

***Ethics and Morality in Consumption: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Deirdre Shaw, Andreas Chatzidakis, and Michal Carrington. New York: Routledge, 2016. 268 pp. ISBN: 978-1138790230**

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What is ethical consumption? What changes do we need to move society toward more ethical patterns of consumption? Are these changes individual, social, organizational, or political in nature? These are the key questions facing those attempting to reduce the environmental impact of consumption and create exchange relationships with greater value for all parties involved.

Research in this area is continuing to evolve in breadth and scope even though academics often work within disciplinary silos. In their book *Ethics and Morality in Consumption: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Deirdre Shaw, Andreas Chatzidakis, and Michal Carrington, together with nineteen renowned contributors, offer a comprehensive overview of ethical consumption. Covering disciplines such as anthropology, geography, history, economics, social psychology, education, and cultural studies, the book presents valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities in ethical consumption. It also offers a dialogue among these different streams of literature on both the agreements and disagreements regarding the best ways to institute practices geared toward more ethical forms of consumption. Such an enriching debate stimulates the critical approach required to increase ethical consumption and prevent it from languishing at the margins of mainstream consumption.

The book is organized into two broad sections, with thirteen chapters overall. The first section, which encompasses five chapters, focuses on *individuals* as ethical decision makers. The second section, which includes eight chapters, goes beyond individuals to consider the *societal* dimensions of consumption and ethics.

Chapter one, “Towards a Sustainable Flourishing: Ethical Consumption and the Politics of Prosperity” by Kate Soper, disrupts and challenges ideas related to sustainable human flourishing, and establishes the grounds to respect this interdisciplinary and cutting-edge book. Soper argues that if ethical consumption is to continue moving forward, going beyond mere green or fair-trade purchases, an alternative “politics of prosperity” is required. That is, current economic systems must be challenged, and well-established ideas, such as work–life balance and time expenditure, must be rethought. Considering its deleterious consequences, human flourishing within a shopping-mall culture, as well as the work–spend spiral promoted by neoliberal market needs, no longer serves the collective good. Thus, the meaning of the “good life” must be redefined by understanding the true nature of happiness. This chapter advances the notion of “alternative hedonism,” which encompasses the current narratives on pleasure and well-being implicated in critiques of consumer culture.

Chapter two by Karen Wenell is dedicated exclusively to the relationship between religion and ethical consumption. Wenell argues that today’s ethical consumption represents a “supramoral” behavior—that is, a personal choice beyond the normal

moral demands of society. She also emphasizes the need to understand the role of religion and faith in contributing to the spread of ethical consumption to the extent that they influence notions of morality.

Martha Starr provides an overview of the research on ethical consumption within the field of economics in chapter three, “The Economics of Ethical Consumption,” and makes a clear distinction between the demand and supply sides of the question. She explains how ethical consumption has evolved and continues to grow through three levels of analysis: individual motivations, social influences, and parallel shifts within the supply chain.

Chapter four continues the analysis of the drivers for ethical consumption through a psychological examination of so-called “green consumer behavior.” Judith de Groot and her colleagues explore here the impact of the social context on the development of individuals’ moral code (personal norms) toward green (ethical) consumption. Finally, informed by psychological theories of moral action, the chapter offers practical implications for social marketing campaigns that encourage green consumer behavior, such as activating moral values rather than emphasizing the self-interested gains of behavioral change.

Chapter five, “The Challenges of Responsible Marketing and Consumption” by Marilyn Carrigan and Carmela Bosangit, provides an in-depth analysis of the marketing and consumer ethics literatures and identifies some of the dominant obstacles that marketers and consumers face in their efforts to behave ethically and responsibly. They stress the importance of approaching these challenges in an interconnected fashion. In light of the growing development of “nudge-based” public policies and social marketing campaigns, the chapter proposes that these challenges can partly be solved through the delivery of a better “choice architecture” to consumers. Rather than trying to change people’s minds, marketers should offer a better environment for ethical consumption, so that consumers can be ethical by default.

