for study and religious upbringing. It is also likely the only version of the Bible Penn read.

holds that we must all live out the testimony of simplicity to continue being true members of Christendom.

Penn, however, introduces ambiguity into this otherwise clear statement earlier in *No Cross, No Crown*, which lends itself more towards the argument of giving and donation as means of living out the testimony of simplicity. This passage leads more towards contemporary understandings of the way in which members should live out the testimony; and may be the beginnings of how the ideas evolved into the experience we see and understand today. Penn states,

The lawful self which we are to deny, is that conveniency, ease, enjoyment, and plenty, which in themselves are so far from being evil, that they are the bounty and blessings of God to us, as husband, wife, child, house, land, reputation, liberty, and life itself; these are God's favours, which we may enjoy with lawful pleasure and justly improve as our honest interest. But when God requires them, at what time soever the lender calls for them or is pleased to try our affections by our parting with them; I say, when they are brought into competition with him they must not be preferred, they must be denied (Penn 1853, 1.4.7).

It is important to note that this statement supports the worldly amassing of wealth and substance as they are "God's gift" which elevates that substance to a higher plane.

Penn is here taking the stance that these items should be permitted and enjoyed while it is appropriate to do so, but that there is a time in which we are to deny material things to move forward to enter the Kingdom of God. This ambiguity is important, as it allows for individual interpretation and actually creates a necessity for the community to work out the proper contours of the ideal through ethical reflection.

Contemporary Quaker Understanding of the Testimony of Simplicity

The ambiguity just described persists into modern interpretation of the testimony of simplicity. One of the modern authoritative texts frequently cited in Quaker communities is *Faith and Practice*. This text is published by the various communities

through the oversight of their local Yearly Meeting; as such there are multiple publications at any time. For consistency in regards to authority I will be referencing the 2002 publication from Philadelphia's Yearly Meeting, as it is their most recent edition and is the largest regional Yearly Meeting in the United States. The text serves as an authority on how Quaker practices and ideals are to be carried out in practice. This covers everyday tasks such as the raising and education of children in the Quaker faith to major life events such as birth, marriage and death. Thus, the text holds a unique place in the Quaker communal ethical formation, as many regard *Faith and Practice* as an authority determining how they should live out the testimonies in their personal lives. This is important to note since despite being regarded as a highly authoritative text, on the topic of the testimony of simplicity the main body of the text is curiously quiet, leaving the interpretation of it to individual members. This is in contrast to the other testimonies, such as non-violence, which often invite extensive discussion.

The text recognizes the evolving and changing nature of the testimonies of Quakerism and makes clear that a rigid, well-defined testimony would be problematic to the core of practice. The text states, "The advices that follow concerning how we live our lives seek to avoid rigid definitions of these evolving testimonies" (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting 2002, 67). The text also states, "We have chosen to abandon the practice of recasting to suit our times a set of highly compact advices received from the earlier generations" (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting 2002, 82). These important statements show the personal nature and communal drive to understand the ideals, recognizing that a manual cannot give all the answers in a prescriptive way.

The text continues with a section titled "Advices," in which passages from earlier editions of *Faith and Practice* are summarized. As noted earlier, the Yearly

Meeting members present these earlier views as something to reflect upon and not necessarily to live out as the community's ideal. The advice included on the testimony of simplicity is, "Use your capabilities and possessions not as ends in themselves but as God's gift entrusted to you. Share them with others; use them with humility, courtesy and affection" (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting 2002, 83). The clear line to Penn's thought is evident here, as again the material aspects of the world are regarded as gifts from God himself. This gives Quakers the idea that wealth is to be enjoyed and accepted in the proper way, which they declare includes sharing, humility, courtesy and affection. However, the text neither clearly defines what this means for the individual or the community, nor does it clearly show how wealth may be understood in a real-world scenario.

There are sections of the core text that discuss how to push past the limitations of present interpretations of the testimonies. In a section on family, for example, there is a powerful statement about the way in which proper stewardship of resources is important in a family environment. It states,

It is within the family that we initially seek to live our testimonies. Two of these, simplicity and stewardship, are especially important. A family that strives to practice simplicity will exercise stewardship in the use of its social and material resources. Considerations of stewardship should include decisions regarding the family's financial commitments to its monthly and quarterly or regional meetings and the yearly meeting (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting 2002, 70).

Important in this statement is that there are financial commitments to the Quaker community and that this should be instilled as a value through the family. This is one place where an ethical imperative is drawn and it is important to recognize that financial means need to be available to correctly support the religious community in its continued existence and growth.

Faith and Practice also devotes a substantial portion of the book to individual essays from members on their understanding of Quaker life, particularly the testimonies. These short contributions are important since they show the ways in which individuals express their own understandings, and give a range of views from multiple Quaker communities. They consistently engage with the ambiguity in the early works that gives rise to the range of practices. For example, an excerpt written in 1987 by one John Punshon states, “The choice of the word ‘testimony’ is instructive. The testimonies are ways of behaving but are not ethical rules” (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting 2002, 197). Here, a member is calling direct attention to the idea that we cannot treat any testimony as a moral or ethical imperative, but a model by which members may live their lives.

One community’s interpretation of simplicity draws upon both the historical origin of the testimony and the way in which we understand modern capitalist society. Written by the North Carolina yearly meeting in 1983 (recognized as a more conservative community), the selection states, “The testimony of outward simplicity began as a protest against the extravagance and snobbery which marked English society in the 1600s. In whatever forms this protest is maintained today, it must be seen as a testimony against involvement with things that tend to dilute our energies and scatter our thoughts, reducing us to lives of triviality and mediocrity” (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting 2002, 158). They call attention both to the original context for the writings of Fox and Penn and the way in which members may understand simplicity today. There is an unmistakable anxiety expressed here about a potential move into a world of mediocrity through materialism, which forces Quakers to develop a framework to define what it means to become excessive in possessions.

This will be explored further later when discussing the individual ways of defining the testimony of simplicity.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the historical and textual foundations that inform contemporary lay Jain and Quaker understandings of possessiveness and ownership. In the case of the Jains, we see a twofold development. On the one hand, *aparigraha* is upheld as an ascetic ideal to which lay Jains should strive; this model, embedded in the manuals on lay conduct, conclude with the layperson becoming an ascetic. On the other hand, the tradition has developed a doctrine that the proper use of material wealth to maintain the community is a source of religious merit (*punya*), which allows for the focus to shift away from accumulation or even consumption to proper use of wealth. For lay Jains, this is most commonly enacted in the construction of temples, commissioning of images, and support for the monastic order.

Similarly, the Quaker tradition, despite – or rather because of – the lack of a monastic community, holds all members to the ascetic ideal of simplicity as vital to attaining salvation, exemplified in Penn’s statements about simplicity being the prerequisite to entering the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, Penn also expresses that wealth is the “gift of God” that is meant to demonstrate both his favor to individuals and to be used until it becomes a hindrance to what many of my informants called “communion with the Divine.” This has meant that the support for the Monthly (local), Quarterly (regional) and Yearly (supra-regional) Meetings, the institutions of Quaker society.

Foucault gives definition to this phenomenon in his essay “The Political Technology of Individuals” where he analyzes the way political entities create a ruling economy that strives to give power in upholding their own authority while

maintaining a level of happiness in the ruled class to legitimize their own authority. Foucault states “the individual becomes pertinent for the state insofar as he can do something for the strength of the state” (Foucault 1994, 409). His ideas may be applied by analogy to both the Jain and Quaker cases. In the former, the life of the religious elite depends upon the financial and material support of the laity. Monastic authority increases proportionately to the degree to which the laity supports them. For the Quakers, the Meetings establish and keep proper outlets for community wealth, namely for the sake of maintaining religious and community spaces.

The source of authority in Jain and Quaker texts bears productive comparison. There is a level of privilege afforded to each writer or compiled text that makes it stand above other options for lay understanding of the ideals of non-ownership. Frequently, this power is drawn from the person or people who have done the writing, as they are the religious leaders (monastics for Jains; Yearly Meetings for the Quakers). Jain mendicants, who themselves stand aside from this-worldly engagements, are nevertheless writing the rules for householders; they claim that a layperson should both uphold lesser versions of the ascetic *mahavratas* and support the institutions of the Jain community. Similarly, Penn espouses simultaneously the eschewal of wealth and its proper use. We must look, then, at the intention of such texts. Is the ambiguity intentional for the sake of maintaining the tradition, including the order of the religious authorities? I argue that such intentionality is visible in *Faith and Practice*'s claim on the responsibility of donation to the Quaker institution. While the Jain texts have not been as clear on this formulation, Hemacandra gives legitimacy to the importance of donation to religious institutions, recognizing what Laidlaw calls an “economy of merit” (*puṇya*). Both authorities recognize that institutions need to be upheld through lay wealth and material support.

We can see the formulation of a purposeful intentionality in the way that the ideas of simplicity and *aparigraha* are structured around lay communities. This plays out in the way communities understand their responsibility to use wealth and material goods to “maintain” the social and religious order, even when it has been redefined through diaspora. These ideas will be analyzed in further chapters through ethnographic interviews with individual members of both religious communities. However, it should be noted here that diaspora Jains lack the close proximity of monastic authority; in its place, the community center – and national organizations such as JAINA (Jain Associations in North America) – functions much the same way that the Quaker Meetings do. In this regard, we may understand the enthusiasm with which the Jains we met in Chicago and Miami support their local centers. We encountered this briefly in the Introduction; I will discuss this further in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

The Proper Amount of Wealth

Introduction

Now that we have explored some of the sources of textual authority in which the ethics of non-ownership (simplicity and *aparigraha*) are articulated, we turn now to the ways in which individual members understand wealth and appropriate degrees of ownership. As noted earlier, there is no line that definitively states when an individual has transgressed the “appropriate” amount of wealth or number of possessions in either tradition. This has led to the development of a complex pattern of individual and communal interpretation strategies for living within the parameters of these ideals.

To understand how lay Jains and Quakers formulate their ethics of wealth, I conducted a series of ethnographic interviews with individual members of each community. The purpose is to bring to light the ways in which individuals locate the sources of their ethical knowledge and the decision-making processes by which they live out their ethics in their personal lives. I observed a range of interpretations even when informants cited the same sources of knowledge. I also observed that there was significant communal influence on what people determined to be appropriate, which is affected by the area of residence, as well as financial and job opportunities. This is important since the opportunity to transgress must exist for transgression to become something for individuals to explore in their own lives.

A common thread among every visit I made during this research is that, whether Jain or Quaker, informants recognized that the ethics of ownership was not something they had thought about in their everyday lives. I frequently heard people say directly to me or within their own conversations that “the idea of *aparigraha* (or

testimony of simplicity) is important, but I never really think about it.” It was clear that, simply by my desire to engage with people on this concept, I had disrupted the daily thought processes and routines by calling attention to their perceptions of their own religious behavior. This was only further demonstrated by the desire of community members to talk with me about these ideas, to understand what it meant to me, and to learn the purpose of the research. The other piece of these statements was almost always, “What you are doing is very important as not enough people think about these concepts.” It is perhaps ironic that these two statements frequently occurred together.

That non-ownership is not something readily on my informants’ minds every day speaks to the success that these communities have enjoyed in capitalist endeavors. Other ethics, such as *satya* or truth-telling, *bhramacharya* or self-control, and *ahimsa* or non-violence are more readily on the minds of the people with whom I spoke. They thought about these concepts more often than non-ownership during daily events; there is, thus, less conflict over transgressions regarding proper levels of possession. Most commonly, when matters of ownership enter into my informants’ daily ethical deliberations, it is in reflecting on the manner in which wealth is gained. The methods by which wealth is gained is important in both Jain and Quaker communities, as earning wealth by proper means provides legitimacy to economic or material gain. We can look back at Penn’s statement about material goods being God’s gift to us, which he maintains should be enjoyed. Comparable is Jain austerity in family life through *tapas* and *upvas* (fasting) which is believed to lead to success in business, as austerity brings merit and good karma. The methods employed to earn wealth fill that thought gap; as the major concern is whether it is appropriate or not to have wealth at all.

I witnessed this play out in my personal life in the way my own Quaker community interacted with me concerning wealth and ownership. It was well known in the community that I was a computer repair technician for a major corporation. While many were quick to ask for assistance or support, it was also common to hear that comments about the predatory nature of capitalism, usually in the form of a strong critique of corporate pricing structures. Working for a corporation introduced the problem of legitimacy due to the inherent perception of greed. However, once I identified myself as someone who is exploring re-entering academic pursuits with a final ambition of being a professor, the question of legitimacy disappeared, as did questions around the amount of financial compensation that I would receive. The merit of the profession of teaching stood higher than the potential wealth that could be achieved.

Historically, this has played out in both Jain and Quaker communities through identifiable professions in which members regularly engage. Weber identifies that Quakers often engage in capitalism and farming practices, but he does not directly address Jains. For this, I look to Nevaskar's *Capitalists Without Capitalism*, as he explores the methods by which wealth and success were gained in both the Jain and Quaker communities. Nevaskar states in his conclusion, "Neither group objects to increasing its wealth; in fact, both consider it their sacred duty to do so as long as it is invested wisely and the dividends diverted towards useful ends" (Nevaskar 1971, 234-235). Nevaskar points to the idea of sacred duty as important within both traditions, which is critical to understand how wealth is commonly gained. To bring this back to my own example, the wealth I was gaining through corporate structures was profane by nature, but could be used for meritorious purposes; still, it maintained an essence of the troublesome nature of its procurement. The idea that merit may be gained

through proper use of wealth came up repeatedly through the course of my interviews with members of both traditions; I will address this more fully in Chapter 3.

