

# Philosophy cultural relativism



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Consumerism - no longer ethical In the twenty-first century America consumerism lifestyle was widespread, highly-respected and valued by the majority of the society. It was believed to be a tool for guaranteed variety of choice for products and services, facilitated way of living, stronger economy and personal happiness. What at that time was regarded as ethical proved to be totally immoral now, in the twenty second century. The legacy left for us from the previous generations living in the twenty first century showed the devastating outcome of their misdeeds. The technological boom, having emerged to satisfy the society's thirst for innovativeness and easier life, deprived the society of its basic functions - live communication, connection with the reality, building relationships; product variety deprived the planet of huge amount of its resources, destroyed natural habitats and left the poor countries unable to meet their basic needs; the U. S. economy actually lost from the consumerism behavior, because as people were becoming "shopaholics" they started to take more and more bank credits as they could not satisfy their previous loans, thus living a life "on credit"; personal happiness became a transitory state of mind.

The creation of cell phones, computers, mp3-players, I-pods, the Internet, TV - all of those items changed the lives of our predecessors so much that they lost their sense of reality. The human himself lost his ability to communicate freely and build real social relationships. One started to prefer cell phone calls, virtual chats, I-net calls as they were more convenient. He did not need to travel to meet the person he wanted to talk with. He did not need to sacrifice the cosiness of his own home or office. It was easier not to look the person in the eyes when saying bad news. It was so fascinating to present false identity in virtual chats and pretend to be "the prince charming" as in

some fairy tale. And that was not the end of the story. Portable players limited the chance of having occasional talks with random people and thus preventing our predecessors from more new acquaintances. Family conversations during dinner were replaced by watching television. The rash development of new technologies and their improvements only contributed to the immoral world of twenty-first century America. One did not regard as unethical working overtime to meet consumerist needs sacrificing spent time with family and friends.

An article from the beginning of the twenty first century showed, as stated, "startling anomalies":

Some aspects of rampant consumerism have resulted in startling anomalies. Worldwatch reports that worldwide annual expenditures for cosmetics total U. S. \$18 billion; the estimate for annual expenditures required to eliminate hunger and malnutrition is \$19 billion. Expenditures on pet food in the United States and Europe total \$17 billion a year; the estimated cost of immunizing every child, providing clean drinking water for all, and achieving universal literacy is \$16. 3 billion. (p. 2)

Hence, our predecessors were so focused on fulfilling their own consumerist needs based on the huge variety of products and services that they neglected real global issues. They neglected the big problems. Humanity neglected humanity. Humanity neglected ethics. Moreover, from the same article we see another shocking and blameful fact: " In the United States, there are more cars on the road than licensed drivers" (p. 1). That is how the air gets polluted, rainforests are being destroyed, natural habitats are getting destroyed, species vanish. Furthermore, automobiles made people's lives as sedentary as never before, which resulted in health problems,

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obesity, you name it.

Phrases like "shopping therapy" and "buy now pay later" became so popular that they turned twenty-first century Americans into "shopaholics". Things regarded once as luxuries became necessities. People continued buying without realizing the consequences of their actions. One who could not satisfy the loans he had taken was forced to borrow another credit and another and another. Thus, involving himself into the eternal cycle of life "on credit". In addition to personal debt, there was the national debt which in the end of 2007 accounted for 9 trillion dollars, making each citizen's share around thirty thousand dollars, a sum more than many made in a year and more than many made in two years. People were becoming more and more nervous. The effects of the consumerist lifestyle influenced them so much that they totally forgot about simple things in life. The government and large corporations did not care about what was happening, at least they did not show it efficiently to the public. Things remained unchanged for long time. Now, twenty second century suffers from the painful legacy left by our predecessors.

As a result of the consumerist attitude of people, happiness acquired a new meaning. It was no longer a feeling of contentment or joy. It became evanescent feeling of contentment, because as people received newer and newer products and services their wish for those products changed. For example, a child was bought a Barbie doll, but after a while she was no longer interested, because there was the Bratz doll. So, she wanted the new doll; because it had more extras, it looked better, it was more trendy. The same situations occurred with adults. They easily got tired of certain products, because new products were introduced on the market. Marketing

strategies became more and more implacable and bold, not taking into consideration people's actual needs and necessities. Profits and superficiality were the rulers. People's values gradually started to diminish. Fewer and fewer people actually thought about ethics and morality. Happiness was transformed into consumer's content.

Finally, the United States of America in the twenty first century were marked to a great extent by consumerist behavior resulting into "contamination" of other countries all around the world as the globalization process was taking place. The development of new technologies and new products basically worsened people's lives in several aspects: they could no longer interact with each other properly, they damaged the nature, and they hurt not only themselves but also other people with their actions. The economy was rather losing than gaining and personal happiness became a distorted notion. People had to learn how to provide higher quality of life using the lowest amount of raw materials. They needed to change the way they produced goods and the way they consumed them. That is what ethics is all about - improving life by realizing right actions.

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