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Ethical Consumerism and Everyday Ethics

> The consumption of the average U.S. citizen requires eighteen tons of natural resources per person per year and generates an even higher volume of wastes (including household, industrial, mining, and agricultural wastes). Some of these wastes are released to the atmosphere, rivers, and oceans; others are landfilled or incinerated; a small proportion is recycled. The standard conception of economic development envisions the rest of the world's population as moving steadily up the ladder of mass consumption, eventually achieving levels similar to those achieved by the United States and some European economies. Clearly, the environmental implications of the global spread of mass consumption for resource use and environmental waste absorption are staggering. … In accepting increasing marketization as normal, and recommending it strongly to developing nations as a route out of poverty, we tend to ignore such negative correlates. Again, the effects on resource consumption and the environment are especially evident, but the insidious effects of the shifting boundary are more general. The undermining of community and family, as well as the replacement of spiritual values with commercial ones are now joined by the distancing of the individual from the natural world, with attendant environmental degradation. (Harris, 1997, pp. 269–72)

> It's a very good feeling that we sit down together, we have breakfast in a completely different way than if

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> we didn't sit around a properly laid table. I think this is very important in the family. And the children, if they get used to it they will have this requirement as well. Because – I often say this – if this is lacking for someone, then I say that one has no soul. I think these small things are needed for me to be tolerant and generous. … It's important that one has an inner (moral) backbone. (Excerpt from an interview with S.R., entrepreneur and housewife, Budapest, Hungary, 2007)

The two quotations above are equally familiar, yet in different contexts. The first, expressed by an environmental economist, formulates moral concerns over the global impacts of consumption in general. The second, put forward by a housewife, makes explicit the ethical concerns behind a particular consumption practice of seating all the family around the breakfast table. Despite their coexistence, there is a clear tension between the two discourses. The first considers consumption as destructive both practically and morally. The second sees it as a necessary element of maintaining some of the most important values of everyday life: the family, the home, decency and even a moral backbone.

These differences stem from the discrepancy in the normative standpoints of the two discourses: the first evaluates consumption from the point of view of its environmental effects; whereas the second does so from that of the meaningful practices of which it forms part. What allows for this double assessment of consumption practices is, to use Wilk's (2001) term, its 'dual nature' (p. 255). On the one hand, as this book has argued, ordinary consumption norms are formulated with reference to ethical concerns arising from everyday life, such as being a good father or a respectable person. On the other hand, consumption practices are also intertwined with complex political, economic, social and environmental processes. They are part of chains of systems of provision (Fine, 2002), and every act of consumption maintains or implicitly supports other elements of the entire chain: the labor relations, political regimes, transportation means, retail structures, environmental impact and so on. Furthermore, due to the scarcity of resources, consumption is also inseparable from questions of access, distribution and inequality. Purchasing a carton of milk is simultaneously an act of parental care and a consciously or inadvertently taken affirmation of the labor relations under which it was produced, the animal welfare issues involved and an addition to our eco-footprint. Owing to these connections, every consumption act can be assessed from two sets of

normative angles: one relating to everyday concerns, and the other to its implications for the larger social, economic, environmental and political systems that it maintains.

The book has so far focused predominantly on the first set of concerns. This chapter, in turn, looks at the second aspect by analyzing the relationship between norms arising from the concerns of everyday life and the aims set by ethical consumption movements. The chapter stresses the diversity and cultural embeddedness of ethics of consumption at both levels. First, I will argue that ethical consumer movements formulate their objectives based on particular visions of good life and justice that, rather than being universal, are shaped by local social and cultural concerns. Second, I will show that the adoption of ethical consumption objectives at the level of everyday life depends on whether they can be integrated into existing culture-specific local cosmologies.

The ethics of ethical consumerism

Diverse ethics

'Ethical consumption' encompasses a wide range of actions from non-consumption, as in the case of boycotts and the voluntary simplicity movement (general downshifting of consumption) to consumption following particular ethical principles, such as the purchase of fair trade, green, and free-range goods and 'buycotts'.[1] More broadly, it involves not only particular purchasing (or nonpurchasing) decisions, but also particular ways of using goods – such as handling them with care so that they last longer, for green motives – and ways of disposing of them, such as recycling and selective waste collection (Cooper-Martin and Holbrook, 1993; Gulyás, 2008).

Ethical consumption is customarily described as a particular type of consumption decision that is motivated by ethical purposes. Gulyás, for instance, defines it as a 'conscious endeavor of the consumer to make their choices on the basis of their values or ethical principles' (Gulyás, 2008, p. 26). Similarly, according to Starr (2009), ethical consumers can be identified by their 'purchasing and using products and resources according not only to the personal pleasures and values they provide but also to ideas of what is right and good, versus wrong and bad, in a moral sense' (p. 916). The underlying idea of this approach is that ordinary consumption is immoral, or at best amoral. This conceptualization of consumption, as shown in previous chapters, has a long history in social sciences. In sociology, the study of consumption was

dominated by the critique of consumption, featuring it as hedonistic, inauthentic, competitive, selfish and materialistic (Lasch, 1980; Veblen, 1924); and private consumer choice was long posited as the opposite of citizenship (Trentmann, 2007b; Trentmann and Soper, 2008a). Ethical consumption in this understanding is defined as the exception to the rule: as special consumption practices which are motivated by ethical – 'political, religious, spiritual, environmental, social or other' (Harrison et al., 2005, p. 2) – aims. More narrowly, the distinction between ethical and other consumption has been made on the basis of selfish private aims versus altruistic public aims.

This distinction has been criticized along different lines. Kate Soper (2007, 2008) suggests that public, altruistic aims can also be engaged in a self-regarding way. Side effects of affluence and a consumerist lifestyle – including pollution, exploitation, materialism, stress and the 'tragedy of the commons' – may create dissatisfaction in consumers, and thereby alter their understanding of what defines a good life. Self-interest is thus modified and takes a 'distinctively moral form of self-pleasuring or a self-interested form of altruism: that which takes pleasure in committing to a more socially accountable mode of consuming' (Soper, 2007, p. 213). Integrated into personal visions of a good life, ethical consumption aims are no longer experienced as altruistic, but as self-regarding or, as she labels them, 'alternative hedonists'; hence the advancement of the common good does not require the 'sacrifice' of self-regarding aims. These moral forms of pleasures may be complemented by more hedonistic pleasures intrinsic in alternative forms of consumption such as cycling or taking a walk, yet for an act to count as 'alternative hedonist' it needs to be 'sensitive to the "tragedy of the commons" factor in consumerism and keen to adjust individual consumption in the light of it' (Soper, 2007, p. 215).[2]