Despite the fact that many people identified my research as important, their assent was not the immediate opening to conversations that I hoped it would be. Many informants kept their personal ideas to themselves; there was a clear feeling among some (especially in the Quaker communities, perhaps due to my identifying myself as a Quaker) that I was there to judge and potentially determine the legitimacy of their ideas and practices. This presented the first real problem of performing these interviews, which was: how would I get people to open up about a controversial topic such as money and ownership? Secondly, could I get people to discuss how they understood and practice these ethics in their everyday lives? I was frequently asked how I lived my own life and why I decided to research this topic before even formally beginning any interview process. My method to navigate this was to speak about my own life as a Quaker and how I see myself both following and transgressing the ideas of non-ownership in my own life. I detailed specifics, such as the quantity of electronics I own, what they mean to me, and the specific purposes to which I put them—I felt that it was important to identify that I use them for both work and leisure. I identified the ways in which I saw my own consumption practices and attempts to cut back (or expand) to live a comfortable life. I wanted people to see that this was not just a question I was asking of them, but something I was attempting to understand in my own life, and how I choose to live out these practices in my personal life. This strategy was frequently successful to start a dialogue.

Professions

My ability to travel to a range of sites was limited; as a result, the communities I visited were in university or metropolitan areas. This created a situation in which

many of the people interviewed had similar careers. This becomes more evident when the range of careers are broken down by tradition. Within the Quaker communities, two interviewees directly identified themselves as retired academic researchers at large universities, considered a meritorious livelihood for its societal benefits. One of the informants identified as a highly-successful independent business owner that focused on selling goods to individuals. Another identified as a former home designer who turned to charity work after a crisis of faith; the final interviewee chose not to reveal profession choice, but did mention volunteering with charities and the Friends (Quaker) general committee. Within the Jain community, every interviewee was either a practicing doctor or teacher. All of these professions fit within the framework of meritorious wealth accumulation as defined within the tradition.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber argues that a religious community applies its ethics to understand what professions are appropriate. He extends his theory to account for why they may be successful in those occupations. The choice of professions by the interviewees points in a similar direction as they all fit within the idea of following the religious beliefs of Jainism and Quakerism. One of the important common threads within both traditions is the strong belief in non-violence and being truthful in all interactions. This, Weber theorized, helps to inform and lead members of these communities into specific professions. Discussing Protestants' early attraction to business professions, Weber states, "But what was definitely new was the estimation of fulfillment of duty within secular callings as being of the absolutely highest level possible for moral activity" (Weber 2002, 29). This brings us back to the idea that there are correct and incorrect ways to earn capital based upon ethical principles that are understood through religion.

The distribution of professions shows that career decisions center on the desire to follow ethical principles. The common thread among all the professions is that they assist others by providing either care or product. The primary option chosen was care for others through medical or research fields. Everyone saw meaning in this pursuit, and when discussing their professions, the idea of money and capital disappeared from their minds. The fact that these were high-paying professions did not register during the conversations, appearing more as a side thought than a reason to pursue those careers. The sense of giving back through medical and research fields was universally regarded as the most important factor in choosing those careers.

One informant well exemplified this idea. He was a researcher at a major university in plant ecology and sustainability. He stated that he felt like his work “matters, helps people.” This succinct statement is filled with meaning for his chosen career. He repeatedly identified throughout the interview that he was focused on real-world application research in plant ecology since he wanted to assist in finding ways to support communities by promoting agriculture without the use of pesticides. He saw a problem in the way that farming was going, specifically the lack of sustainability, so he put himself in opposition to this and financially supported himself through this research. His method of enacting his ideas of non-ownership was also idealistic. For him, the financial side was unimportant; he purposefully turned down additional financial compensation over the years. The reason I call attention to this is that his reasoning was not centered on any religious or personal ideology, but that by keeping under a certain financial threshold at the university it granted him additional personal benefits that he could use to support his wife and children. He also stated “innovation doesn’t need to be able to make people millions of dollars.” While this was an afterthought to his motivation to turn down financial compensation, it is still

important to note that his belief in his own research is that the primary result should be providing a service to society and not his personal financial gain. (I should note that his research was of high interest to major agriculture companies and the opportunity for considerable financial compensation arose. I cannot reveal companies or university for the sake of preserving the anonymity of my subject.)

His understanding of his own career and wealth stood as an exemplary way in which religiously-supported ethics can play out at an individual level. His chosen career was centered on his desire to live in accord with his personal beliefs. When he was presented with additional potential compensation, he turned in down in support of his family. Additionally, he turned away from more theory-based pursuits to focus on real-world applications. For him, the importance was solely focused on how he received compensation and its application: to support his family. This became more apparent when he discussed the wealth that he did possess. At the time of interview, he was retired and his children were of adult age and supporting themselves. Therefore, his wealth had lost the primary meaning that it previously held. He noted that even in retirement he was still choosing to live as much off the land as possible, as he had his own vegetable garden, chose to minimize electricity use as much as possible, and lived in a small house that he himself built over the years. He stated, “I was not used to spending money, so it accumulated in the bank” and he noted how much money was in his bank account, but that he simply did not know what to do with the money. His decision-making methods were always informed by his personal ethics, which he frequently pointed out. One statement he made about farming was “I do it just because I feel like, it keeps me in touch with earth, not sure why, it makes me feel in touch with simplicity, but it does.” For him the decision to farm for his own personal use was both informed by his desire to minimize his impact and what he

perceived as simplicity in his personal life. His lack of attention to the wealth he had obtained stands as a stark example of his lack of desire to engage in accumulating it. His personal ethics caused an amassing of wealth that continued to be ignored and grow. For him, the mere existence of his personal wealth stands in opposition to what his ethical beliefs are.

Another person I interviewed had chosen to abandon her original career and pursue a change in her life to support her ethical beliefs. It is important to note that the change in career was never centered on ideas of ownership or capitalism, but rather on service to others in the form of non-profit and non-violent pursuits. Her original career was as a landscape architect and she felt based on her understanding of capitalism, her profession was deeply intertwined with capitalistic intent and behavior. Her change in career was the result of exploring ideas that arose through a crisis of ethics, which developed by witnessing inequality in the world. During a visit to Latin America, she saw firsthand what happens when there is inequality in the distribution of wealth and resources in the world. She witnessed an eighteen-year-old girl die of kidney failure. She began to consider what happens when there is unequal access to medical care, since she believed that an eighteen-year-old should not have to suffer and die at such a young age from kidney failure. She stated, "I no longer felt I could be who I am, struggle with the guilt based on what my culture requires of me." She called direct attention to the problems associated with the need to engage with consumerism to be viewed as successful. She noted that her main takeaways from this crisis were that there is injustice between the haves and the have-nots, that it is possible to work for peace, and that it is possible to focus one's energy through their vocation toward right actions. Her crisis played out through quitting her job as a landscape architect and taking time to reflect at Pendle Hill (in this case the Quaker

retreat located in PA and not the hill on which George Fox received his revelation) on what Quakerism and personal ethics meant to her.

She desired to change her life from someone who was living in an environment that encouraged excessive taking and use to one shaped by giving to others. To increase the merit-based legitimacy of the money she needed to survive and to give back at the same time, she chose to dedicate her life to non-violence and peace activism in Latin America; she noted that she has not gone back to landscape architecture since her crisis. Through talking about the change in vocational decisions she also noted the drop in financial means and what that meant for her personal life. She felt as if the money she earns now is more important than the money she had before, since she can now live the life she wants to live and support others through her work. Focusing on the means, she considers the wealth that she accumulates now to be legitimate, despite the reduced amount.

Part of this crisis of ethics involved examining how she was spending her money and living her life. She called attention to selling her living space and moving into a smaller space that she felt was more in line with her ethical ideals. The way in which it was being presented to me was through the frame of correct action and living that out whenever possible. I found the choice of interview site very important to her to demonstrate her ideas of simplicity. We met for the interview at a house owned by the Quaker community that is maintained to support visitors to the monthly meeting or local colleges by giving them a space to stay for little to no cost. This volunteer-run space is important within the local Quaker community due to the service that it provides; she chose to show that volunteer work and giving of the self was a key aspect of who she is.

The final case I present concerns the way in which ethics informed an informant's professional decisions. A biologist, he decided to aid others through his research. He chose to focus his career on an understudied problem due to the feeling that his findings could bring significant change and support to others who would not otherwise have had a solution. He continually expressed his ethics in terms of "authenticity of the self," that is, the idea that we have "authentic ethics," which we follow as best as we can. His career decisions, he states, "[Come] back to authenticity, [come] back down to values, and I am convinced that one can find joy and a deep sense of joy and connectedness if there is a connection between outward life, choices in life and your inner life. Testimonies and trappings of Quakerism can help with authenticity." There are a few key ideas within this statement. He discusses connectedness between people through a decision-making process. He is recognizing that everyone can support and uphold each other which itself can also contain the antithesis and bring damage and deprivation to others at the same time. He wanted to live out the authentic level of his ethical ideas through his work and chose to do so through a focused set of research goals to aid others. This is important to note since for him part of this authenticity was earning money in a correct method and as will be explored later the way in which the money is used personally, through charity and through research goals.

One informant called out that when he accumulated some form of monetary or material wealth that when he was doing so for the right reasons then it was guaranteed, and when done for incorrect reasons then it never was successful. This was exemplified through his story about winning a car at a local festival. He was struggling at the time and knew that to continue to support his life and growing business that he would need a car. He talked about how he knew that supporting both

himself and his business with this purchase was morally and ethically sound. Due to the perception that the purchase was morally and ethically sound, he felt that winning the contest was guaranteed. He saw this as a gift of the divine and as a result of his own merit. Both Jain and Quaker texts as I noted earlier point towards the gifts of right action and for him his merit guaranteed that he would have the result necessary to continue to grow.

In *Capitalists Without Capitalism*, Nevaskar notes similar ideas that inform professional decisions for members of Quaker communities. He writes:

“through energy, honesty, and native ability the Quakers achieved prosperity and a degree of influence far beyond what might have been expected from a small group. Their industrial activities were widespread in weaving, shipping, pottery making, pharmaceutical manufacture, the manufacture of scientific instruments, and clock making. Their reputation for probity led many people to deposit their savings with them at a time when banks were virtually nonexistent. Because of their refusal to take oaths, they could enter neither universities nor political life in England. Their pacifism prevented them from entering the armed forces. Therefore, they utilized their talents in trade and commerce” (Nevaskar 1971, 135).

There is a divide between the historical professions that Nevaskar has noted and the professions of my informants. This shows some of the ways ideas of simplicity and professional ethics have changed through the progression of time. Nevaskar noted that the ethical ideals of Quakerism led to specific jobs to be considered appropriate and the same practice exists today. Both Quakers and Jains focused on proper, ethical professions and desired to fulfil their professional duties to the best of their ability. This desire to engage with an ethically sound career to the best of their ability results in a measurable level of success and substantial financial compensation. This substantial compensation may seem to cause a transgression of ethics, however it does not since the choice of profession is more important than the financial compensation if it is pursued in an ethically sound manner.

I will call attention to the fact that interviews sourced here were with members of the Quaker tradition. Both had similar trends in understanding their chosen occupation through ethical ideals and called strong attention to his throughout the interview process. The use of Quaker interviews here is due to the Jain respondents were not as vocal about choosing vocation through their personal ethics. They were open about their profession and specialties, but did not look deeper into why they chose the profession or any ethical dilemmas that may have led to the choice. As noted, the primary occupation of Jains that were interviewed was medical doctor and there was a feeling that the merit based on assisting people through the medical process was evident. This job was something that fell in line with ethical principles of non-violence and the interconnectedness of souls through supporting people in health. One Jain stated, “Whatever I have is from my past good deeds.” He continued, “If I use my good value, wealth, then I can accrue good karma.” This person saw the value in their ethics leading to the material wealth, whether it was good karma from a past or present life there was ethical value in the money and that could in turn be used from more good deeds. The merit in the way they earn capital was never in question for them as it is being earned through sound behavior and ideals, and this played out through the way in which they communicated their profession and not the ethics behind it.

In *Riches and Renunciation*, James Laidlaw writes about a community of Jains that focus around the proper maintenance and running of business in Jaipur. He noted that many of the most prolific Jains in the area were engaged with the gem and jewel industry as sellers in the local markets. He notes “the price at which a business can obtain money depends directly on reputation for wealth, honesty, and prudent business practices and it depends on the public perception of its creditworthiness”

(Laidlaw 1995, 354). He notes throughout the text that *satya* (truth-telling) and *brahmacharya* (chastity) are ideals that lead to being labelled as a credit worthy businessman. There is a perception that members of Jainism will not cheat through their business and act in highly ethical ways in all aspects of the business. This was reinforced through my own interviews as one informant was engaged in the gem business and was very adamant that one should not want or desire the products that are being sold as it was not theirs to own. She stated, “(I) don’t touch the jewelry at the store to avoid wants becoming needs.” There is the idea of proper business in the statement since she was engaging with the idea that all business should be run in a truthfully. Where the product is as pure and accessible to the purchaser as possible. She directly recognized that the product was not owned by her or her family and was therefore was not theirs to use in any way other than through business.

This all ties back into Weber’s theory as mentioned earlier. I will look to the concepts that were common themes in the way that people informed their professional decisions and actions around procurement of wealth. As evidenced in these examples, non-violence stood first and foremost when people talked about living ethically. There was a feeling that non-violence informs every other ethical frame within their respective tradition. There is a sense of giving back in some form through occupational practices or ethics.

This idea of the authentic is also important when investigating the chosen professions. There was a sense of authenticity in the decisions that informants were alluding to through their answers when the decisions they were making were informed by their personal or religious ethics in their lives. This sense of authentic is something that came up through every interview, though not in those explicit terms. Living in accordance with what people determined to be the correct way for themselves was a

pervasive idea that informed all decisions whether mundane or substantial for all the informants involved.