The second section begins by broadening the range of academic disciplines that are helping to advance the ethical consumption debate. It emphasizes the contributions of disciplines such as history and geography, which are too often overlooked in ethical consumption literature. In chapter six Terry Newholm and Sandy Newholm argue that ethical consumption is not a modern phenomenon but a continuous one in changing contexts, as consumers have included ethical or moral considerations in their exchange relationships throughout history. Although many rich consumption histories are often lost to time, reconstructing these events is crucial to contribute to today’s debate on ethical consumption. Chapter seven, “Putting Ethical Consumption in Its Place” by Dorothea Klein, holds that geography is an essential lens through which to analyze the present and future of ethical consumption. It provides a strong critical tradition and capacity to create important action-oriented research, such as new technologies to easily communicate about the “tracing ethics” of consumer products and promote accountability in geographically sophisticated supply chains.

Kim Humphrey outlines in chapter eight the debates in the sociology and ethical consumption literatures on the actual status of ethical consumption as a movement and its opportunities for development. This key chapter sheds further light on the different schools of thought discussed in the book and highlights how the goals of

these approaches vary: some seek to dismantle the current capitalist consumption system and others help frame consumption choices for political and moral goals—for example, alternative hedonism discussed in chapter one and choice architecture in chapter five.

Chapter nine explores people's values behind ethical consumption from an economic anthropology perspective. Peter Luetchford describes how monetary and other values coexist and, often, compete. An important strength of analyzing ethical consumption from this perspective is that it provides a critical comparison of the different forms in which people consume and construct themselves as ethical individuals. Given the wide scope of beliefs and practices surrounding ethical consumption today, this analysis is crucial to moving the debate forward.

Chapter ten, "Political Consumption: Ethics, Participation and Civic Engagement," presents a critical examination of political activism and its capacity to promote ethical consumption. Lauren Copeland and Lucy Atkinson argue that, on the one hand, political consumption can be highly beneficial because it empowers citizens in that it allows them to express their political concerns rather than waiting for an election. But on the other hand, they note that political consumption situates both the social and political problems and their solutions in the marketplace and thereby promotes the individualization of responsibility. They conclude that this situation implies a limited capacity to mitigate large-scale problems, while absolving governments and corporations from assuming a larger obligation to effect change.

Focusing on the Australian context, Peter Newton and Denny Meyer in chapter eleven explore another key dimension of sustainable living—namely, specialized, built environments that, together with their commitment to consume less, can help populations move to more sustainable lifestyles. The chapter presents research results on the significant gap between the intentions of those who live in these spaces and their behaviors. This indicates that moving to more sustainable living arrangements is not going to be an easy task.

Chapter twelve, "Are We Walking Our Own Talk? Building the Capacity for Ethical Consumption Through Education for Sustainability," focuses on the role of education in sustainable development. The author, Kathryn Hegarty, proposes that for sustainability to succeed, an ethical foundation as well as an inquiry- and problem-based learning approach are required in order to permit engagement and sensemaking in new organizational and policy-making contexts.

Chapter thirteen by Jo Littler focuses on the contribution of cultural studies to the ethical consumption field through its capacity to cross disciplinary boundaries and engage in conjunctural analysis. She highlights the role of ethical and moral considerations in informing cultural studies so that all consumption can be seen as ethical in nature. At the same time, the commitment to morality of cultural studies implies its critical analysis of all the political, social, and cultural barriers that prevent ethical consumption. Illuminating what cultural studies brings to the ethical consumption debate is critical to further understand counter narratives to existing neoliberal economic models.

This book is at its best when it makes sense of the coexisting economic, psychological, moral, and social influences on ethical consumption. While it acknowledges

the necessity of making improvements at the individual level, it also questions individuals' impact on ethical consumption overall. A major strength of the book is thus its presentation, synthesis, and contrast of the different theoretical frameworks, including those that are premised on the autonomous sovereignty of consumers alongside the critical views of current liberal theory, which propose transforming the presumptive weight given to consumer autonomy in favor of an ethical economy embedded in larger political projects oriented toward the common good.

Ultimately, Shaw, Chatzidakis, and Carrington's collection is really about promoting a broad understanding and accurate integration of the extensive insights provided by the diverse academic disciplines into ethical consumption, and aiding the required individual, social, organizational, and political changes needed to scale up ethical consumption. The interdisciplinary and critical nature of this book presents ample food for thought on ethical consumption and a solid platform upon which further research in this field can build.