Another line of criticism has questioned the very assumption that ordinary consumption is immoral or amoral by pointing out the cultural, social and moral imperatives at play in ordinary consumption (see Chapter 1), and has prompted a redefinition of the concept of 'ethical consumption'. One of the most prominent of such examples, featured particularly in geographical discussions of the topic (Barnett et al., 2005; Popke, 2006; Trentmann, 2007a), defines ethical consumption as concern directed at distant as opposed to close others, which is characteristic of ordinary ethical concerns. For example, Barnett et al. (2005) suggest that ethical consumption can be conceptualized as referring 'to any practice of consumption … explicitly registering commitment or obligation towards distant or absent others' (p. 29). Daniel Miller, too,

distinguishes between the 'ethics' of consumption (defined as 'direct involvement of altruistic concern for others and, in particular, distant others') and other normative concerns that involve 'general questions of good versus bad, or right versus wrong behaviour by the social actors themselves' (Miller, 2001a, p. 133), which he calls 'morality'.

In contrast to the approach that sees consumers as naturally amoral, this line considers them as ordinarily moral; the question is rather how to extend the scope of ordinary moral commitments to distant others. The problem is seen to lie in distance and in the invisibility of people and processes which distance brings about. For example, distance hides the complex commodity chains involving environmental degradation, exploitative work relations, unfair trade and the reality of battery farms from the eyes of the consumer who only encounters the neatly packaged product on a shelf in a metropolitan supermarket (Barnett et al., 2005).

Yet even this definition of ethical consumption as care for distant others is problematic. As Amartya Sen argues, the '[g]roups intermediate between oneself and the all, such as class and community, provide the focus of many actions involving commitment' (Sen, 1977, p. 334). Indeed, many of the ethical consumerist movements have focused on a 'politics of proximity', the 'commitment to closer rather than distant others', involving overlapping ethical reasons of 'regionalism, nationalism, environmentalism and communitarianism' (Adams and Raisborough, 2008, p. 267). These concerns defined, among others, patriotic consumer movements, the slow-food movement that started in Italy (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010), as well as the contemporary organic movement in China (Klein, 2009). Many ethical consumer movements are not directed at distant others at all, but focus on the self (Sassatelli, 2004) and their primary motive is self-amelioration. For example, the intention to overcome materialism and gain back control over one's spiritual development through renouncing consumption is one of key elements of the voluntary simplicity movement and of various branches of religiously motivated ethical consumption (Doherty and Etzioni, 2003).

The difficulty in pinning down ethical consumption by a substantive definition only partially stems from the diversity of the phenomenon. The other, probably even more stringent, reason is that 'ethical' is used simultaneously as a descriptive and a normative term. Acts are therefore classified as 'ethical consumption' based on a substantive definition of the good, which makes analytical descriptions dependent on particular value judgments (Dombos, 2008). As opposed to this stance, the approach that I wish to follow here is to refrain from any substantive

definition of what counts as a properly ethical concern in order to be able to analyze the ethics proposed by different ethical consumerist movements, and to provide a descriptive rather than a normative assessment of the definitions of ethics that different movements use.

What is obvious even at first glance is that ethical consumption movements do not follow a single, uniform ethical principle, but apply a diverse range of ethical imperatives. These vary from fair trade and antisweatshop principles to aims related to environmental protection and wildlife preservation, animal welfare, national progress and personal moral development. Often the same initiative combines different aims. For example, the Buy Nothing Day in Canada consists of a mix of 'environmental, humanitarian, ethical and political motives' (Sassatelli, 2006, p. 228), and the UK-based Ethical Consumer organization rates products and services along 23 criteria, including ones relating to animal welfare, environmental protection, human rights, fair trade, working conditions and company politics (Ethical Consumer, 2012).

The criteria are often complementary, yet they may also be conflicting. The conflict between buying organic products versus goods with a lower food mileage, when locally produced organic produce is unavailable, is well documented (e.g. Andersen, 2011). The contradiction may not only stem from the difficulty of combining all criteria in one product but also from disagreements over the ethical ideas objectified by them. A patriotic consumer may choose products with a higher content of local raw materials and labor, whereas one concerned with global inequality may opt for one that helps the most disadvantaged group globally. For example, some of the British ethical consumers studied by Adams and Raisborough (2008), saw their choice of buying locally produced food as a political statement defined against foreign goods, including Fairtrade products. Similarly, depending on the side one takes, let's say, on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, one may boycott and buycott Palestinian or Israeli products. Even the criteria used by the Ethical Consumer rating can be disputed. For example, companies that lobby for trade liberalization receive a lower rating (Ethical Consumer, 2012); which is in sharp contrast with the aims of the free-trade consumer movement in late-19th and early-20th-century England that saw free trade as simultaneously promoting national interest and cheaper prices (Trentmann, 2008).

These dilemmas are often hidden by composite ethical scores and the language of ethical consumption that suggests a simplistic opposition between the ethical versus ordinary 'unethical' aims. Yet ethical consumerist aims, like all values, cannot be assumed to stand beyond

debate. Therefore they are better analyzed as particular forms of consumption norms; an approach that highlights the fact that their conflicts stem from the differences in the ethical elements of their underlying cosmologies.

First, the majority of ethical consumer movements promote a particular ethical vision of how to live and whom to be, as an individual or as a society. These visions can be radically different, which is the first source of conflict between the imperatives of various movements. To illustrate this point, let's compare the underlying ethical visions of two movements: the contemporary voluntary-simplicity movement in the United States and the National Product Movement in China in the early-20th century.

Voluntary simplicity involves cutting down on consumption, sharing goods (such as cars), in many cases vegetarianism and avoidance of genetically modified food, and in some cases moving to rural areas or less industrialized countries. The movement extends beyond consumption, involving changing to a job and living location that allow for more connection with nature and more time spent with one's family and on spiritual development (Bekin et al., 2005; Doherty and Etzioni, 2003; Etzioni, 1998). The ethical vision of good life that the voluntary simplicity movement seeks to develop is free from the ills of modern consumption characteristic of affluent Western consumer societies; a life lived in harmony with nature, focused on spirituality and authenticity rather than on material satisfaction (Etzioni, 1998). This simple life is believed to allow one to regain control (as opposed to the previous dependency posed by consumer society), and to find one's real purpose in life (Bekin et al., 2005). In this sense, the movement is connected to older traditions of Western thought, such as Rousseau's idea of 'back to nature', as well as to Romantic and conservative ideals of premodern harmony that accompanied the Enlightenment and modernity.