An exploration of these ideas leads us to two common threads that came up throughout the process of interviews. The most pervasive was the idea of upholding non-violence in their personal lives. The idea of non-violence is connected to ideas of ownership as well, since by taking we are also denying others and committing violence. Violence in ownership manifests in physical ways, such as killing animals for food, as well as abstract ways, e.g. economic inequality. The other idea that came up often was the connectedness of all living beings. People frequently stated that we all have a moral imperative to support each other through the process of living, whether human or not. Members of the Jain community were quick to bring animal rights into the conversation when weighing whether to indulge in any material that negatively impacts an animal's life (more than simple slaughtering for meat or leather). Ethical authenticity in decision-making led many to the idea that the central concern with wealth lies in how it is earned and maintained.

This all ties back to the idea of how people perceive ethical transgressions or issues concerning their personal wealth and material goods. The answer I most frequently received regarding transgressions concerned the means of earning and use of, rather than strictly the amount of wealth owned by any of the respondents who volunteered to speak with me. The commonly heard statement was that ownership of material wealth was not something that was thought about regularly, despite the frequent affirmation of the importance of my research for the community. My calling attention to their ethics regarding wealth forced self-reflection and identification of their own religious values and ideas about how they felt they should carry out these ethical injunctions in their own life. However, my informants frequently did have

clear ideas about limits to wealth for themselves and their fellow community members. Further, while most were able to consider what a transgression might look like, none of them pointedly accused any other member of the community as guilty of having “too much.” However, the answers varied significantly, informed by their chosen professions, the communities in which they lived and worshipped, and the ways in which the individuals chose to practice their ideals in their own lives.

Transgressions

Individuals and communities have developed unique ways to understand transgressions of material wealth. Despite the arbitrary nature of materialism presented in text, individuals had strong ideas on how a transgression might look and how to address the transgression. The common lines were defined around times when the material starts to become more important than the self, the divine or impacting others ability to live. Important to note is that there still is an ambiguous nature to these ideas since there was always a sense that this is individually determined and not something that could be understood by any textual authority, but community authority would be able to assist in understanding what is appropriate.

Through the interviews there were some common themes around what the appropriate amount was and why not transgressing the amount was important. The most important and most noted was the ability for materialism to stand in the way of proper religious growth and practice since the material starts to become more important than all other pursuits. This definition was the clearest and most supported by many of the respondents and became a clear theme around how wealth and material was understood. There were also clear lines as to what material is problematic and likely to stand in the way of this divinity.

This idea of standing in the way of access to religious practice or communion with the divine (communion with the divine being specifically Quaker) was common with both communities. The response showed up with equal frequency with all communities that volunteered. This is important since it shows that each community despite having different teleological goals in life has independently come up with similar ideas on how to define the capital wealth that they have in their life. This common idea fuels much of the way in which they understood ways to define wealth and how to interact with it once it had been obtained.

What was interesting was the different way members of each tradition viewed and understood this disruption. When Jains were discussing this interruption, the common thread was the issue of wants (desires) becoming needs and then standing above proper conduct and action for the sake of further materialism. While the Quakers focused on the disruption of the mind through distractions and the inability to communicate with spirit or the “inner light.” An idea of significant importance in the Jain community was ensuring the financial support of the next generation. Every respondent that had children of college age or younger called direct attention to the importance of ensuring that there was the capacity to support their children in their personal life goals. (While this was not an idea expressed in any interviews with members of the Quaker faith I do not feel that it was due to the idea of supporting children as being unimportant, but that the volunteers had children of adult age who were supporting themselves rather than relying on parents.)

For Jains, the idea of conduct and living a properly meritorious life stood as highly important. Every interview had some idea around this theme come out as well as the importance of being able to recognize what is a want and what is a need. One of the strongest statements given by a Jain was “what is a single-word answer to all the

unhappiness in the world? Wants.” He continued, “Completely controlling wants will lead anyone to *kevaljñan* (omniscient knowledge).” For this person, wants not only created an issue with their personal life, but for society as well. The wants of the world immediately stood as a line that should not be crossed. While lacking true clarity in the definition since there was no defined line this person was focusing on the idea that anything that was not needed for living could be a want. This expanded further through his statement around possessing clothing and the ways in which the decision would be made to purchase clothes. He stated, “Have I been miserable without these jeans in my life. If the answer is yes, I buy it, if the answer is no, I don’t buy it.” Personal and communal happiness was the ideal for this person as they always looked back to the way in which they saw material in the world as something that could both support being happy and stand in the way if desires started to control what made us happy. There was no definitive answer as to the amount that was appropriate in maintaining happiness of controlling wants, but he did give a powerful statement about how to determine this independently. He stated “(the) truest answer would be honesty to yourself about what you truly need.” There is a strong level of independence in the decision-making process and an acceptance that everyone can make their own decisions based on what they feel is appropriate for themselves. Interestingly for him, his children who are of adult age gave a feeling of additional autonomy in the ability to live out his personal ideas of ownership without impacting the safety and comfort of his children.

One individual saw the ideal for himself personally and lived out his method in his way, however due to the nature of having children was willing to engage with material wealth on a higher level to ensure that his children were taken care of in the present and the future. He himself called out that he had taken formal vows around

personal ownership and lived these out for himself only. He had a strong focus on spiritual practices and ideas in his understanding and when while talking about reducing his own personal consumption stated, “by reducing other attachments I have freed up my body to do other spiritual things.” The greater context of this was centered on a conversation around what he did own and his lack of desire to own fancy clothes or the most up to date car for himself. He had a strong focus on ensuring that he maintained a very specific amount of wealth that he himself felt was over what would be appropriate if not for his desire to support his children. He stated, “I have responsibilities, retirement, kid’s college, earn well, live well.” The context of retirement was around not burdening his children and ensuring that he and his wife would be able to be comfortable and live on their needs (recall that he had taken vows to reduce material things in his life) post retirement. He actively and exuberantly talked about his desire to take further vows of non-attachment and reduce his worldly materials, but felt the time was inappropriate due to the nature of parenthood and supporting his children.

Continuing this idea of individual interpretation was another member of the Jain community. He continued with this idea of knowing what is needed and why it is important to know what needs looked like instead of wants. Central to his idea of why it is important to solely focus on needs was an idea of ensuring there is enough for everyone else in the world and that should be used to determine what the appropriate level is. His idea of how *aparigraha* is understood was exemplified by his statement “whenever you are using *parigraha* (ownership) you are using lots of resources; you want to save these resources for the rest of the world.” This is important since he was looking towards the interconnectedness of all beings to determine what is appropriate and what is not in terms of ownership. He stated, “It will help big time if everyone

knows their limitations. Each individual decides what is appropriate and should live within those limits.” There is no clearly defined limit to what should be owned, but he has given a strong idea on how an individual can choose to understand and interpret the idea of wants and needs. He was very open about the limits he sets for himself and how they play out in his life as well. He described this through his limitations on food and had voluntarily chosen to limit himself to three kilograms of potatoes per year since that satisfied his desire for potatoes and ensured that there would be enough to go around for others. He at no point asserted that this limit would be appropriate for others though and focused on his individual idea and decision to do this. For more broad decisions such as home ownership, clothing, vehicles and other personal items he turned his understanding towards his financial means. He very succinctly stated “I set my limit in terms of pay” due to his feeling that his current pay was more than sufficient to maintain the needs in his life. He even continued this thread with explaining how he felt that was a maximum amount of compensation that he would feel comfortable receiving through his job and to go over that amount would be a personal transgression unless he had the ability to give the excess away. This idea of handling the excess will be discussed further in the next chapter.

There was a strong trend centered on what is personal through these interviews as well. One case which stood as extraordinary was when the individual ensured that when he engaged in ownership and wealth it was designed to be meaningful individually and something that would stand as important and useful for a longer period. While talking about what *aparigraha* meant, one person, a leading member of the Jain center in Chicago, stated, “I try not to spend a lot on myself; that is my way of practicing *aparigraha*.” There was a very strong focus on minimizing the number of physical objects to be attached to, but not the quality or the cost of the objects.

However, another Jain, also a leading member of the Chicago center, expressed greater comfort with using his wealth, stating, “I do like good quality clothes and good quality restaurants,” and expressed a desire to enjoy what was possible through the financial means that had been accrued. Most importantly was the idea on determining what was important through social standing. It was directly called out that there is a sense of judgement within the community based around the clothing worn and the car driven. This sense of judgement is important as an idea since it drove the person outside what they felt comfortable with at times since there was direct attention called to only replacing clothes when they had worn down to the point of being unusable, but also desiring to have nice or fancy clothes for the sake of social standing.

Social standing came up once more during my interviews at the same site. One informant brought up making repairs to his car in this context, stating, “To match the social side, I had [the] bumpers replaced. How else do you show your wealth to people?” This statement shows that he felt there was an element of social responsibility to the community to maintain a specific standard to show his family’s financial success and overall wellbeing to their local community. This sense of communal policing of material standards will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The Jain communities focused on very practical ideas of ownership. The idea that there is an appropriate amount of wealth was pervasive and strong. However, the way in which we can understand what the appropriate amount is centers on a pragmatic approach to enacting ethical values. They showed a desire to engage when necessary to support any true needs, and their family, but expressed that excess could be defined as the time when material wants became material needs and when there is a desire to possess things that are above what is needed to support comfortable living.

There was also a strong desire to support community and maintain a level of community standing as well through the proper possession and use of the wealth. These ideas all express ways in which we can understand wealth and how to properly engage with it.

We can turn to the Quaker interviews and see a similar understanding around what is an appropriate amount of wealth to obtain, but understood through a different means. The most noted line that was stated was the point at which material wealth stood in the way of proper convening of personal spiritual communion. Within Quakerism there is importance placed around being accessible to “spirit” or the “inner light” to guide practitioners through daily living with a strong emphasis on the various testimonies. Therefore, a disruption or distraction from being open and able to communicate would be highly problematic to a practitioner and focusing on material gains to the point where they stand higher than inner religious nature would be problematic.

On the other end of the spectrum of ownership many Quakers called out the issue of having too much focus on living simply. There were clear ideas on the problems of living purposefully uncomfortable as an act of simplicity and how this idea would present a situation in which we become so focused on finding basic levels of comfort that we also shut ourselves out to communion with the divine. This started to form a picture of a median in which the ideal would be that consisted of both not too much and not too little.

Briefly we can turn back to what the “inner light” is to bring context back to the importance of communing with it. Penn defines the nature of the “light” in *Primitive Christianity Revived* as, “That god, through Christ, hath placed a principle in every man, to inform him of his duty, and to enable him to do it” (Penn 2015, 9).

The essence of divinity itself is defined as within every person and this guiding principle leads us to both fulfill our duty and have the capacity to do so. This is something that becomes a definition of phenomenological importance as there is an otherworldly essence that gives rise to correct action and reward that many understood should not be interrupted by distractions.

One of the most extraordinary responses received was around how one Quaker had redefined the idea of the “inner light” for himself and what it meant. He stated “all of a sudden it occurred to me, truth, just truth could be a substitute for God.” He was tying this to the idea of the authentic that was discussed earlier when looking at the proper method for procuring wealth. The essence of God for him was that of being truthful to himself and those around him. Being truthful led into a conversation around what is the appropriate amount and how he understood where to live. He identified lines by which there was too much focus on material wealth, but recognized his own desire to engage and enjoy many things which were important to him. He identified himself as someone who lives very comfortably in retired life and gets to enjoy what he understood to be some basic extras in life. His idea around what would stand in the way was a desire to not purchase or obtain “unnecessary or opulent consumer goods” and went further into what that meant to him. When describing his television, he talked on how it was useful as a medium to enjoy sports, public access stations and the news only. There was an essence of utility to the use of the television and that made it important to utilize. This was exemplified in the perceived utility of cars as he discussed at one time owning two cars and when the utility of owning two was no longer needed that there was a reduction to one car and an increased use of public transportation and ride sharing. Food was also described in some utilitarian terms. He identified the desire and enjoyment of eating good food and the practice of

creating the food as important, but could become a distraction or a problem if the desire became to engage with “junk food”. Once the utility transcended past basic enjoyment and needs then it became more extravagant and could stand in the way of the idea of authenticity and truthfulness for him and that is where the line in materialism would be problematic.

Another used very strong words around the idea of wants and needs. It was stated, “There was always something I wanted or needed and once I was aware (of this) it became an irritant.” There is strong attention called to the practice of desires in this situation as she wanted to recognize what is important as a need and what is not important through a want. For her wants became an irritant and stood in the way of her personal desires to live out the testimony of simplicity as she understood it. She called attention to this through her understanding of her generation’s capitalistic desire and stated, “Second world war culture was buy, buy, buy” when referencing how materialism was viewed to her in her formative years. (Post World War II) She also called what she could purchase as “showing off” and defined many purchases as for the other and not the self. She described her process of minimization and being able to focus on living her life comfortably and without excess through the process of selling her home and moving to smaller locations that she felt could be more defined around her personal life and less on her material life. She gave a powerful recollection of her defining moment as, “I don’t need all this space, I don’t want to be responsible when (my) washer/dryer breaks” and her question became “If you don’t want this what do you want?” This is a different use of the term want as many before have used wants in a negative context since they became something that could stand above needs. For her wants were something more internal as she desired to want to live out what she saw as her ideal in materialism which was less than what she had at the time.

Part of her realization was when she saw a smaller space and came to recognize “I could live here” and chose to move into the space. When moving in she had to spend time reflecting upon what was truly needed and what could be removed due to the lessening of space. She additionally felt that through this reduction she could be more in sync with her faith and ideas of simplicity. She stated, “My whole outlook on life has changed from big to small, getting in sync with faith (is) what worked for me” and “one way I transitioned my life to (become) more in sync with simplicity for me.” This desire to be more faithful drove her decisions to reduce her possessions and through this removal of distractions she felt that she was in contact with her own ideas of divinity and simplicity. The distraction of materialism was the problem for her and the solution was to reduce to a level of comfort that still maintained the capacity to be open to spiritual practices.

One interview immediately moved towards the idea of the spiritual. She stated very clearly, “I am guided or encouraged to eliminate all the things that inhibit my relationship with God.” This statement calls out two key ideas. The first is the idea that there is guidance in place. Which ties back into the idea that the essence of divinity within all of us will guide us onto the correct path and lead us to proper action. This gives an essence of divine importance to the decisions around material life. Which she chose to live out through minimizing personal material wealth, and live in a more environmentally friendly manner. She made the decision through this idea of reduction to move into a community that focused around environmentally friendly practices for the use of energy, and community based gatherings and support for living. This was spiritually important to her and she felt was more in line with what she understood about herself and her ideal in living simply. She also called out her idea that material things may inhibit her relationship with God. The idea that

materialism can be a distraction ties back to the concept that wants can become needs and begin to take the place of spiritual ideas. She called attention to this level of importance and stated “I find it comforting to not have any money,” which for her was living within means available to her by the level of monetary compensation she was provided and focusing on what she needed to be comfortable and not go above for the sake of ownership or engaging with materialistic aspects of society.

Important to many Quakers was also an idea that there is a minimum threshold to maintain this proper communication with spiritual pursuits. Since just as easy as it is to overindulge and have materials stand in the way of spiritual practices, we can push ourselves so far into levels of discomfort for the sake of reducing materials that physical discomfort can be a distraction from spiritual pursuits.

The same person mentioned above who had a strong focus on reducing possessions to a level that she felt was appropriate also discussed that she had reduced physical comforts to a level that proved to be a distraction from engagement with the divine and had to bring herself back to a middle ground of comfort and material wealth. She stated, “Some friends (used to stand in for Quaker) take it to the extreme, living painfully” and “suffering is also standing in the way of communion” (with spirit) while talking about a time when she engaged in practices of denying herself basic needs such as heating and air conditioning. She identified a time when she was so focused on staying warm and comfortable within her own home space that she was not as available to spiritual practices. She identified that at that time she was wearing four layers and a hat around her home simply to stay comfortable and happy within her own living space and this provided a situation in which she was unable to live out her ideal of spiritual communion due to the distraction. She concluded this idea by stating that she now ensures that her base level of physical comfort is met with the

statement “now I feel like I am much more available to spirit”. She had found the middle ground and the ideal for herself and was living it in a profound and important way.

Another interviewee talked about heavy lines defined by too little comfort or material wealth. He stated “It’s easy to fall into the trap of living below the poverty level to not pay peace taxes (and) to call that living simply.” (“Peace taxes” are, perhaps ironically, recognized as taxes that support military efforts and non-peace activities. Many Quakers find ways not to support such efforts through lawful means to reduce their tax bills. In this case the interviewee was referring to groups that choose to live below the poverty line so that they do not pay taxes and thus do not indirectly support war.) For him it was too simple a solution to say that you are correctly living out the testimony of simplicity by just removing ourselves from the system of capitalism and materialism. He saw no solution in ignoring the issue of materialism, (since he saw that as a form of denying the authentic self, since in his opinion we desire and need things.) Therefore, we should not deny this aspect within ourselves, but find a way in which we understand it and live it out as authentically as possible in our everyday lives. He gave a profound statement around how Quakerism fits into this idea as he stated “(it) comes back down to authenticity, comes back down to values and I am convinced that one can find joy and a deep sense of joy, and connectedness if there is a connection between outward life, choices in life and your inner life. Testimonies and trappings of Quakerism can help with authenticity.” The ideal of living out a simple life for him in an idealistic manner is informed through Quakerism and not the decisions made by Quakers. He found the “authentic life” in a middle ground, not being so impoverished that one lives without some comforts, or strong statements around who has the least, but finding a way to be true to the

authentic self and living that out as honestly as possible. For him this idea of the authentic self was the most important since he saw problems in both having too little and having too much.

Conclusion

Throughout this section I have explored the ways in which members of each religious community understand the ethical pitfalls of wealth and having capital. Surprisingly, for Jains and Quakers, what it means to have wealth and what is considered an appropriate amount of it, was not as important as might be expected from two communities that focus on ascetic principles. Instead they focus on the proper earning of wealth through ethical practices and meritorious professions. Each community seemed drawn to specific occupations that they saw as compatible with their internal ethics, and committed themselves to performing this profession as best as they were capable of. Through every interview there was evidence of this idea and it stands supported by the thinkers in each tradition that identify material wealth as something that is acceptable to obtain through ethically proper means and channels. Some go so far as to identify this wealth as a “gift from god” or “earned through austerity itself”. Weber’s theory of the *beruf* can be applied to both the Jain and Quaker cases and it holds true to the way in which members were living out their professional lives. I witnessed that material goods stood almost entirely subservient to the method by which capital is earned; and this is the first part of the way in which capital is understood. The second part, which will be the focus of the next chapter, is the way in which capital is spent. Here we will focus on proper meritorious *use* of capital which is considered just as ethically fraught as the ethic based way capital is earned.

CHAPTER 3

The Proper Use of Money

Introduction

For Jains and Quakers, the mechanics of the way in which money should be handled and donated have similar mechanics to the way in which money comes in through choices of profession. There is a sense that the way in which the money is used for merit stands higher than the amount of money one possesses and can even prevent the idea of a transgression of non-ownership principles from occurring. There were some common themes that occurred between both Jain and Quaker communities that will be discussed in this chapter. The common themes across both communities were centered around material donation (both money and material goods), and a sense of communal policing of this process of giving wealth. Within the Jain communities there was also a strong focus on giving back to the Jain centers to ensure that the Jain center was properly funded. In the Quaker community, there was a strong focus centered on volunteering time and less on giving back to the local Quaker meeting, contrary to what we saw in our examination of texts in Chapter 1.

The idea of communal policing throughout the discourse is hidden in the way people choose to donate and the way in which the system is designed. Foucault's genealogical theory of power, presented in his article, "The Political Technology of Individuals," describes the ways in which systems are designed to ensure consistent support; for our purposes, this essay helps to illuminate tradition-specific methods to ensure that the institutional order survives on member support. Foucault shows that government cares about the individual insofar that the individual provides support in upholding the government. In the power structures of Jainism and Quakerism, similar ideologies appear. Through communal understanding and support of the proper way

to give and handle money, we can see the way in which traditional donation scenarios have been transformed. In Jainism, the diaspora has changed donation scenarios from the *gocahri* practice of giving food to mendicants by the laity to social giving in the form of support for the local Jain center. Jains police each other's giving practices—indeed, there appear to be few financial secrets in the communities. Quakers have focused on ways of fostering donations in their respective communities and police this mechanism in subtle ways to ensure the money is going to the correct places.

Giving

For Jains, giving (*dān*) to religious figures or institutions is a means of accumulating *punya* (meritorious *karma* or action). In India, the paradigmatic form of *dān* is the giving of food to Jain mendicants. Since the communities I interviewed were in the United States and were unable to perform traditional food donations due to the lack of a mendicant class, they have reformulated their ideas about the proper objects of such donation, with the local Jain center now the main means of performing *dān*. The giving of food to mendicants encapsulates ideas of merit, proper action and leading a proper lay religious life. Due to the inability of mendicants to cook so that they may follow the vow of *ahimsa* to the logical ideal of reducing all violence as much as possible, they are dependent on the lay class to provide them with food. In return, the lay class can partake in the wealth of knowledge and accumulation of *punya* available to them through interacting with and giving to the mendicants. While this is not possible in the diaspora, many Jains emphasized the importance of donating appropriate and expected amounts of wealth to the temple, or to academic pursuits, and to charitable organizations. One member I talked with even called out that once the Jain center was built and stable financially, and the images were consecrated, that it became important to the community to support academic pursuits involving

learning about Jainism. This gave me a sense that there is importance in giving money to the proper places and through the proper channels in the community.

Jains consistently identified material donation to others as a means by which they could live within their vows of possession or maintain what they considered the appropriate amount of material wealth. Donation of items is perceived to be a tool to make sure that wants do not begin to stand in the way of needs and lead into less than meritorious action. This was frequently described through ideas centered around willingly giving up an item if another of the same item was purchased to maintain specific numbers. One informant even enumerated this down to the number of shirts. He stated, "If I am buying two shirts today, can I get rid of two others." He noted that this was his method on engaging with purchasing even if the item was on sale or a great deal since it was important to be able to maintain the proper level of living. Donation became his means of maintaining the proper level and giving of the excess was an important facet in this. This was a means of keeping the idea of needs and wants in check. Since for him giving away of items was a way of knowing what it needed and what is wanted since if he needed the new item he would willingly be able to give away the excess.

Some informants discussed the importance of the correct frame of mind when giving donations as there is a desire to not be attached to the item. As noted above, that person wished to ensure that they were willingly and without attachment able to give up the excess items. Another interview exemplified this idea and we spent a large amount of time talking about the emotional and physical attachment to items. For him there was an importance in the objective of donation and the idea that we should not be attached to the idea of donation or the merit of the donation. For him all actions must be done with full detachment and this he recognized as a very challenging

objective. He asked “If I donate, what are my objectives?” and talked about how it is not appropriate to donate because he feels sorry for others and wishes to do so to make himself feel better through directly helping them. He noted that his purpose of donation was to fulfil his desire to donate and not that he feels he needs to. Part of his understanding was centered around the idea of who owns what objects and for him the answer was a very simple: no one owns objects. He was pointing towards the lack of permanence in the world and that ideas of material pass from one to another easily and with relative fluidity. Therefore, if we truly do not own the item we should not be attached to it and be capable of willingly giving it to another through donation and to maintain personal merit and any potential vows that were taken.

One interviewee identified utilizing donation to solve a perceived transgression as soon as the transgression had begun. He stated, “If they gather something more, (give to) charity, cut down properties, cut down consumables, same thing with food. Otherwise you can become obese (or) unhealthy.” This person was using the comparison of overindulgence of food to the overindulgence in attachment and materialism. The answer is to cut back and give away what is in excess as determined by the individual who is choosing to engage in this practice. This was understood through the ideas of vows and maintenance of the proper amount. This is important to note as charity and giving is a means to meritorious action. This person frequently cited Bill Gates as a strong example of what ideal action would be if the financial and material means are present to enact change. They were looking towards Gates’ charitable work around reproductive rights, disease prevention and giving of wealth. It was noted that he still maintained substantial financial and material means for himself and this was not perceived as a problem due to his meritorious actions in the world. Proper use of capital and material was much more important than the

amount that was present of possessed by a singular person and could remedy any perceived transgressions.

The person who had taken formal vows around the number of items to be owned is someone I expected to exemplify giving as he was actively reducing in his life as often as was available and possible to him. He spoke fondly of future vows that he was planning on taking and what they meant. He stated, “one day I will take a vow for five pants (and) five shirts” as at the time of interview he had not taken this as a formal vow yet. However, he had taken a formal vow centered on the number of food items he will eat on any day and does not go over this amount. What surprised me was how silent he was on the idea of what to do if there is a perceived transgression. For him he was focused so much on his singular experience with *aparigraha*. He ensured that he lived out his vows and ideas ideally for himself and was not concerned with others and what they choose to do. He only chose to replace items when absolutely needed since the utility of the original was no longer present. With this there is no excess as defined by his vows and it simply was a one to one transaction as one went out and a new item came in to replace it. He also presented a strong focus on multiple use items as a means of reduction. He looked to find ways in which a singular item could fill multiple uses for him so that he could reduce two or more items into one as a means of reduction. While he did not directly mention “donation”, at no point, did I perceive him as someone who did not give to Jain causes or charity due to his position within the community. He commanded respect within the Jain center and many looked to him for proper understanding on ethical ideas. This will be further shown in the discussion around communal policing of these ideas there is a sense that proper giving is a means to show authority in the community.

One Jain interviewee brought up a perception that donation was only important due to the fact that someone can own more than their personal needs. This is important since without the ability to transgress the ideals of ownership this person did not address donation at all. There was the sense that being able to live within the correct amount stood higher than the idea of donating. The understanding of excess was understood to be important as an object that could be donated and given to others. They stated “(in an) ideal world (we) would donate it to those who need it” The excess being the item that could be donated here. He understood that attachment to these items would be the reason that people would not willingly give them away and saw the challenges in becoming attached to such items. They identified the idea that in an ideal world they would be given away as donation and not something that always occurred. Donation was still a solution to the problem for this person, but it only stood as a solution due to the perceived problem, that it occurred and was not something that necessarily happens every day.

When engaging with Quaker communities the sense that charity and donation is important permeates the entire culture of the worship spaces. Through the announcement process at the end of worship times to flyers, pamphlets and bulletin boards there is always the sense that there is opportunity to give of one self to aid others in the world and the importance of doing so. Entire Quaker communities desire to define themselves through this movement towards action and giving of money to those who may need it. This becomes something that is important in the design of the idea of money in Quakerism as it is an appropriate way to utilize capital within the community. Every Quaker site I visited had a prominent table, bench or wall covered in volunteer and charity opportunities. This set of information always ranged from small local opportunities to current initiatives through yearly meetings and the Friends

committee for national legislation (A non-profit centered around lobbying for non-violence and justice) centered in Washington DC. The sense that donation and charity as an important idea and movement within Quakerism was always prominent and becomes impossible to question when presented with the way in which this set of information is situated in a worship space. One worship location had the basket to collect monetary donations for the local food pantry in the physical center of the worship space so that it was continuously visible.

The site where this idea stood the strongest was a meeting house where the members have dedicated an entire corner to current social action being undertaken by various Quaker groups and to support those groups. As I walked into the site, the board was clearly visible and stood out as important because of its central location and size. The wall stood opposite the worship space, and next to the entrance to the space that is reserved for communal gathering and meal sharing. The wall was covered in pamphlets ranging from college programs at Quaker school such as Guilford, Earlham and Haverford College to current action that the Friends committee for national legislation is currently working on. Prominent to the entire display were local charities and groups that were in search of both financial support and volunteer time. I was drawn to this display since I had never seen anything so prominent at any Quaker meeting house before. I was used to seeing some form of display and engagement with these ideas, but nothing so noticeably central within the space.