The National Product Movement in China in the early-20th century, in contrast, sought to encourage a very different ideal of people and society. It promoted the production and purchase of products manufactured in China, using Chinese raw materials and workforce as opposed to foreign products. The movement, unlike the grassroots voluntary simplicity movement, was promoted by the state, alongside women's organizations, students and ordinary citizens. It used not only boycotts but also sumptuary laws, and sometimes even violence: several merchants were murdered for stocking foreign goods. The context of the movement was imperialism and China's inability to impose regulations on imports. The movement was an alternative means to gain national

autonomy, and its main ethical idea centered on nationalism (Gerth, 2003, 2008). Nationalism involved 'cleansing China's national humiliation' (Gerth, 2003, p. 19) and the creation of a pure Chinese nation by means of pure Chinese goods, often invoking eugenic rhetoric. Unlike voluntary simplicity, the movement promoted modernity, industrialization and economic progress. As opposed to small local producers and handicraft, it posited the 'authentic Chinese capitalists' (Gerth, 2003, p. 8) as the epitomes of ethical conduct and promoted the establishment of factories.[3] As this comparison shows, the different imperatives of the two movements stem from the differences in their ethical visions of how to live, either as an individual or as a community.

Ethical consumption movements, beyond these ethical visions of a good life, also promote specific notions of justice. The basic idea of fair trade (guaranteeing a fair price to producers) can be cited as one example. Similarly, ethical consumption motivated by the aim of reducing one's eco-footprint and thereby not consuming more than one's due of Earth's resources also draws on a particular principle of justice.

The principles of justice used by different ethical consumerist movements, just like the ethical visions of a good life promoted by them, are diverse and contradictory. A brief look at competing ideas of justice relating to environmental harm illustrates the point. Who should the political community, that justice refers to, include? People of the same nation or people of the globe? Only present or also future generations? Only people or also animals and even plants, and if so what applies to deadly bacteria? Examples are easy to find for all these positions. The environmental justice movement, originally launched in the United States to guarantee that pollution does not fall unevenly on poor areas, inhabited by people of color, used a notion of justice that applied to different social groups within the nation; therefore its aim was to reinforce a *national* antidiscriminatory legislation (Taylor, 2000; Walker and Bulkeley, 2006). Critiques of the disproportions in eco-footprints, in turn, promote justice among different nations globally, whereas the agenda of sustainability extends the political community entitled to justice to future generations (Martinez-Alier, 1995). Environmentalism limits the community to people, whereas ecologism includes nonhumans as well (Bell, 2006). Not only the relevant members and communities across whom justice is to be set, but also the principles along which it is to be decided are subject to debate (Bell, 2006; Wissenburg, 2006).

This means, in sum, that the definitions of ethics and the principles of justice promoted by ethical consumption movements are far from uniform. Just like all consumption norms, definitions of various

movements involve different, competing visions of how to live and justice.

Whose ethics?

How can we account for these differences between the ethical visions of good life and justice of various ethical consumption movements? A comparative view suggests that ethical consumption movements are shaped by local social, economic, political and institutional settings; and their particular ethical visions underlying different conceptions of what counts as 'ethical' draw on local cultural resources. These cultural resources pertain firstly to different countries. As Maclachlan and Trentmann suggest, in different countries 'different ideological traditions … shaped the formation of organized consumer groups and definitions of consumers' interests' (Maclachlan and Trentmann, 2004, p. 171), and the success of each movement depended on the 'ability of the movement to frame objectives in ways that complement or contribute to broader cultural norms and prevailing ideas about democracy and political economy' (p. 201).

This means that, depending on a country's ideological traditions, different country-specific ethical objectives are likely to develop, and these ethical aims draw on existing political and, more broadly, cultural traditions. Press and Arnould (2011), for example, showed how the Community Supported Agriculture programs selling directly from farmers to consumers in the United States achieved success by building on the existing tradition of American pastoralism, and incorporating 'elements of the American pastoral dream: safety, community, spiritual fulfillment, contributing to a better world' (Press and Arnould, 2011, p. 185). Kozinets and Handelman (2004) studying antiadvertising, anti-Nike, and anti-GE food activists found that these movements draw on the spiritual and evangelical values that can be traced back to the religious origins of these movements. The organic movement in China suggests a similar conclusion: one of the organic farms studied by Klein (2009) linked organic food to traditional Chinese conceptions of health as balance as well as to the Confucian and Buddhist notions of compassion for one's surroundings.

The embeddedness of ethical consumerist aims in local cultural resources implies that global ethical consumerist trends are better understood as the development of diverse, homegrown versions of a vaguely similar idea, rather than as a proliferation of the very same ethics. This phenomenon is well illustrated by the different conceptualization and reception of fair trade in the United Kingdom, Germany and Hungary.

The key objective of fair trade is to provide more equitable trading terms in international trade, in particular by paying a fairer price to producers of developing countries (Boonman et al., 2011). The movement is vastly popular in the United Kingdom, which has the biggest share of the world's fair trade market (26 per cent). In Germany the movement is popular, yet its 8 per cent of global market share is still far below the United Kingdom (Boonman et al., 2011). In Hungary the movement has barely taken off (Dombos, 2008).

In the United Kingdom, the movement was originally connected to Christian religious cultural sources. Its antecedents were poverty relief programs launched by Oxfam after the Second World War to help Eastern European recovery by importing handicraft from local producers (Nicholls and Opal, 2005).[4] The first fair trade organization, Traidcraft, established in 1979, linked fair trade to religion, to the 'love and justice found at the heart of their own Christian faith' (Traidcraft website, cited in Barnett et al., 2005, p. 33). Alongside various distribution channels (such as mail order catalogs, fair trade shops and mainstream supermarkets), volunteers promoted and sold the products in churches, and gave sermons as part of the Traidcraft Speaker Scheme (Barnett et al., 2011). Most of the current Traidcraft buyers first encountered the movement through their personal contacts in their local church-based network, and connect the aims of the movement to their religious faith. As Barnett et al. point out, the 'fair trade movement mobilizes existing, geographically embedded social networks with the purpose of sustaining a vision of alternative economic and political possibilities, networks rooted in local church communities or in localities where local businesses, fair trade activism and willing customers collude to generate [a] thriving fair trade "scene"' (Barnett et al., 2011, p. 180).