This idea of charitable giving was exemplified further by the community's desire to invite speakers from various academic and non-profit organizations to speak on social activism and how members of the Quaker Faith would be able to donate and volunteer before worship time. Frequently this resulted in an engaged worship time centralized around what was talked about and various members grappling with how

they could engage based on their available time and resource. There was a sense that this idea of giving was central to this community of Quakers and they had found a way in which to let this live out as ideally as possible for them.

We can look back to the person who redefined her entire life around service to others and working within groups that centered on non-violent action and equality in the world. Recall that there was a crisis of faith that led to this decision and then the immediate rejection of the way in which wealth was being accumulated. For her the ideas of material wealth became how she could fuel and live out her desire to be someone who bettered the world through her ideals and passions. The money she is making is to support her ability to continue living this work out in her life. For her the desire to be someone that supports others through volunteer work and non-profit permeated even into the way in which she chose to indulge in life. She is so focused on giving to others that even her own desire to engage with and enjoy theatrical arts. She mentioned that her way to obtain a ticket to the theater was to volunteer rather than spend money on them. This way she can continue to exist within the means she is earning in her current work and not need to worry about earning more. She tied this all together with her idea of living out the appropriate amount of wealth as she kept a gentle balance between maintaining comfort and not having more than she needs.

Another person gave significant time through Quaker retreats and meetings as a means of donation. There was a focus centered around running workshops, learning and assisting others in learning to support her ideal of living simply. She frequented many Quaker retreats and acted through both learning and engaging, and as someone that could be a resource for other teachers and learners while there. She called attention to the idea of community as something that should be supported in living out ideals of any personal ethic. Community for her was a way to collectively navigate

giving of the self. She detailed a story of when she was celebrating her birthday with her community and the purpose was that the person celebrating gets to share wisdom with the community. She expressed in her message that community was her way of living out her ethics and ideals. She noted that she always tries to engage with everyone on a personal level and that it is important for her to know everyone by name for this reason. She spoke about a communal desire to support each other in getting around as not everyone owned or possessed the means to get around. For her this played out through giving rides to others towards their desired destinations. She was willing to use her own personal wealth to help others as much as was possible for her.

I found it interesting that no one directly called out material donation to understand and interact with their physical material or wealth. The conversations around giving were centered on the self and not of material. This contrasted strongly with the conversations that were had with members of the Jain tradition with heavily focused on material giving. It also contrasted strongly with the presence of donation requests both in spaces of worship and in newsletters that circulated weekly and monthly in the communities. The focus on the ideal of giving time and of the self was pervasive throughout the conversations however. The giving of time and of the self is still supported by material wealth, as there is a level of financial base comfort (this was called out in the interviews) that is necessary before one can turn to ideals around charity.

One meeting centered ideas of donation directly on the community due to current construction happening to expand the site. Sandy Spring Friends Meeting in Maryland is a strikingly large Quaker meeting site. It frequently supports 200 families for both worship and religious education on Sundays and needed to expand buildings

to continue supporting Sunday school functions. At the time of my research visit, the traditional site was not in use and a nearby Friends school provided the space for worship. While touring the new space the clerk shared with me the communal desires and expectations for the new space. It was amazing to me as this was the Meeting House that I grew up in and to perceive it as too small for the current needs of the community was amazing. I had vivid memories of being in those rooms with 10-12 other children my age and learning about Quakerism and Christianity. This new space was much larger and contained more classrooms and a larger hospitality space to accommodate a greater number of people. I bring this expansion in since it directly tied into the idea of financial donation. There was concern expressed that the community would not come back as strong and there would not be the necessary support to afford the expansion that was already in the process of building. This ties back to the proper idea of donation presented in *Faith and Practice* as the community needed to be directly supported by the members to be able to afford what was needed and this was being articulated by an authority in the meeting. It was stressed that this expansion was important and that donation back to the community was critical in maintaining the space as a religious meeting site. This gave the sense that within this community they were stressing proper giving of money as a means of meritorious and proper action.

The final site I will address here utilized communal giving and donation in a unique way. The community was so strongly bonded together around the idea of both physical donations and the giving of time that it permeated into their everyday discourse through daily email newsletters and requests or offers to help others out. These email chains would come into my inbox multiple times a day. Requests ranged from offers to donate items, to rides to some appointment, to full days of volunteer

service that were coming up. I want to note again that this was a daily occurrence in the community and the community itself was only about 30 to 40 total adults. The community was so centered on assisting each other and their community that it became a normal everyday occurrence to talk about this and make sure that offers were available for people to assist others. The responses to these emails were also quick and filled with a strong desire to help.

I brought up the way in which the communities showed support of these ideas so that despite the perceived lack of importance in the interviews that it still is a very real aspect of the Quaker faith. It has become such a large part of the collective identity in many of communities that it may not be something that a member will draw direct attention to; charity is a proper means of using money. Even when I explicitly asked about donation or charity, people seldom thought about their activities in these terms.

Communal Policing

I observed that communities also had mechanisms to police the proper use of wealth. Within each community there were pre-determined ways in that determine the appropriate ways to handle money. This became important as many informants drew attention to a common interest toward being in line with this communal expectation of how wealth was to be used.

The first event I witnessed that showed a sense of communal ideation of proper giving was at *Mahavir Jayanti* (a celebration centered around the birth of Lord Mahavira) celebration. The celebration was attended by more people than the traditional worship space could support and it was moved to a local school so that everyone who wished to attend could. The celebration was large, energetic and was centered around the stories of Lord *Mahavir's* conception and birth. The first time I

sensed that there was a communal policing of money was about halfway through the celebration. At that time, the celebration stopped and a member of the local Jain center took the stage and began to talk about the history of the local Jain center. He spoke with happiness and positivity on the importance of the Jain center and the way in which it has a positive impact on the community. His conversation quickly turned to the operating costs of the Jain center and a very specific amount that was needed for continued support. While talking about supporting the Jain center a board was brought out with space to fill in names and amount of money donated. The president himself was the first one to donate money to show his personal support of the Jain center and he placed his name and amount donated at the top of the list on the board. After this the cry for donations began quite exuberantly. At first the pledged donation amounts were coming in at a rapid pace and the board began to fill up quickly. After a short while, reaching about halfway to the goal the donations began to slow down, and at times halted. This is when everything took an interesting turn as the announcer began to solicit donations. He pointed out how much money was still needed to support the center, with statements such as, “only 10k is needed, then we can go back to our program!” The program was put on hold until the proper amount had been donated by the community and once that amount was reached the community could then go back to the celebration. This back and forth continued for a noticeable amount of time. With the call for more donations needed to hit the goal, someone in the crowd responded with a pledge. A celebration of their donation was followed by the continued cry for more donations. Once this process was completed the signboard that listed the names and amount of donation was complete and showed that the amount needed had been raised by the community. There was no ordering based on amount, but the order simply reflected the order in which people opted to donate from the

crowd. This board was then taken away from the stage area and the celebration continued as the donation had been met. At a future visit, I noticed that the sign had then been transported to the Jain center and now stood prominently displayed between the communal gathering space and the worship space. The austerity of donating to the temple was on full display at the Jain center for all to see and experience. This sense of displaying the merit of donation is used in a positive way. By no means do I want to imply that this is negative since it is understood as something that shows how successful many families are and the positive ways in which they support their religious sites.

This was not the only sign of donation present at this Jain Center. When visiting the site during the weeks after the *Paryushan* celebration there was a nice poster celebrating donations in the worship space. This was one centered around donations towards saving animal lives from farming practices. Central on this board was a picture of the cow that was adopted using money donated by the community. Below this was the list of people who donated and the amount they contributed to the cause. There was the sense that this project was very important since it was shown to me by a member while we were talking about my research on the lived experience of *aparigraha*. They wanted to show me the display since it displayed a proper use of money. I myself was not a witness to the donations were taken in for this cause, but due to the central location of the sign centered on this practice it again had clear importance and significance in the community, and this displayed the importance and proper use of money for meritorious action.

The last practice that I will discuss (supported through many ethnographic studies as well) is the auctioning off of various austerities to the community. During each auctions idols that symbolize the dreams (14 auspicious dreams that point to the

idea that either the child will be a great world leader or religious leader) of Mother *Trishala* (Lord Mahavir's mother) are sold to the highest bidder in the community. The winner of each auction would be awarded the right to carry the idol during the telling of the dreams. I had the privilege of having an informal discussion with one of the families that won one of the auctions and they expressed their excitement around being able to carry one of the idols during the celebration. I did not inquire into the amount that was spent, but it was clear that the amount was something that they personally felt was appropriate for the honor and merit involved in their purchasing of this austerity. The sense of happiness and joy around this honor was strong and easily perceived for the family that had won the right to carry the idol during the celebration.

The practice of these auctions is something that James Laidlaw also explores in a section in his book *Riches and Renunciation*. The formal title of these auctions is *ghi boli* and they are practiced in Jain communities all around the world. He notes, “*Ghi boli* serves two purposes at once: they raise money to pay for religious functions, and they allocate a ritual role, that of patron of the religion.” (Laidlaw 1995, 334) There is importance in supporting the local religious community as I have shown through the process that was followed in my sites and how it was displayed. What is important about these auctions is the communal expectation for spending.

Laidlaw notes from his own experience:

He (auctioneer) begins by calling out a starting price and as assistants move among the crowd identifying competitors, encouraging them to bid, and relaying the new bids back to him, he shouts out the new price so everyone can follow. For the most desirable *ghi bolis* scores and even hundreds of thousands of rupees are no unusual bids. It ends with the last opponent dropping out, after being goaded to offer more rather than admit defeat (Laidlaw 1995, 336).

There is a sense that the community wants to see the proper amount get spent and that the correct person spends the money. Laidlaw again notes from his experience when identifying the partitions that exist within the practice of *ghi boli*. He states “The other, of course, is wealth and a reputation for wealth. Though not picked out from the congregation, the notables of the community are identified within it. Everyone looks to them to see what they will bid.” (Laidlaw 1995, 341). The amount spent is directly understood through the means available and it would be inappropriate to spend too little, but certainly would not be to spend too much. Thus, this practice of earning merit becomes one sectioned off to those of more means in the community and is policed by the community to ensure that it is completed in a satisfactory manner.

There is also a sense of success and creditworthiness through these auctions and is important to understand through the idea of merit. Kelting notes in her article “Tournaments of Honor: Jain Auctions, Gender and Reputation” that the public spectacle of the auction is a way in which people can determine who has the potential for merit and is therefore worthy of credit. She states, “Jain auctions (*boli* or *ghi boli*) serve as ‘tournaments’ in which honor, prestige, and status are negotiated in the context of religious donations and to lose the game of the auction is to lose face and diminish the family honor (*izat*), name (*nām*), standing (*pratiṣṭhā*), or reputation (*ābrū*)”. (Kelting 2009, 290) She noted that both overspending one’s means and underspending or being too frugal (based on communal perception) were both equally problematic. The sense that the community gives means to what they perceive as someone’s personal wealth is important. The auction is an important event to show one’s position in the community and to earn merit (*puṇya*).

This concept of the communal judgement on people’s merit through wealth did show through the interviews as well. The most profound I felt was the story of the

bumpers being replaced on the car. This is someone who had taken vows of minimization centered on physical belongings and was excited to take further vows and reduce his ownership even further. However, he noted that he had replaced the bumpers on his car solely to match what the community expected of him. He stated, “to match (the) social side I had (the) bumpers replaced, how else do you show your wealth to people.” The car was a 2004 model and he had noted that he was planning on continuing to use it till the point where it was no longer functional as a tool for everyday life. The make and model of the car also stood as different when put into comparison with the other cars I had observed in the parking lot. Most of the cars were what could be described as luxury or high end models. They were incredibly nice cars, recent model years. His stood out as an older model that showed wear after years of use. He was following his own ideal of ownership through the type of car he had, but still felt that to match his station with the community he should ensure it met a level of maintenance care and because of that chose to spend money to repair the bumpers. He believes that if there were not the sense of community, he would not have spent the money to repair his car, which would have allowed him to follow his ideal use of money.

Through another interview, I got a matching set of ideas. This person also identified the importance of communal perception through cars and added in the idea of clothing. It was stated “I choose to buy the nice car and clothes since members of my own community judge me by these.” He was very matter of fact about this idea and stated it quite simply. The community which itself adheres to these ideals of ownership also judges based on what a person chooses to drive or wear. This was his reasoning to purchase the high-end products. He had also stated that for him the vow of *aparigraha* stood highest of the vows and that all the other *mahāvratas* stood as

derivatives. Even though he strove to follow the concept of ownership to the greatest extent he thought possible, he was choosing to engage with certain aspects to match his station in life, and to meet community expectations. As noted through Laidlaw's book there is an expectation as understood through financial wealth and station that members are expected to meet within the community and this plays out through everyday ownership practices as well.

Through one interview there was a focus on the ways in which community can assist with maintaining a level of reduction in materialism. For this person community also provided a means of inspiration to continue to live in the idea of reduction. They stated "if a person limits himself or herself then you want to limit yourself." This person is looking towards the positive effect of when a community gathers together and perceived austerity in choices are important. There is an essence of who can fill the ideal role the best and everyone wishing to support each other through this. This also is shown through the auction system. There is a positive aspect to the goading of those who can spend the money and the expectation that they utilize their means for merit. Through spending and utilizing the money the person increases their merit and does encourage others to do the same. This person also noted that this can go in the opposite direction as well. If one person in the community goes over what is deemed to be acceptable it can encourage others to do the same to match their purchases. This can tie back to the early statements about matching communal perception of ownership, since within a community there can be the desire to be the one of the highest means and ownership is one way to show this off. The same person identified this as "showing off" and simply stated "do not create communal problems" when addressing the idea of owning too much.

Within Quaker communities this idea of communal understanding and policing of ideal living played out a bit differently. Through the interviews there was a strong focus on the positive nature of communal living and the ways in which having others of similar ethics can be a positive thing. However, this was centered around the positives of being directly in that community and it is important to remember that there is real world stress that is enacted upon communities whether directly or indirectly as members move outwards and need to engage in the world. When talking about the formation of ethics within community, Howard Brinton states “being first generated in the intimate circle, become applied more widely as its members go out beyond its limits to the larger world.” (Brinton 1964, 119) While he is talking about the process by which these ideal practices are informed and expressed by outside communities, he recognizes that different sets of ideals may exist within and outside the community.

One community kept their donation bowl (a small wicker basket) in the center of the meeting space. The donation bowl was for the local soup kitchen and everyone in the community positively supported donating to this charity. However, the positioning made it possible for everyone to see and know who was giving and the amount of their donation. While no one would outright say that there is an appropriate amount of money for one person to give based on their social standing, there is a sense of being watched when walking to the donation bowl. I have donated through this method, and can say that I felt people watching me and looking to see how much I donated. Opportunities for donation are also announced every week during the community announcement period after worship. These announcements come from both the clerk and the community. (I myself took part in this by utilizing announcement time to talk about my research and mention that I was looking for

volunteers.) The announcement about the donation basket was always one of the earliest; the person making the announcement made the soup kitchen's need for donation clear by discussing any special circumstances based on the time of year or local events that may be impacting their level of need. For example, the announcements made right after major holidays tend to call attention to the fact that donations spike during holiday periods and drop off immediately afterward, resulting in lower than average supplies. The announcement called attention to the fact that the community itself is part of that cycle, pressuring the small group of about 20-25 people to give money to support local charities during off-peak times of year. Thus, we can see that there are both positive and negative sides to the sense of community; while providing a sense of togetherness, it also places, consciously and unconsciously, pressure on members to give money.

This sense of community also expands outside the meeting space as well. Three of the people who volunteered for interviews either currently or previously lived in a community that focused on Quaker values or the general material simplification of life. These communities ranged from shared farms and living spaces to entire communities that have agreed-upon ethical practices that helped to shape the community and draw like-minded new people in.

The first interviewee I will discuss lived on a shared farm. For this person, the community allowed him to maintain a simple life, as he was both supported by others around him and could support them. On the farm, they grew their own food and minimized acquiring new materials as much as possible. While he noted that a portion of their reason for simplicity was a lack of material and financial wealth, there was also a sense that they were choosing to maintain way of living for their own ethical ideals. The farm was in a state of disrepair at the time of their purchase. They desired

to repair the space quickly but, he stated, they “did it on the cheap” and utilized salvaged material and inexpensive means to repair what they could, which added time to the process. He noted that his personal space was a closet, and that he generated heat from a kerosene lamp. This community was a source of support for his chosen lifestyle, which he continued later in his life after moving away. He chose to build his own home over time, and never showed an interest in utilizing the full capacity of his financial resources when they were available to him. The community farm helped to shape his ethical frame for the testimony of simplicity.

This extreme level of communal simplicity was something that others identified as problematic. He even pointed out that the cold and physical issues of the farm were a distraction from his personal goals in life, at that time centered on family and research. There were times when these discomforts and challenges stood in the way of his productivity. The communal component of the farm kept everyone rooted in living the testimony of simplicity to an extreme degree. Part of the community’s reasoning was based on their lack of financial resources, in addition to their agreed upon desire to spend a limited amount to maintain the space. The community itself became central to properly living their idea of simplicity.

Another interviewee mentioned the communal aspect of creating a way to understand what it means to live a simple life. They stated that it was easier to understand ethical concepts if a community of similar thinking people was involved. She stated, “I am strengthened to act more in line with the Quaker values since I live with other Quakers.” The community she lives in is not explicitly Quaker but is modelled after similar values and ideals. She herself moved into this space due to the ethical ideals of the community and felt that it was more in line with her own desires. As noted she felt that being within the community made it easier for her to act with

her own Quaker values since she was surrounded by others who held similar ideals. This presented a situation in which making individual decisions becomes easier. Within the community, some transgressions of values are often ignored or not recognized, since everyone is thought to share the same general practices and ideals. She stated that they all live in a similar way due to similar ideals of how to handle wealth. This is important since any potential transgression is not with the actual possession of wealth, but in the improper use of wealth—when the community does manage to perceive it (for instance, she also gave away “excess” wealth). Whether perceived or not, the community polices the habits of its members to see if any transgressions occur and the manner of the transgression.

Others who moved into a communal space also expressed similar thoughts. There was a sense that the community provided comfort and a framework in which to live the way they felt was ideal. When talking about community and simplicity, one interviewee stated, “don’t rock the boat, leave it alone, keep it simple” when she was talking about replacing physical items for herself. Communal surveillance informs the ethical practices of the group. She recognized that part of living is a desire to own more, which she, like the community as a whole, sees as a problem. In her own life, she chose to avoid engaging with wealth. She discussed it as a matter of wants over needs, and felt that the community supported her in the pursuit of curtailing material acquisition. She understood this as a positive way in which the community watches what its members purchase and the ways in which they use money. For example, she expressed that, though she was able to afford a high-end washing machine, she would not purchase it for fear of communal opprobrium. For her, stepping outside communal expectations is “rocking the boat.” Recall the interview with a member of the Jain community, discussed above, in which we saw a similar idea expressed that when one

person transgresses a communal standard of material displays of wealth, it then becomes easier for the community to obtain similar products. This would lead, slowly, to change the way the community engages with material ownership.

The last case I will discuss here concerns a Quaker who chose to make purchases that the community perceived as excessive. During this interview, I felt as if I was becoming a confidante for this person, as they expressed a level of happiness about what they bought as well as a level of remorse. I perceived their remorse through the fact that there was a justification for every purchase and perceived indulgence. The question that arises from this conversation is: who would be the perceived judge of these transgressions? The nature of these purchases would not have been something that, overall, the community would have necessarily seen as excessive or problematic. In fact, it would likely still be perceived as very minimal living to many and their standard of living stood as extraordinary in its simplicity to me. Thus, while the answer to who judges a person's actions is perceived to be the religious community, it appears that, oftentimes, individuals become their own harshest critics. Because of the perception of potential communal judgement, some purchases and choices were kept quiet.

The other largely unmentioned extravagance that I could see was the beautifully adorned clothing being worn by members of the Jain community. The idea being expressed was that members should wear their best clothing when performing and attending religious rituals. This demonstrates communal policing for me as the people who would be judging and judged by their clothing were solely members of the community. The center administrators established a standard of appropriate clothing to be worn during religious practices and community events; the message is then transmitted by example to the community as something that should be done for

propriety's sake. To say that everyone dressed in this manner would be incorrect, however, as there were some who chose to come in more plain clothes that stood as muted in comparison. This type of clothing was far from normal however, only witnessed on a few people at the *mela*, while the majority of community members wore more extravagant clothing.

Clothing standards provided a stark contrast between the two communities in the way that people chose to present themselves, but the Quaker community, like their well-dressed Jain counterparts, still engaged in sartorial communal policing. Within the Quaker communities, those who came to worship in more formal clothes stood as the exception to the norm. Many worshippers wore jeans, shorts, t-shirts (sometimes with logos and sometimes without), skirts, or very plain dresses. There was a sense of simplicity in the overall dress in the Quaker communities, which many other religious communities might deem unacceptably informal. The sense of simplicity by wearing muted, plain clothes was always the normal way of things, so seeing jeans and t-shirts was acceptable, while suits and dresses would stand out.

Conclusion

These interviews show that even when conditions have radically changed the composition of a religious community, means to cope with these changes likewise develop, providing methods by which to live properly religious lives. Each community, rather than choose complete disengagement from the greater societal desire to use wealth, chose to engage through volunteering, donation and giving in different forms. It is important to these communities to find new ways to show that wealth may be used for purposes other than self-fulfillment. This also allows the engagement with material goods to be considered appropriate by fostering new sensibilities about the appropriate use of such goods in these new contexts. Aside

from the one case in which the person felt that there may be personal overindulgence, everyone else happily discussed what they possessed and showed their frame of understanding was heavily informed by both their community and the manner in which items were obtained.

These common themes concerning proper donation and communal policing are highly influential in both Jain and Quaker communities. The actual ownership and possession of capital or material stands apart from community scrutiny if the perceived proper ways in which it is spent, given, or used are followed. These methods to understand wealth within the communities mean that the definition of what is a transgression of ethical ideals in ownership is formed more by proper use and less by the actual possession itself. This means that fully realizing the ascetic ideal is not seen as appropriate for lay life. This tension, we saw in the previous chapter, also exists in the texts and commentaries that delineate proper lay conduct. Community practices and standards, then, function as living commentaries on texts to inform the way in which people engage ideals to create norms of practice. Thus, we see that the ethical way to utilize material wealth develops within local communities. Due to this, transgressions in terms of mere ownership of material wealth do not exist, but rather function within the framework of living in a manner that communities recognize as within acceptable norms.

CHAPTER 4

Aparigraha and Simplicity in Action

Introduction

As we have discussed in the preceding chapters, communities define appropriate ways both to earn and utilize money. These ideas have ranged from what jobs are deemed appropriate to engage in to how money should be used in an ethically sound manner. These ethics are derived from several sources of authority in each community and are both textually based and communally oriented. This still leaves open a wide range for real-world practices and modes of engagement within the current economic system in the United States and, in some cases, in India. These choices vary widely in how individuals engage in the system. My purpose in this chapter is to bring together as cohesive wholes the threads of some informant's stories that I used in previous chapters to illustrate specific points about wealth acquisition and use. I do this to show the range of mechanisms for understanding non-ownership in each tradition, the ways Jains and Quakers express non-ownership in their lives, and the changes that can potentially occur over a lifetime. These changes illuminate the ever-evolving way that personal ethics are expressed based on individual, communal and societal influences. Telling my informants' narratives in their entirety allows me to link the concerns with wealth acquisition, the focus of Chapter 2, with the ethics concerning the use of wealth discussed in the previous chapter.

Asceticism in Laity

I start with two cases—one from each tradition—in which informants chose to stand aside from the system of capitalism and live only with what they deemed necessary in their personal lives. There were no similarities between each person aside from their desire to disengage from consumerism and capitalism as much as they could in terms

of satisfying their personal needs. Both chose to understand this minimal engagement through religion; in one case, the discovery of the ethical ideals of their religion came after making the decision to minimize engaging with capitalism.

The first of these stories is of someone who has lived their whole adult life focusing on surviving with only the bare minimum needed for what was deemed “comfortable survival.”³ His desire was always to live with what was needed for survival and to ensure that the means (i.e. earnings) and desires never went over that level. The standards of “comfortable survival” changed based on what was deemed necessary for their stage of life; within each stage of life there was a desire to stand aside from consumerism as much as possible. The most interesting thing that I found was that he discovered Quakerism and converted after acting upon his desire to live a minimal life; he felt the Quaker testimony of simplicity validated his own ethos and thus regarded Quakerism as the truly correct path.

He was in his mid-70’s and quickly invited me into his home for the interview. Not many people chose to show me the full capacity of their way of living, but he did let me in just so I could see the full extent of how he lived his life and how he goes about negotiating the problem of choosing to stand aside from consumerist behavior. Just getting to the location was a challenge as it was obscured from the roadway and had a quarter-mile driveway that was entirely dirt road. He built the house to have minimal impact on resources. It was simple in every way with a woodstove for heating and cooking right in the center of the house. Windows were placed everywhere to take advantage of the sun as a heating mechanism and the house was positioned to take advantage of every natural resource that was available. There was

³ I purposefully use the third-person plural pronoun in the singular sense at times in this chapter to protect the identity of my informants as much as possible.

no television present in the space and the only modern convenience electronics that I could see were a single cell phone and a small laptop that were used as methods of communication. The space was filled with plants with some hanging off the ceiling and others on shelves or floors. The entire space felt alive and green, which was further exemplified by a pet cat and turtle that were in the space as well. The space was also small, but not claustrophobic in its design, as the windows gave it a very open feel. The dining room served as the living space and common areas, with a small stairwell leading upwards to the bedroom. This was truly a simple space focused on functionality and maintaining the basics of comfort instead of excess or any extravagant pieces. There were no pictures on the walls.

The land that the house was on was cultivated to be entirely functional in a way that promoted simple living. It was a farm first and foremost and acted as one of his primary means for food. This concern with function was informed by living on a communal farm earlier in life, when the desire was to live off the land as much as possible first found expression. Even the farm space was designed to make as small an impact as possible, as the crops grown were seasonal and local to the area. Anything harvested that was in excess of immediate need would be preserved or stored for future use. There was direct evidence of this as I was willingly and excitedly shown jars of preserved vegetables and other foods that were around the kitchen space.

This was the culmination of this person's life and practices centered on the idea of simplicity. At first, he identified that the manner of simple living was facilitated by severely limited financial means. The decision to be a lifetime student and researcher directly impacted his ability to maintain wealth or own things. Through his desire for education and the inability to afford basic needs such as food

and books without working, this sense of frugality first came to rise. This was exemplified by the statement that when he originally arrived at college, he only had \$100 to find housing, food and books. Due to this, he chose to live at a former filling station that did not have proper heating. It was described through the necessity of having to place a rag under the door to keep out the cold draft. Food was obtained from a USDA commodities store or from workplaces where he could take some food home. This way of life went on for “ten years or so” as him and his significant other needed to live on these meager means to maintain their academic career. This is important since at no point during the conversation did this way of life seem to be something that bothered him or was regarded as extraordinary in any way. It was simply just the way it was and that was okay. It was something that he got used to and this idea continued later into life as well.