Later on, fair trade moved mainstream, with products sold by leading retailers, many of which – such as Tesco and Marks and Spencer – market their own fair trade brands (Barrientos and Smith, 2007; Varul, 2008). In going mainstream, fair trade effectively connected to – and was reinterpreted according to – different and more widely shared cultural traditions. One of these is the nostalgic, romantic, even orientalist aesthetic imaginary – underlying voluntary simplicity as well – which sees modernity as alienated. In this context, fair trade is associated with a life lived in harmony with nature, authenticity and self-sufficiency (Pratt, 2008; Varul, 2008), epitomized by the 'smiling, satisfied peasant depicted on the package' (Carrier, 2007, p. 2).

Furthermore, in the United Kingdom, one of the key principles of fair trade, according to which people can and should act as consumers to

promote social causes, could build on existing local political traditions. One of these is the long history of citizen-consumer movements, as a result of which acting as a consumer is seen as a legitimate, even civic activity. The other, related tradition is that of a neutral state characteristic of a liberal democracy, and the assumption that public interest is to be achieved by the proper working of the market (Maclachlan and Trentmann, 2004). These traditions imply that consumer choice and market mechanisms are a legitimate and efficient means of bringing about change. These helped the development of the Free Trade movement in the early-20th century that campaigned for the elimination of trade barriers in order to provide access to cheap necessities for consumers – equated with the general public at the time. Thatcherite liberal politics in the 1980s that involved both the privatization of public services and the repositioning of citizens as customers of state services also drew on these traditions (Burgess, 2001; Maclachlan and Trentmann, 2004; Trentmann, 2005). Fair trade in the United Kingdom could also connect to these traditions: as the market is seen as a self-regulating entity, unfair trade is understood as a market failure that is to be corrected through the market, that is, through consumer choice. This is why in Britain fair trade producers are often depicted as self-sufficient farmers who enter into commercial relationships with consumers. This depiction, in turn, can be further connected to the dissociation from the colonial past: the relationship is between equal trade partners rather than between colonizer and colonized (Varul, 2008).

In Germany, fair trade has built on different cultural resources, and has been conceptualized accordingly. Unlike in the United Kingdom, the consumer here has not developed into a figure symbolizing public interest. Instead, the emphasis has been on workers, and even when consumers were invoked it was largely in defense of producers' interests (Trentmann, 2005). According to the German corporativist tradition, the liberal market in itself is not seen as a self-regulatory mechanism that guarantees fair pay; it is to be regulated based on principles of entitlement in order to achieve certain social aims. Therefore in Germany the commercial aspects of fair trade are played down: producers are pictured as wage-earners rather than independent trade partners, and fair price is understood as an entitlement rather than as a correction of market failure (Varul, 2008).

The other aspect of the producer – as opposed to the consumer – identity prevalent in Germany is a strong emphasis on rational choice understood in terms of price and quality that leaves less room for a symbolic aesthetic imaginary. As Varul (2008) argues, this explains the limited romantic

appeal used by fair trade in Germany, and a strong focus on conscious ethical choice instead. This is also probably why, whereas in the United Kingdom fair trade went mainstream and became an ordinary choice, in Germany fair trade consumers are seen as forming a distinct moral community. This is also reflected in the retail system of fair trade, consisting mainly of specialized fair trade shops rather than mainstream chains.

The Hungarian positioning of the movement illustrates yet another local appropriation of fair trade. To Hungary the movement arrived relatively late, with the opening of the first temporary fair trade café in 2005. At the time of its launch, the receptiveness to fair trade, according to market research commissioned by the activist organization, was virtually non-existent (Dombos, 2008). This is not surprising, given the social, political and economic circumstances of the time, 16 years after the transition from socialism to market economy. Socialist public discourse emphasized a citizen-worker identity and associated consumption with materialism and individualism. The socialist state limited all civil society activities, including churches and charities, and promised to provide all needs compatible with the socialist ideology – from poverty reduction to culture and workers' rights – thought state-affiliated organizations. Fair wages in this discourse were to be guaranteed by the state and by the socialist system itself. The change of 1989, in turn, brought an uncritical embracing of the liberal, deregulated market economy on nearly all sides of the political spectrum, and the market was posited as a mechanism which automatically solves all problems of inefficiency. Leftist discourse became quickly associated with dictatorship and political crimes; a situation which makes the articulation of leftist arguments difficult even today (Szalai, 2003). In this context, the idea that people should pay more in order to correct market inefficiencies regulating wages did not fit easily.

Furthermore, unlike the United Kingdom and Germany, Hungary's position between East and West is ambiguous. Located in Eastern Europe, and with much lower GDP per capita than the two other countries, its self-perception is of a poor country in contrast to its Western neighbors rather than a rich one in contrast to developing countries. Hence it sees itself as a legitimate recipient rather than contributor of aid. Given the rapid increase of inequalities and unemployment, decreasing real wages, and the reduction of workers' rights following the change, the notion that one could act as a benefactor or proponent of worker rights in even poorer places was not easily adopted.

In the Hungarian context, fair trade became associated with an existing idealized Western imaginary that has long pictured the West as more

advanced, progressive and morally superior (Dombos, 2008). This somewhat 'self-colonizing' (Kiossev, 2000, p. 7) discourse has a long tradition in Hungary. It featured prominently in 19th-century debates on development and continues to serve as one of the key reference points in contemporary political discourse (Farkas, 2012). Drawing on this discourse, the lack of Hungarian involvement in fair trade has been depicted by the media and activists by contrasting 'the image of the "modern", "progressive", "concerned" societies of the West with the "poor", "parochial" and "self-centered" Hungarian society' (Dombos, 2008, p. 131). Fair trade became linked to values associated with the West: modernity, civil society and development. This was further reinforced by the fact that fair trade was launched by people with strong ties to Western countries, either being from the United States or the United Kingdom themselves or having spent extended amounts of time there. Also, fair trade goods arrived in Hungary through Western fair trade outlets, carrying foreign-language text and high-quality images that stood out in comparison to the poor design of locally produced items (Dombos, 2008).

As this comparison suggests, the global 'spread' of ethical consumerist movements do not imply the adoption of the very same idea but involves its local appropriations into existing traditions. Through such a process, the aims of the movement are transformed, but the traditions with which it is coupled are also altered. This process is well illustrated by Sassatelli and Davolio's (2010) study on the way the ethical aims of the Italian slow food movement were gradually reframed and modified as it came to incorporate elements of the ecological ethical consumer movement. The slow food movement started in 1987 as a left-wing protest against McDonaldization, Americanization, the disappearance of local cultural diversity and a slower pace of life. Its original emphasis – highlighted by the 1989 manifesto's subtitle 'International Movement of the Defense of and the Right to Pleasure' – was on gastronomic pleasure; local artisan food specialties and slow-paced *osterias* were appreciated because they contributed to such a pleasure. The incorporation of ecological and sustainability aims into the movement in the 2000s took place 'by stressing concerns such as the environment and landscape, with pleasure being not deemphasized, but re-framed' (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010, p. 216) into a new concept of eco-gastronomy. The concept works by extending the range of gastronomic connoisseurship from taste to the circumstances of production, and by shifting 'focus from the safeguard of typical foods to the safeguard of their cultural and environmental premises, emphasizing biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and responsible consumption' (p. 211).