The next steps took him into a new journey and a new living area. This is when the purchase of a farm with a community of people occurred. This farm was run down and very simplistic in nature and met the bare minimum of what was needed to survive. It needed repairs and the communities only means to repair it was to use salvaged materials and their own labor, which they did slowly over time. This became a source of tension between the informant and his significant other, since at that time they had a child that also needed to be supported and the farm was not a space in which it was appropriate or safe for a young child. Due to this, he began to maintain two living spaces, spending a few days in each location to be with family and to continue working on the farm. This living situation was described as “living a simple life, I guess, in terms of material simplicity” because there was no real material ownership occurring. The farm was nearly sufficient to meet their food needs; those items that were not able to be grown were purchased in the most inexpensive way

possible. The threshold of affordability for this food purchase was that it needed to be under a dollar per pound.

He discovered Quakerism only after leaving the farm. To this point, his life had been defined by the inability to afford much more; thus, they regarded this lifestyle as normal. The discovery of Quakerism happened through a Quaker friend who began to bring them to Meeting for Worship. After approximately three visits to Meeting for Worship, he encountered the then current edition of *Faith and Practice* (this was in the early 1980's; the book has been reedited and republished multiple times since then). His feeling when reading the book was, "This is so cool, this is right, what I believe in, this is right." This discovery occurred after he had been living in a simple manner and this validated those decisions and cemented his desire to keep living in this manner. It began to inform his decisions even after his earnings grew over time. From a passive acceptance of this lifestyle, Quakerism facilitated his active choice to continue living in this manner even after earnings would have allowed more luxurious accommodations.

The interview then moved to when he built the house in which I was sitting. The process of building took decades since his decision to purchase the materials was defined by when it was financially possible to make the purchase and when it would not be considered excessive. The ability to afford materials was impacted by careful and calculated career decisions. Since the desire was to keep living as simply as possible, decisions were made that kept them at a level of poverty that granted certain benefits for him and his wife's children and themselves. This resulted in a slow accumulation of wealth over time that even at the time of interview was being ignored and stood unused. When talking about why the choice was made to not use any of that money, he pointed to the lack of need to do so, since he was comfortable in his

current living situation. When describing his view on capitalism, he stated, “(I am) not buying into the system; (the) whole capitalist system rots.” He perceived the reward system of capitalism as problematic and “crazy,” since “innovation doesn’t need to be able to make people millions of dollars.” His solution became to completely stand aside from the system as much as possible and not engage with capitalism at all even to the detriment to the self and family.

Within the Jain community, there was one informant who lived with a strong desire to follow the *vratas* as a layperson. The space chosen for the interview immediately made him stand apart from the rest with whom I had spoken that day. He chose to do the interview in the teaching space of the Jain center. This was the only space in the entire Jain center that seemed untouched by the *mela* going on upstairs and all the consumerism that was happening with it. It was quiet and undisturbed by all the activity just upstairs from where we were sitting. The timing was also unique, as a college group had just come through the space. He had just given a short lecture that gave the students the basic tenets of Jainism. Through the lecture, I got the sense that he was shaped by a strong belief in the central tenets of Jainism, but who would not see them as absolute rules that must be adhered to at all cost. For example, when a student asked about Jain opinions on abortion, his response centered on what the texts said, followed by “you can decide how to interpret that for real world application.” The sense was that the texts, while important, were not always the most appropriate means of determining the best course of action when living in the world.

He identified himself as a Jain since birth that had immigrated to the United States as an adult. Jainism was very important in terms of his personal identity, since more than once the connection to Jain family still in India was brought up as a crucial aspect of who he is. He felt a sense of connection to the root of Jainism through a

family member he identified as an *ācārya* (head of a monastic sublineage) who had a deep understanding of Jainism. I perceived the direct connection to an *ācārya* as aiding the importance of the vows in shaping one's ethical decisions. His desire to commit to living in accordance with Jain ideals on an ever-deeper level was aided by formally taking the vows of a layperson (*anuvrats*). Further, he planned to curtail his consumption by qualifying in ever-stricter terms his interpretation of the vows, over the remainder of his life. This is a common strategy for many lay Jains who choose to take the vows formally (see e.g. Laidlaw 1995). His desire was to come as close to mendicancy as possible from the distance of another country and without the ability to access traditional *sadhus* and *sadhvis*.

I do not want to imply that he had always lived in accordance with the ideals throughout his life. He directly stated that this was not the case. In younger years, he questioned the traditional practices of Jainism. He identified as someone who has always lived a vegetarian life and did not question the meaning or importance of living a vegetarian life, but also did not always consider the ingredients that went into prepared foods and at one point was even taking cod liver capsules for health. He recognized his failure to consider the ethical and karmic cost of the cod liver capsule and whether that cost was worth the perceived health benefits. This was true of many of his earlier decisions. A reconsideration of his faith led to accepting the importance of Jain practices. Rituals and observances now provide the ethical framework in which he understands his actions.

His reflections on what it meant to be non-possessive also led him to consider attachments to non-physical objects as well. He identified the concept of *kadagraha* (attachment to bad [ideas]) as an important aspect of truly aiming to be non-possessive in our everyday lives. He defined it as “insisting on things that may or may

not be correct.” The informant regarded attachment to ideas as potentially a violation of the vow of *aparigraha*, since it was a possession of thought. Still, he recognized that lacking possession of thoughts is much harder to cultivate and of a higher level of asceticism than that of avoiding possession of material objects. He stated in the interview, “(In my) personal life a lot of my non-possessiveness is about the material things.” He recognized that his greatest energy is spent detaching himself from material possessions. He saw this as an element of gaining control over himself.

The first thing that he identified as something that could be controlled was the consumption and possession of food. His central focus was on performing austerities centered on an idealistic understanding of the non-possession of food. He asked, “If I only need food to survive, then why do I need to worry about choice of food?” This statement points to a common and important way lay Jains discuss attachment; it is the desire to have things that are pleasing to the senses. His recognition that food is merely a substance for survival led to the choice to eat only what is appropriate and available and not for the purpose of enjoying the food. The choice to be non-possessive of food led to the decision to limit himself to eleven items a day for the rest of his life; this was taken as a formal vow before the *archarya* in the family. He explained that the 11 items applied to the number of ingredients in any dish, meaning that if an item took 10 ingredients to make, that would constitute most of his food options for the day. If this limit was met before the end of the day, then the choice would be to complete the rest of the day by fasting and wait until the next day to be able to consume food again. This was important to note since the *mela* that was happening just one floor up provided many food options which a large portion of the community was exceedingly excited about. However, he chose simply to partake in a glass of the chai that was available to the visiting college group. This was due to the

desire to keep the food simple and not to over indulge. Further, he recognized that most foods available at the *mela* would put him over the daily limit or be right at the edge and then he would not be able to eat for the rest of the day. As he summed it up, “Personally, it is about reducing attachment to food.” I found this to be very powerful in the way that it was experienced. He saw an element of his life that could be controlled and followed as strictly as possible. The action itself, centered on controlling the self, became formalized through the vow, which made the practice meritorious (i.e. generative of *punya*).

In a manner similar to the Quaker discussed immediately above, he had also chosen to limit his personal income to a certain level and has been living within those limits as much as possible. He identified multiple times in which they declined to receive either greater compensation or a promotion at their place of employment in order to stay within the preset limit of material wealth. In similar fashion as the Quaker, this amount changed due to life events, such as becoming a homeowner and having children. At each level, the desire to live within a set income limit was held to a strict standard and followed as closely as possible. This was exemplified through the statement, “I am quite satisfied; I don’t need a new job (or to) negotiate pay.”

He has also made plans regarding what the future would bring in terms of personal ownership and plans to take further vows. He focused on maintaining or reducing levels of possession. He saw no reason to either obtain a larger home or a smaller home after his children left for college. He saw the home he currently has as something that would work for an extended period. When asked what would be necessary for home ownership, he stated, “There is no end to it. Do we have enough of a home to live for 20-30 years?” For him, the answer was “yes,” since the point of comparison was the house in which he grew up, a 300-square foot apartment in

Mumbai. With that point of reference, the home he owned in the United States already seemed quite extravagant. However, this was considered acceptable, since it was part of providing for his family. While he was not looking to reduce the size of his house, there was a desire to maintain and keep it the same for the rest of his life out of obligation to his spouse and children.

However, clothes fit into a different sphere, regarded as possessions that could be actively reduced without needing to consider others' needs. Limiting clothing was seen as a central way to cultivate and maintain a truly non-possessive life, and it was considered an individual decision that did not affect his family. At the time of the interview there was no direct vow taken limiting the possession of clothing as he was not actively working on further restricting the scope of the vow of non-possession. He expressed a desire at that time to maintain only very basic or plain clothing. This relates to the idea of not being attached to food. By focusing on having plain or basic clothing, it becomes easier to reduce the number of clothing items over time. He pointed out that the clothing that was being worn at the time was multiple years old and the intent was to keep those items of clothing until they were no longer usable. He said, "I don't really care about buying clothes," as he really focused on the idea of functionality over showing off wealth through clothing. He spoke fondly of the future plan to take a vow to own just five pairs of pants and five shirts. This was something he was planning to undertake at the appropriate time. He started to recognize the problem of being attached to clothes and the social function of showing off through the ownership of clothing. Therefore, his tendency has been to replace worn out clothing with fewer, plainer items. The final statement he gave that exemplified all of this was, "There is no end to our needs." He understood that desire led to conflate wants with needs, which is the ethical root of the issue of possessiveness. He desired

to become detached from possessions and both took formal vows and instituted informal practices to live in accordance with his personal ideals as much as possible. The vow increases the karmic value of the act, but requires strict adherence because of the liability involved with its violation. This moral calculus helps us to understand how *punya* plays a central role in ethical decision-making.

The Middle Path

Most responses to my questions about the ethics of ownership landed somewhere in the middle ground between extremes of self-indulgence and -denial. They neither reached a level of renunciation that we saw in the two cases discussed in the previous section, nor chose to engage in a manner that transgressed communal norms. These groups discussed here focused primarily on determining what their ideal level of comfort was so that they would be distracted neither by trying to meet base comforts nor by obtaining too much in the world.

The first person discussed here had explored what it meant to go to the bare minimum of ownership. This was all explored through a crisis in ethics that led to a desire to change the way in which they lived their life. She was at first fully engaged in the capitalist and consumerist system but then chose to reject nearly all possessions; finally, she concluded that the middle ground is the best place in which to live.

She started her story by identifying what her previous life was like. She worked as a landscape architect working with affluent people. As a result, she could afford a life of relative luxury. She felt this occupation helped others to engage in materialism to a high degree. As I discussed in Chapter 2, she was comfortable living in this manner until an ethical crisis occurred, which brought to her attention what the nature of consumerism is in the world. A trip to Latin America brought financial and

material inequality into stark relief. Through witnessing the tragic event of an eighteen-year-old girl dying from kidney failure due to her family's extreme poverty, she decided to change the way in which she engaged in capitalism.

This resulted in an initial exploration of what it meant to fully minimize material ownership; she rejected many creature comforts. The hardships she faced during that time of complete material and financial minimization eventually led to accepting some creature comforts. Heating her house only enough to keep the pipes from freezing forced her to wear “a hat and four layers around the house” in order to be comfortable. Ultimately, she decided that a doctrinaire approach to following the testimony of simplicity stood in the way of proper communion with the divine. She regarded some Quakers as living too far in simplicity, stating, “some Friends take it to the extreme, living painfully.” The idea that simplicity can be painful came up in one other interview, mentioned in Chapter 2, in which an informant expressed that living below the poverty line to avoid paying “peace taxes” was a failure to live “authentically,” meaning in accordance with one's capabilities. This was an idea that only came about in interviews with members of the Quaker tradition. Due to the lack of a monastic order in Quakerism, the testimony of simplicity has no end goal to define it as clearly as *aparigraha* is in Jainism with the figure of the mendicant.

By the time of our conversation, her rejection of what she regarded as extreme forms of simplicity had led her to find new strategies to live with an appropriate level of creature comforts. She did not want to buy back into a system of inequality due to her desire to be socially active in the world and a focus on peace missions. She had purchased a space in a community that centered their ideas on environmentally friendly means of energy use, farming and communal sharing. This was not inexpensive, however, as the initial cost of the space could be considered prohibitive

to many. However, the group's ideals and the ability to maintain a lower level of income due to the lower monthly costs was important to her. This was her first step toward understanding what it meant to live comfortably while still following her ideals and religious practices.

Additionally, she desired to have some comforts such as entertainment for the sake of relaxation; it was also important to her to separate work and personal life. She determined a base level of heating and air conditioning to avoid distraction, which are supplied through environmentally-friendly and renewable means as much as possible. For her, entertainment meant borrowing movies from the local free library. She also enjoys the theater, but likewise recognizes it as a costly luxury. The way around this was to volunteer at the theater to earn tickets to the show. These creative solutions presented a way for her to engage her desires while staying disengaged from capitalism and consumerism.

The way in which she chose to make purchases also exemplified her desire to tread a middle ground. She purchased clothes and other items secondhand to "not feed into slave trade." This way, she could possess goods she considered necessary to maintain her desired level of comfort in an ethically sound way. These examples show how she treaded a middle path based on a Quaker understanding of what simplicity could be.

While no Jain directly stated that there is a baseline of creature comforts that should not be crossed, there were several people who engaged with material and capital in a very calculated and precise manner to maintain what they considered an appropriate middle ground. Jains tended to focus on what individuals need and want, and how to navigate balancing these in an appropriate manner.