So far, I have located the ethical objectives of ethical consumerism movements in the traditions of particular national cultures. Specifying the argument further, ethics of particular ethical consumerist movements reflect not only national traditions but also ethical views of a particular class, gender or ethnicity. Dorceta Taylor (2000), for example, in her study of environmental activism in the United States, shows how its changing agenda reflected the concerns of the various social groups which participated in the movement over time. The first, 'romantic environmental' (p. 527) phase that emphasized wildlife protection and conservation was promoted predominantly by middle-class white males. Proponents were often immersed in capitalist production, and used nature as a means of recreation through exploration and hunting, which led to a view of nature as a reserve of authenticity and as a source of rewarding leisure activities. Later, the environmentalist agenda was taken up by working-class activists who connected it to workers' rights and occupational health and safety. More recently, environmentalism has been linked by working-class people of color to the critique of 'environmental racism' (Bullard, 1990, p. 78) – a term referring to the disproportionate environmental hazard afflicted on communities of color –, resulting in a new agenda that connects environmental concerns to discrimination, social inequality and human rights.

Looking at the dominant model of ethics of ethical consumerism, emphasizing private choice, antimaterialism and altruistic concerns from this angle raises questions about which social group's concerns and possibilities are reflected by it. Most commentators analyzing ethical consumerism from this point of view suggest that, despite its seeming universalism, it reflects the concerns of middle-class, white, Western consumers. Miller, for example, suggested that the critique of materialism stems from an 'anxiety most acutely felt by fairly well-off academics, mainly in the United States, about the possibility that they may be too materialistic' (Miller, 2001c, p. 226). He argued that a large part of the world suffers from poverty (i.e. the lack of goods, including food, medicine and housing), and the moral stance that emphasizes denouncing the desire for goods is characteristic of the privileged, affluent class position enjoyed only by few. Johnston (Johnston and Baumann, 2010; Johnston et al., 2011), building on Bourdieu's (1984) theory of taste, also emphasized the middle-class character of ethical consumption. According to Bourdieu, maintaining an abstract relation to goods – focusing on form rather than substance – as opposed to a utilitarian relation is a middle and upper-class phenomenon as it depends largely on one's distance from economic necessity. Although in ethical

consumption the emphasis is not on form, it requires a similar stance of abstraction, which makes Bourdieu's argument extendable to it as well.

Ethical consumerist aims have been argued to reflect not only class but also gender and ethnic bias. Guthman, for instance, pointed out that the rhetoric romanticizing the family farm and small-scale agricultural labor conceals the exploitative gender relationships within family enterprises, the history of agricultural production based on slavery, and the land distribution policy that privileged white land ownership (Guthman, 2004). Moreover, having investigated the rhetoric and imaginary conveyed by ethical consumption spaces, including community-supported agriculture (CSA) and farmers' markets in the United States, she suggested that the 'alternative food discourse hails a white subject to these spaces of alternative food practice and thus codes them as white' (Guthman, 2008a, p. 388).

Beyond reflecting particular class, gender, ethnic bias and national cultural ideals, the emphasis of ethical consumerism on private consumption choice mediated by the market is also informed by a distinctively modern and Western worldview, conception of political subject and political action. First, some argued that the centrality of choice is predicated on ideas of moral selfhood and identity that are products of Western modernity.[5] This ethics assumes a moral subject who bases his or her moral actions on individually gathered and evaluated information, and works toward a reflexive moral identity (Barnett et al., 2005; Sassatelli, 2006). Second, the emphasis on consumer choice presupposes market distribution. However, markets, as noted in Chapter 1, are only one of the distribution mechanisms, and much of the goods outside Western contexts continue to be allocated by the state and traditional networks where private consumer choice may have little role to play. Finally, it assumes that people universally see themselves as consumers and are willing to act for social and political aims via private consumer choice. However, as Trentmann (2006b) points out, the consumer as a category of self-definition and political agency is a particular historical phenomenon that cannot be applied univocally even to Western countries. In fact, many, if not most, of the seemingly consumerist movements did not even operate with a concept of distinct consumer identity but spoke out in the name of citizen-consumers, worker-consumers or other mixed entities. The Co-operative Movement, for instance, that started in 1844 in England sought to reunite the consumer, worker and citizen aspects of what it saw as having been torn apart by monopolistic, capitalist production relations. The aim was to provide consumers with cheaper commodities by simultaneously engaging them as workers of a cooperative and citizens

of civil society (Lang and Gabriel, 2005). Similarly, in early-20th-century Germany, consumer politics' 'emphasis was on developing socially responsible habits of consumption amongst middle-class "consumers" to improve the social conditions of "workers"' (Trentmann, 2006b, p. 39). Patriotic consumer movements – such as the Védegylet in Hungary in the 19th century (Gulyás, 2012) and the National Products Movement in China (Gerth, 2003) – that formed part of the political liberation movements from Austria and imperialist powers of Russia, the United States and Japan, respectively, addressed people primarily as patriotic citizens rather than as consumers (Maclachlan and Trentmann, 2004).

From this point of view, the self-conscious consumer who takes action via individual consumer choice is not a universal and natural phenomenon but has been brought about by particular political traditions, institutional arrangements, market policies and consumerist movements (Burgess, 2001; Micheletti, 2003; Trentmann, 2005). Some consider it as stemming specifically from liberal economic policies and understand this process, following Foucault, as a form of governance: one that acts on personal conduct through nurturing self-governing forms of consciousness and practices that are compatible with those required by neoliberal economic policy, and see it as part of a broader trend, characteristic of contemporary Western liberalism. As Barnett et al. argue, 'individual dispositions to choose are not the expressions of natural dispositions, but are worked up, governed, and regulated by an array of actors who make possible certain forms of individualized conduct' (Barnett et al., 2005, p. 29).

These critiques, in sum, suggest that what is meant by the 'ethics' of ethical consumption are not universal, unquestionable principles but ones which emerge partly from local ethical traditions and are specific to particular class, gender and ethnic positions. What is even more disturbing is the argument that this definition of ethical action is not only biased towards particular groups but that ethical action thus formulated is only accessible to these groups, thereby excluding others from the possibility of becoming 'ethical'.