One person balanced their needs and wants in an interesting manner. There was no outright rejection of purchasing things that were wanted but not needed. This person had been raised as a Jain and had moved to the United States as an adult. Their core belief is that people should recognize what is a want and what is a need and attempt to minimize acquiring “wants” as much as possible. This does not entail a complete rejection of purchasing desired items that are not strictly needed. While their desire was to minimize as much as possible they had formulated a way to be able to engage with wants in a manner they deemed appropriate. Their method of negotiation is to create what they termed “detachment” toward what they already have. They summed it up this way, “If I am buying 2 shirts today, can I get rid of 2 others?” This important question pointed to the ideal of maintaining a specific level of ownership and does not outright deny the purchase of wants. Their strategy is to remain so detached from these purchases that they are able and willing to give them away whenever a new item is needed or desired. Many Jains expressed a similar strategy for limiting possessions.

Another strategy for navigating the desire for possessions is to give away a fixed percentage of income and material objects. One person identified that they chose to engage in the world willingly due to their attachment. They stated, “I can always do more [i.e. give more in donations], but I cannot do more due to my attachment.” I found this to be profound since this person recognized that more could be done, but acknowledges their level of attachment to material objects. This person navigates their materialism by giving away 10% of their total pay to charitable organizations, namely medical centers in India. They understood this to be an important way to show that they are detached from their material and financial wealth, since it is willingly given to others for the sake of assisting the charitable

organization. This also opened the way to purchase material goods. Since they had determined that 10% was an appropriate amount to donate, the remainder of their income was free to be used for the sake of enjoyment. Thus, we see a “middle way” strategy creating a dual belief: on one hand, there was a free recognition that there was more that could be done for charity; on the other, donating a fixed amount of their income freed the remainder to be freely utilized. Again, we may note that the mere possession of wealth is rarely castigated if others in the community regard the person as giving their fair share to the community.

Freely Engaged Materialism

The final group I wish to discuss includes those who choose to engage freely with materialism and money. There was a sense of guilt in this group centered on the things they were choosing to enjoy that were felt to be transgressions of non-ownership principles and there was either a desire to keep quiet about this or to look to the community to see how they responded to these practices. These “excesses” may not be perceived as odd or outlandish outside of these communities. The scale of the perceived transgressions was understood through the ownership principles of each tradition. This group was as small as those who chose to adhere to their traditions’ respective ideals to an extreme degree.

The first person whom I found to be comfortable discussing non-ownership principles while admitting that he does not follow them in his own life was running a booth at the *mela* in the Jain center in Chicago. Commerce was going on all around and there were purchases being made while we were talking. The man at this booth was selling life insurance and giving those who were interested information on various life insurance plans. There were prizes and gifts all over the table to give away to those who did sign up for insurance at the time. I found it a bit odd to have a

conversation about *aparigraha* in a space that exemplified commercial behavior. I asked if this was the space in which he wished to talk after explaining what my project was about; he chose to stay at his booth due to his level of comfort with the topic and his desire to maintain the table even though there was another person that could run the table present at the time.

This person desired to have the best of what was available, but chose only to purchase it when it was necessary so that he would not purchase things merely out of desire. He expressed a sense of remorse about owning fine objects and materials that may not be available to others due to their lack of means to purchase them or because of their pious commitments to observing *aparigraha*. He stated that he will “always be attached to the material world”; for him, this was okay since it was “part of life.” His focus was on caring for his family and the greater Jain community. He frequently cited the way Bill Gates uses his tremendous means to help others around the world as much as possible while living a life of luxury himself. This helped me to understand that he justified the things he owned by acting in an administrative capacity within the local Jain center to ensure that all members of the community were satisfied with the events and services that were offered. He even expressed his desire to do more for the community as a form of attachment, and even stated that adopting an idealistic view of *aparigraha* would be problematic to meeting these goals. Despite recognizing his desire to help the community as a transgression of *aparigraha*, and acknowledging that he should be trying to detach himself from such attitudes, he felt incapable of doing so, since aiding in the growth of the Jain community was more important to him than the personal goal of adhering to the ideal. He described his activities as “focusing on something substantial rather than focusing on attachment.” His desire to do something important transcended the problem of attachment; while he still recognized

his attitude as an issue of being too attached, he felt his work was important enough that it must be completed for the sake of the community.

When discussing his ideas about ownership, this person also expressed a sense of longing to be more idealistic in their choices. As stated earlier, this person sees himself as being attached to the material world and recognizes this as a problem that can be navigated. Still, he also chose to continue to engage with the material world in a manner that was found acceptable. He stated, “I do like wearing good quality clothes and (eating at a) good quality restaurant.” He recognized this as a means of demonstrating his social standing. He accepted this and recognized that he does not want to have a desire to be at that level of attachment, but was nevertheless committing to it, since he also recognized that he desires to have the finer material objects in life. This played out in a comical way during the conversation, as he had an interaction with his wife, who had gone to another booth at the *mela* and made a substantial clothing purchase. The article of clothing was beautifully adorned and stood out as colorful and of high quality. While she was standing here, he quickly said to me, “See? My wife is committing *parigraha* right now!” This was said in a purely comical manner and not with any negative connotation, as both people excitedly talked about the purchase with large smiles. This purchase was also something that I would not have perceived as out of the ordinary, as it was a *mela* and purchases were happening all over. Any negative perception, if it existed at all, would have solely been in the minds of the people I was currently interacting with, as all around us were large groups of people making similar purchases and excitedly talking about the quality of the products around them. This person identified their acceptance of being attached to worldly affairs when it is necessary and articulated a reason for it in their life.

There were two cases among my Quaker informants of freely engaging with consumerism; both presented different cases for why their actions were acceptable. They varied greatly in profession, the items that they chose to engage with, and why they chose to engage with them. I found this important and profound, as both showed a sense of guilt but also a sense of justification for owning the items that they chose to have.

The first person understood the things that they had through the idea of the divine gift. They had a successful local business that provided a decent income and whose products successfully competed with national brands in the same market. This level of success was important and provided the possibility of engaging with greater objects. The way this person understood their success was through being gifted the money from God; because it was a gift, it was appropriate to have it. This understanding of material and capital being a gift from God does not mean there was always personal wealth available for use, however, as at times this person had very little means available to them. It was the manner in which they made the decisions that I found striking and different. They described that, at one time, they worked in a physically intensive job that provided a substantial income. He saw this job as acceptable, but left it to assist their spouse with their burgeoning business, stating “I knew it in my spirit” that this was the right decision. They thought that any success or failure would happen through divine will. The company was a success and resulted in greater-than-expected profits. They saw their profits as a gift that could be used as they saw fit. They described the promise of success as divinely ordained, which led them to feel free to purchase things as they saw fit. If the means were there, then anything they purchased could be deemed a gift from God and was therefore appropriate to own. Their attitude strongly reflected William Penn’s, as well as what

is in *Faith and Practice*, as we saw in Chapter 1. This person identified *Faith and Practice* as a primary text that drew them to Quakerism. I was struck by their responses, as they had a clear way to understand their wealth. At the time of interview, though, this person had very little wealth and was unable to engage with capitalism on many levels, yet this too was okay to them. They chose to understand what they did or did not have as the outcome of divine will and accepted their fate.

I briefly discussed the case of the biologist in Chapter 2. I strongly felt that this person was confiding their inner turmoil to me throughout our conversation. They had converted to Quakerism later in life after having previously achieved a high level of success in their field. They had the wealth that went along with that success. This was okay at the time that they earned it, but, after beginning to follow the Quaker tradition, cultivated the desire to reduce their wealth and so implemented some life changes to carry it out. As a first step, this person had removed from their house physical objects that were deemed excessive. One of the biggest things was to give up their second car, choosing instead to utilize public transportation and ride sharing with family and friends. Reduction of “excesses” was an important part of what it meant to this person to minimize possessions. However, there was also the desire to enjoy what was available to them in the world, namely going to the theater, subscribing to cable television and owning a house that many would deem to be larger than needed. Still, they regarded the house as acceptable to own, since it was fairly earned and properly maintained by not overindulging in other luxuries. The sense of guilt that I felt while talking with them makes this case of perceived transgression of their own ideals of non-ownership. Within the greater world or even within their own community there may not have been this perception, since the person worked hard to reach the peak of

their profession and did so in an ethically sound way and with a desire to help others as much as possible.

Conclusion

There are varied ways in which people have chosen to understand and express ideals of non-ownership in their lives. This is just a small set of examples that show the wide and varied way in which people have chosen to act within the world. Life events give rise to changes that inform individuals' choices about how they adhere to community ideals. There is thus no sharply-defined line delineating what is appropriate and what is not; this ambiguity is what allows various individuals to determine their way of living and the degree of impact that ownership principles can have on their lives in tension with the norms established in the communities with which they affiliate.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this exploration, I have been looking to find the ways in which ownership and material wealth are understood in the Jain and Quaker traditions. Both traditions uphold ascetic based ethics when discussing the way in which people should live out the concepts of *aparigraha* and the testimony of simplicity. However, such abstract conceptualizations do not consider the importance of the lay community and their need to interact with wealth and ownership to support their lives – and their communities. Whether this is the formal distinction between the mendicant and the lay community in Jainism, or the Quaker concept that everyone should embody the ideals of the tradition, there is a need for a community of people to live in and engage in the world for the sake of their own survival and the survival of the tradition itself.

The communities that have chosen to interact with wealth and ownership have developed means of understanding the proper ways to interact with capital that utilizes the ethical frames of their respective traditions. Additionally, they have developed means of communal policing and support of these ideals of ownership, centered on the proper use of money once it has been obtained. Through these mechanisms, unique communities have arisen within each tradition, which interact with the world through the continual reinterpretation of ascetic ideals and their incorporation into everyday life. These reformulated ideals allow both interaction with wealth and ideas of non-ownership to coexist simultaneously.

The financial success of each community makes it easy for the casual observer to perceive that they do not follow their own ethical ideals at the lay level. However, there is a much deeper and more profound series of ideas at play that lead to this success. Individuals are finding ways to understand and choose professions based on their personal ethics, which are fostered in their religious communities.

Looking at the interviews, there was a strong focus on career choices in both communities that directly ethical ideas presented by the individuals. This broke down into social non-profit work, research, or medicine. Only the one person stood aside as a store owner, but still used ideas centered on ethical business practices as understood through their ideas of ownership. This developed a means of understanding a proper way for money to be received through ethical practices in earning money so that it could be used in a proper way for the sake of merit. Weber's ideas are strong and are supported by these ideas of ethical practices of the individuals in choice of profession. Additionally, these ethics have led to success due to perceived trustworthy actions by the individual and a dedication to fulfill the promises of their work to the highest degree.

There is also the additional way in which the communities understood the proper quantity of wealth. The ambiguities of the source texts are something that each tapped into in their own unique way. Which brought to light the ways in which they chose to understand their own individual wealth. From communal support of service to generating ways to show austerity and success in the community there were many ways in which people accessed their personal wealth.

Through this communal policing and maintenance, we can see how people choose their jobs. Within each community there was a consistent theme centered on the profession that was chosen. Each area had developed a way of defining who in the community was having a measure of success through their profession and position within that profession. In the Jain communities, the amount of wealth that they could show through the items they owned was used to show off the success of the individual. As shown in the story of the person who repaired his car, their desire was to show the community the success and wealth that was possessed even though this

stood aside from their own ideal of non-ownership in their life. There was an intentional and important transgression for the sake of fitting in and meeting the community expectation of the position held. This played out in more subtle ways as well and can be seen in the way individuals dressed, the jewelry that was worn, and the cars they drove to worship sites. Each of these items seemingly stands in opposition to ideas centered on non-ownership, but individuals possessed and maintained extremely lavish and fancy items. This was repeatedly identified as something to be understood through the community as it was important to always show austerity through success and material goods were key in doing this.

Within Quaker communities the policing was much subtler. Rather than focusing on the material possessions the community based these ideas more on the acceptability of profession choices. My own story on choosing to go back to school and the communal reaction to this exemplifies the way in which others saw the proper way to earn money. Purely capitalistic endeavors, especially when viewed as predatory through corporate business, were put into a place of demonization and while the individual engaged in these practices might not be completely entrenched in the system they are still seen a part of the potential issue. Through changing the focus towards a profession that focuses more on giving back to society in some capacity the financial compensation becomes less of the focus and the positive gains are the central idea. In each community those who stood out as leaders in social giving and charitable work were celebrated and held to a higher standard, and their amount of material wealth earned lost some of the focus. This is a unique way of understanding what it means to exist within a material world, and is tapping into the ambiguity presented by William Penn where he defines possessions as a gift from God.

Therefore, the items are allowed when earned correctly and the community assists in determining what is the correct way.

The ascetic based traditions of Jainism and Quakerism both have very formalized ideas centered on non-ownership as part of their ethical tradition. Despite these ideals there has historically been significant commercial and financial success for many Jains and Quakers and this seemingly creates a paradox where those who believe in a reduction of material wealth have obtained significant wealth and success. The way in which lay communities in each tradition understand these concepts has created a profound and important means of understanding what it means to live and engage in the world. The way in which transgressions of the principles are understood changes in a dramatic and important way that is policed and understood by communities and individuals. They focus on engaging with their work in an ethically sound manner and this leads to a measure of success. Through these ways of understanding both profession and the way financial success is displayed the transgressions have transformed and the ascetic based understanding is no longer appropriate for those who live in the world as laity. The laity (remember for Quakers where there is no ascetic/lay split that all are held to the same ideal) is a unique and important subset of each tradition and there has been the development of their own understanding and ideas centered on the ethics presented in their tradition. We can see the ways in which they tap into the history of these ideas to show the evolution and the unique ways in which it exists in the lived experience of today. The communities have used the ethics of their tradition to respond to outside pressures and developed this new means of understanding what it means to be a lay Jain or Quaker so that they can stay true to the core of their own faith while maintaining the ability to live in the world. Through all this the perceived transgressions disappear, and we have a

community that has a unique means of understanding financial and material success in the world and maintains ideas centered on non-ownership through engagement.

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