Ethical consumption and ordinary ethics

To what extent are these ethical concerns, formulated by different movements, taken up by people in their everyday choices? Surveys looking at consumers' preoccupation with ethical consumption and their willingness to pay higher margins for 'ethical' products[6] indicate a growing ethical consumerist trend. In 2009, 50 per cent of adults in the

United Kingdom said that they purchased a good out of ethical reasons (Co-op Bank, 2009), and more than half of the respondents of a survey covering 15 developed countries claimed to be 'active ethical consumers' (Ethical Consumer, 2009). According to a 2009 Boston Consulting Group (BCG) survey, consumers in developed countries claim to be willing to pay 5–10 per cent more for green products (Manget et al., 2009).

The ethical consumerist trend, however, seems to apply mainly to developed countries of the global North. For example, the same BCG survey found that people in China are unwilling to pay a premium for green products, while Chan and Lau (2000) reported a very low level of ecological knowledge and actual green purchases in the country. In Chile, only 6.5 per cent of the population engages in practices that can be classified as ethical consumerist (and even these practices are mainly related to saving resources, hence not necessarily motivated by ethical consumerist aims); whereas in Brazil only 6 per cent of consumers claimed to take the environmental impact of their consumption choices into consideration (Ariztia et al., 2012). This proportion is slightly higher in urban and affluent areas. For example, a recent survey conducted among young urban middle- and upper-class Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo found that 19 per cent of respondents already participated in buycotts (Barbosa et al., 2012).

Yet even where surveyed people claim to be ethical consumers, these claims do not always translate into actual choices (Miller, 2001a); a phenomenon referred to as the 'attitude-behavior gap' (Devinney et al., 2010) or 'value-action' gap (Blake, 1999). This is probably the reason why sales of 'ethical products' are still small: they only contribute to 1 per cent of sales worldwide (Carrigan and De Pelsmacker, 2009), and amount to only 5.3 per cent of household spending even in the United Kingdom (Stancich, 2008), the country exhibiting the highest ethical consumer awareness. In Southern countries, the proportion is even smaller. Organic food, which rates highest among all ethical products in China, still accounts for only 0.1 per cent of food purchases (Klein, 2009). More disturbing still is the fact that even when people act on their ethical consumerist opinions, the impact of their behavior is doubtful. According to a recent study by Csutora (2012), for instance, green and nongreen ('brown') consumers have equal ecological footprints; described as the 'behavior-impact gap' (Csutora, 2012, p. 148).

One explanation of the low rates of actual ethical consumption choices has been the ignorance of consumers of the effect of their choices. It was assumed that once consumers learn about the actual consequences of their consumption – such as its environmental impact

or the exploitative labor relations supporting it – they will – switch to ethical consumption (Adams and Raisborough, 2008; Barnett et al., 2005; Caruana, 2007). Another explanation, which drew on the assumption of ordinary consumption as immoral or at best amoral, attributed the reluctance to selfishness. The solution was then to convince people to become more moral and concerned with issues other than their own satisfaction.

However, in the light of recent scholarship (including this book) which showed that everyday consumption is also informed by ethical concerns and pragmatic deliberation, neither of the above explanations seems to be sufficient. Rather, given the complexity of ethical concerns at play in ordinary consumption decisions, the obstacle to ethical consumption seems to be not so much the default position of amorality or the lack of knowledge but its possible incompatibility with existing moral frameworks. The adoption of ethical consumption therefore depends primarily on whether or not it can be reconciled with ordinary ethics and practices. What is crucial, then, is the relationship between the ethics of ethical consumption and the ethics of ordinary consumption. In what follows, I look at the different forms that this relationship takes: when the two moral frameworks and the practices implied by them are in conflict; when the moral frameworks do not coincide, yet their associated practices do; and finally, when the two moral frameworks and the practices objectifying them match.

Conflicting ethics

In his study on shopping practices in London, Miller suggests that one of the major obstacles to ethical consumer choices is that they clash with the imperatives of ordinary ethical concerns guiding consumption: the twin values of care and thrift (Miller, 1999, 2001a). Care among his participants is a primary ethical concern guiding ordinary practices; shopping is seen as legitimate and righteous as long as it is motivated by the love for one's family. Thrift is partly a means of achieving the best value for the family, but it is also associated with respectability and sobriety. Ethical consumption conflicts with both of these values. The purchase of more expensive ethical goods goes against the value of thrift, and they are hence seen 'as a form of extravagance' (Miller, 2001a, p. 134). Moreover, this practice, as Miller notes, is paradoxically considered selfish: ethical consumers are often seen as egotistical and concerned only with their own agendas related to distant others as opposed to their obligations towards their family. A similar conflict is described by Connolly and Prothero, suggesting that in the

environmental discourse promoting a simple life 'particular practices and material goods will become identified as bad, yet these very same practices and material goods may be central (meaningfully) in social relations' (Connolly and Prothero, 2008, p. 128).

Conflicts between ordinary ethics and practices required by ethical consumption go well beyond those posed by thrift and care. From the environmentalist point of view, the less material-intensive is a given good, the better: singing lessons have a lower eco-footprint than sports utility vehicles. Yet it is precisely this aspect that clashes with two of the most widely shared consumption norms. First, it goes against the consumption as investment ethics, outlined in Chapter 2 which implies that consumption is legitimate as long as it materializes in goods. The importance of materiality in this context is connected to the cross-generational care for the family in the form of inheritable goods, and the translation of expenditure into investment as opposed to consumption. According to these ethics, material-intensive alternatives are by definition more ethical than services such as taking a cab or attending singing lessons which are considered wasteful.

Second, environmentally friendly alternatives, requiring less material, often go against norms of modesty and the refusal of snobbery. From a purely environmental point of view, purchasing a Gucci bag or an exorbitantly priced watch are better choices than the thrifty alternative of spending the same amount of money on ten different cheap bags and watches. These choices are abhorred as luxury and snobbery, precisely because the actual material that one gets for one's money is small compared to the immaterial image value that one pays for. This is why modesty often implies choices with a much bigger eco-footprint than snobbery, and consequently more clashes with environmental principles.

The conflict between everyday and ethical consumerist morality at a more general level stems from the fact that most goods, contrary to the assumptions of many of these movements, are not some kind of superfluous extra floating above ordinary life. They are part of practices, which objectify practical ethics. Giving up a good implies giving up participation in a practice and the meaning and ethics that can be lived by it. Reducing the use of soap, deodorant and toothpaste violates norms of cleanliness and respectability; cutting one's spending on suits, ties and shirts is not compatible with the professional norms required by many jobs; and giving up books means giving up all the internal rewards of reading. Given these conflicts, what seems to require explanation is not so much why people do not engage more in ethical consumption but rather why they – even occasionally – do so.

Ethical consumption as side effect

How and why do people engage in ethical consumption in their everyday life? Or to put it differently, how do they navigate between conflicting ethical demands of everyday concerns and ethical consumerism? Existing research suggests two main avenues. In the first case, which I will call ethical consumption as side effect, a given practice conforms to ethical consumerist aims, yet it is engaged primarily out of ordinary ethical motives that have nothing, or little, to do with ethical consumerist aims. In the second case, the engagement is 'genuine' in that people choose ethical consumerist alternatives out of motives promoted by these movements.[7]

Klein's (2009) study of organic farms and their consumers in southwest China provides a suitable example of ethical consumption as side effect. The study suggests a divergence between the ethical principles formulated by the organic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and those of their consumers. NGOs put the emphasis on sustainability, biodiversity and enhancing the livelihood of farmers; and promote stopping the use of chemical pesticides in the name of these aims. Consumers, in turn, understand these products as responding to health concerns (French and Crabbe, 2010; Klein, 2009).[8] This phenomenon is also supported by another Chinese survey that found that 69 per cent of eco-friendly purchases are motivated by securing one own and one's family's health (Zoysa, 2007). Health concerns are fueled by food safety scandals, including high levels of pesticides, low hygiene standards and the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus. These scandals are widely voiced in the media, with no week passing without a new scandal emerging (French and Crabbe, 2010). The marketing of organic products therefore focuses on health. Unlike their Western counterparts, organic products do not contain references to producers or provenance, but emphasize health by highlighting technology, hygiene and safety controls instead. In everyday discourse the concept of 'green' is equated with being healthy and free of pesticides, with no implication of environmental protection. This is why NGOs, in promoting organic products, use messages focused exclusively on health, with hardly any mention of the environment in their communication (Klein, 2009).

Ethical consumption as a side effect of ordinary ethical concerns not only applies to organic goods. Traditional means of saving money, such as turning off the lights or the heating, limiting car use, cutting down on long-distance holidays, buying goods second-hand and purchasing them in the farmers' markets are practices that can be equally motivated by thrift and by environmental concerns. In fact, these strategies

constitute the majority of the 'ethical consumption' in Chile and Brazil (Ariztia et al., 2012), and purchase of energy-efficient appliances forms the largest chunk of 'ethical' purchases in the United Kingdom (with the purchase of organic food ranking second) (Stancich, 2008); which may explain the seemingly mysterious phenomenon of the recent financial crisis triggering a rise in ethical consumerist practices (Carrigan and De Pelsmacker, 2009). Similarly, the fact that India ranks first on National Geographic's Greendex index of environmentally sustainable consumption is not due to the high ethical consumption awareness of Indians but to the compatibility of existing practices informed by ordinary ethical concerns with sustainability goals (Anantharaman, 2012).

Depending on the prevalence of ethical discourse in a given country and social group, these practices may be more or less framed as ethical consumerist choices. In the Chinese case, environmental discourse was practically absent; hence people felt no need to justify their health concerns by environmental motives. In contrast, in the United Kingdom, where ethical consumerist discourse is omnipresent, Londoners frame even those choices as ethical consumerist that are in fact entirely motivated by thrift – such as the use of charity shops – or by health and physical appearance – in the case of organic food (Miller, 2001a). This discursive strategy has also been observed by Johnston et al. (2011) among poor consumers in Canada who appropriated the environmentalist discourse to account for their low consumption level and recycling practices.[9]

Matching ethics

Whereas in the above cases ethical consumption was a side effect of engaging in practices for other, ordinary ethical concerns, there are instances where these practices are motivated by ethical consumption concerns; when not only practices but also the ethics underlying them match those of the given ethical consumerists movement. How can we envision this match, given all that has been said about the frequent incompatibility between ordinary and ethical consumerist ethics? As previous chapters showed, people's consumption norms draw on different ethical visions of good life, social relationships, obligations as well as ordinary conceptions of justice. 'Genuine' engagement of ethical consumerist aims requires their incorporation into these existing ordinary ethical frameworks.

The different ways in which this engagement happens can be related to the different degrees to which ethical consumption assumes centrality in one's life, which can range from the occasional purchases of fair

trade coffee to joining a radical ethical consumerist community. An analogy with religious devotion is helpful here. People's religious dedication and activities associated with it vary in intensity from the occasional attendance of religious services to choosing religion as a vocation by becoming a priest or a nun. Similarly, in ethical consumption, the quantitative differences at one point turn into qualitative ones, indicating a different type of engagement. Up to a certain point, ethical consumption aims are incorporated into existing cosmologies; beyond that point, ethical consumerism is understood as a break with ordinary ethics, life and society and it is chosen precisely because it offers a way of complete transformation. In these cases, ethical consumption is not understood as a set of principles that should be integrated into ordinary cosmology and life but as an ideal to which ordinary life should be elevated.

Conflicts between ethical consumerist and ordinary ethical frameworks are less intense 'on the edges', that is, when people show very little or absolute engagement; and are more severe in the middle, when they try to integrate conflicting demands of the two moral frameworks. In these cases, the conflicting moral frameworks bring about a large amount of ambivalence and inconsistency (Adams and Raisborough, 2008; Andersen, 2011; Connolly and Prothero, 2008; Halkier, 1999; Miller, 2001a). Evans's (2011) research in southeast England, for example, suggests that ethical concerns are only followed if they are compatible with the main ethical concerns of parental responsibilities, health concerns and thrift. Similarly, Miller, based on his study in north London, suggests that 'convenience ethics' guide shopping: people only buy ethical products if they provide an alternative to what they would buy anyway 'at no additional cost; [otherwise] ethical concerns are non-existent as a factor determining shopping choice' (Miller, 2001a, p. 126). Other studies suggest that people reach temporary compromises and change priorities from situation to situation (Andersen, 2011) and limit the scope of ethical consumption to a manageable scale of products and problems to avoid conflict with other commitments (Newholm, 2005).

Often, ethical consumerist purchases are made alongside 'non-ethical' ones as a form of compensation, and have the opposite effect of the original intention; for example, the organic cotton bag purchased after a downtown shopping spree represent additional material consumption (Simányi, 2004). This phenomenon is partly explained by what Gershuny and Sullivan (2004) call 'inconspicuous consumption': consumption used as symbolic representation of a life and values that cannot be pursued within one's actual lifestyle. In this sense,

> alternative products may come to represent bridges suspended not so much towards others as towards ideals that usually escape us, and which we do not want to renounce: even if a style of consumption that is entirely green might presently be difficult, through buying and using some organic, ethical or fair trade products consumers can gain proof of the importance of their aspirations, feel as if they have the capacity to contribute to change and claim a new kind of identity for themselves. (Sassatelli, 2006, p. 221)

These conflicts only seem to ease in radical forms of ethical consumption. These require the submission of ordinary ethical concerns and values internal to diverse practices to ethical consumerist aims, and involve a fundamental transformation of one's ordinary life, including social relations, work and lifestyle. For example, members of most British voluntary simplifier communities radically change their previous lifestyle: they move to the same rural place, work full time or part time at the community, produce their own food and develop new forms of social relations required by the communal way of living (Bekin et al., 2005; Moraes et al., 2008). As Eräranta et al.'s (2009) research on eco-communities suggests, these new social relationships develop by 'problematizing their personal relation to themselves (self) and to others (spouse and family), as well as by constructing new forms of subjectivity, intimacy, and relatedness through communal life' (p. 347). The point of joining a radical ethical consumption community is not simply to achieve a given social, political or environmental aim through purchasing choices; rather, it is an identity project through which one becomes a new kind of person. Life in these communities is experienced by participants as 'not only [in] direct opposition against the social order of contemporary Western consumer society but also [as a] more subtle resistance against the normalized forms of subjectivity that it entails' (p. 347). The community provides 'a safe-shell from consumer temptations and an aid in self-disciplinary techniques' (p. 19) that allows participants to develop their genuine self and overcome their unwanted, unethical selves. Moraeas et al., following Low and Davenport (2007), therefore call these communities 'ethical spaces' (Moraes et al., 2008, p. 19): spaces that by their rules, norms and 'communo-spatial environments' oblige participants to be ethical and block their unethical impulses.

In these cases, the full engagement of ethical consumption norms does not take place through the *incorporation* of these norms into what is seen as a normal or ordinary life. The emphasis is on rupture: developing

a new ethical outlook, involving a new form of life, new subjectivities and new social relations.

Engaging ethical consumerism

Research on the motives of people engaging in ethical consumption is abundant. We now know, for example, that reasons as diverse as environmental concerns, belonging to a community, creating direct contact with producers and helping to sustain their livelihood, safeguarding tradition, health, superior taste, culinary expertise and physical appearance motivate green eating (Andersen, 2011; Johnston et al., 2011; Klein, 2009; Miller, 2001a), and that people join ethical consumption communities because they would like to reconnect with nature, raise their children in a calm environment, or because they are fed up with the stress and materialism of affluent lifestyles (Bekin et al., 2005). Yet these explanations seem to be still wanting. Most people would like it if global warming stopped and would prefer to raise their children in a calm environment, yet this leads only few of us to purchase 'green' or to join an ethical consumption community. The presence of these concerns therefore is not enough; for them to be articulated as ethical consumerist concerns and acted on accordingly, something more is needed: they need to be compatible with already existing ordinary ethical frameworks that allow for their incorporation, or more precisely, the mutual appropriation of ordinary and ethical consumerist ethics.

My own fieldwork in Hungary provides a particularly illuminating case of one of the ways such integration happens. Géza (born in 1979) engages in 'ethical consumption' both at the level of discourse and in practice. He holds that one 'votes with every Forint',[10] buys food in organic outlets and consciously avoids 'wasteful' practices. For Géza, the ethics of 'ethical consumption' form part of a substantive vision of the good life centered on spirituality, tradition and community, as well as on a high-cultural version of intellectual sophistication. This vision bears a close similarity to those of his parents, who also participated in the research. It rearticulates his mother's high-cultural intellectual orientation, conservative stance, patriotism and nostalgia for presocialist times into an ethical consumerist imaginary of a traditional, bucolic life and spirituality. This is why 'conscious consumption' is an argument he deploys equally to refuse environmentally wasteful practices, kitsch and books of low literary value. Moreover, Géza's ethical vision of how to live draws on his father's frugality. His father developed this frugal stance during the shortages in the 1950s, but today this stance regularly

features in family discussions as a hallmark of his manly rationality. As Géza lamented, frugality has been ingrained in him through his upbringing and today lurks as a suppressed guilt over spending.

This feeling is out of place in his actual situation: he earns very well, much more than he actually spends, and has inherited a nice, big flat without a mortgage. He mentioned that his restraint in spending caused conflicts with his friends who – given Géza's financial situation – could not understand why he begrudges money spent on public transport, pubs and concerts, simply seeing him as a loner, stingy or a weirdo. In this light, for Géza, the modest choices of ethical consumption are partly a way of resolving this contradiction between his ingrained feeling of guilt over spending and his healthy financial situation. Being a conscious consumer translates Géza's guilt over spending money – which his friends classify as avarice – into a conscious choice of antimaterialism.

This translation of ethical consumption aims occurs through what Barnett et al. call 're-articulation' (Barnett et al., 2005, p. 29).[11] Rearticulation means that existing, ordinary ethical concerns are reworked so as to incorporate the concerns of ethical consumerist movements. Their example is the Traidcraft movement in the United Kingdom, discussed earlier, that people could relate to largely because it connected to existing religious ethical concerns by rearticulating these concerns as care for distant others.[12]

The likelihood of this rearticulation, as Géza's example showed, depends on people's existing cosmologies, which in turn vary according to the cultural and material resources made available by their social, economic and cultural locations. This latter aspect is emphasized by studies that point out that ethical consumerism is engaged predominantly by middle-class, affluent, Western consumers (Barnett et al., 2005; Miller, 2001c; Sassatelli, 2006).[13] This is not only because some practices of ethical consumption require goods that are more expensive than alternatives, or that retail places hosting ethical goods, such as Whole Foods, are located in affluent areas, which may make it difficult for other classes to access them (Guthman, 2008a). Equally important is the fact that, as the first part of this chapter suggested, ethical consumerist aims themselves draw on ethical visions and ideals of justice that are not universal, but reflect the cosmologies of groups of a particular social class, gender, ethnicity and nation. This means that any given ethical consumption discourse is likely to be more compatible with cosmologies of people who have similar backgrounds to those of the movement's proponents. For example, the aesthetic rather than functional

relationship to consumption – that is often identified as a middle-class bias inherent in the formulation of consumerist aims – is more likely to ring true to middle-class consumers than to working-class ones. In this light, the engagement of ethical consumption at the everyday level can be understood as a linkage between historically, socially, culturally specific ethical visions that inform ethical consumerist aims on the one hand, and historically, socially, culturally specific ordinary ethical visions that inform everyday consumption norms, on the other.