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The “Recovering Community” and the Power of
Choice: An Anthropological Study on Consumption,
Addiction and Responsibility.

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Table of Contents

1 Introduction	5
2 Methodology	12
3 An Anthropological Approach to the “Recovering Community” and Consumerism	21
3.1 The “Recovering Community”, “Addiction”, and Compulsive Consumption	21
3.1.1 The “Recovering Community”	21
3.1.2 Defining Addiction: An Ethnocentric Problem.....	31
3.2 Culture and Addiction	37
3.2.1 The Biwat of New Guinea and their Relationship with Betel	37
3.2.2 A Search for the Sacred or Hiding from Reality.....	38
3.3 Consumerism.....	42
3.3.1 Contemporary Economics.....	42
3.3.2 Economic Value equals Cultural Value: Jean Baudrillard and Marshall Sahlins	52
3.3.2.1 Sahlins.....	52
3.3.2.2 Baudrillard.....	54
3.4 Consumerism as Culture: My Precious Toys.....	56
3.5 Responsibility, Convenience and Identity	62
4 Consumerism and Benefits.....	64
4.1 Identity: The Story of Consumerism.....	64
4.2 Material Culture, Time and Ideology.....	67
4.2.1 Reconfiguration of Time Around Patterns of Emulation.....	68
4.2.2 Ideology: Profits and Consumption as Means to Themselves.....	70
4.2.3 The Creation of Consumers: Children and Stories of Material and Capitalism.....	74
4.2.4 Consumption as Means of Control: Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood	77
4.3 A Culture of Compulsiveness: The Theoretical Approach of the Present Work	79
4.4 Why Does the Program Work: The Traditions and The First Three Steps	85
4.4.1 The Organic Element of the Program: The Twelve Traditions	86
4.4.2 The Dogmatic Element of the Program: The First Three Steps	86
4.5 Religion	94
4.6 Conclusion on the First Steps.....	97
5 Consumerism and Costs	100
5.1 Responsibility	100
5.1.1 Non-consumerist Notions of Costs.....	102
5.1.2 Value of Costs within Consumerism	107
5.1.3 Empirical Research	107
5.2 Individualism and the Lack of Interconnectedness: The Story of Consumerist Responsibility	114
5.2.1 Individualism.....	114
5.2.1.1 The Person	116
5.2.1.2 Internal Individualism	120
5.2.2 Consumption vs. Prosumption: An Historical Lack of Connectedness Between Individual Costs and external Circumstances.....	126
5.3 A Lack of Interconnectedness and Rational Choice.....	134
5.4 The Economic Left: Resistance to Capitalism within the same Hegemonic Constructs	138
5.4.1 Marxism and Interconnectedness	139

5.4.2 Market and Non-Western Resistance	147
5.4.2.1 Social Business	147
5.4.2.2 Gandhi and the Swadeshi Movement.....	149
5.5 Why Does the Program Work: Steps 4 to 12	151
6 Concluding Considerations	160
7 Sources	169
7.1 Bibliography	169
7.2 Electronic Sources	179
7.3 Informants.....	182
7.4 Illustrations.....	182
8 Appendixes	183
8.1 Survey Instrument.....	183
8.2 Survey Results.....	185
8.4 Survey Graphs	186
8.5 Adamah Questionnaire	187

Abbreviations List

Concepts

GNP Gross National Product

GDP Gross Domestic Product

Institutions and Organizations

SAA Sex Addicts Anonymous

AA Alcoholics Anonymous

DA Debtors Anonymous

NA Narcotics Anonymous

USA United States of America

BSE Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

BASF Grameen - Badische Anilin- und Soda-Fabrik Grameen

ASS Anonyme Arbeitssüchtige

UN United Nations

UK United Kingdom

1 Introduction

If I were to tell that this work began because of deep interest in the “recovering community”¹ and a desire to study their “program”, I would be lying. If I told the reader that the present study began as an employment of “Grounded Theory” through ethnographical study of the mentioned community, I would not be stating the complete truth. I thought I already knew a lot about this community even before I began my project. The focus of the mentioned became related to this community only by accident. My interest was always a different one; I wanted to study the “West” through an anthropological perspective. I wanted to study the “West” like an alien, like if it were the first time I had seen everything related to this cultural, social and geopolitical “space”. Not any state, group, or community in particular, but rather economic behavior in general. I have always considered my political preferences to be in the left of the political spectrum; however, I also felt that lately the “left” had much to criticize and little to offer in terms of viable proposals in the contemporary world. So my interest was always related to something that in the future could contribute, in any way, to a proposal, even if it meant criticizing everything I knew. I wanted to study anthropological theory, and use theory to produce something that could contribute. I wanted to produce theory.

During my master’s, most of the teachers and professors I shared my ideas with, told me the same thing, they said that I’d “have to focus”, to sharpen my interests so that they would “fit” within a viable study. Most recommended to focus in a “social group”.

I didn’t. Not at first. Actually, my first process of interest sharpening was related directly to the subject of study. In one of my courses I was given the assignment, to read the introduction of Warren Belasco’s *Food: The Key Concepts* (2008) and something clicked; responsibility related to consumption strongly attracted me. This was my first guide. I

¹ The “recovering community” is non-organized, not hierarchically based social entity. It doesn’t have an official name or denominator. The designation “recovering community” is used by its members to informally describe, the international collectivity of people who belong to a “Twelve-Step group” and practice the Twelve Steps and their philosophy, in order to overcome varied forms of “addiction” or compulsive behaviors. The Twelve Steps are a set of “spiritual” directives, based in the belief that a “Higher Power” will eliminate the desire to consume in a harmful manner.

engaged in a deep theoretical research concerning consumption and responsibility in my chosen context of study: consumer driven economies, that lead to mass-consumption societies. I approached the subject from every single angle. I studied mainstream economics, and what did they have to say about the subject. I studied rational choice theory, Marxism, sociology, and, of course, anthropology of consumption.

I began my empirical study, without yet specifying a group or an activity in particular. I had come to some conclusions regarding the current proposed theories to explain consumption, both the proposals of the left and the right of the political spectrum, presented serious contradictions. My first empirical studies were directed towards these issues. The initial questions I was trying to solve are too broad to even mention them at this point of the introduction.

However, I did learn a lot. And, then, while studying mass-consumption as “cultural” behavior, the first clue towards choosing a group, that in time would turn out to help me achieve all the tasks of my proposed subject, came up: I stumbled upon the word *shopaholic*.

My name is Pedro, and I'm a grateful recovering alcoholic. I had always related the previous phrase with responsibility and consumption. It meant stop hiding from yourself and from your life within a pattern of consumption that I had grown to know all too well. I knew *Shopaholic* had to be related as well. The first stop in the world of compulsive overspending was Debtors Anonymous. Interestingly so, I found that Debtors Anonymous follows the exact same philosophy and Steps, that the same group I attended, Alcoholics Anonymous. This fact made me question everything I knew about the community I belonged to.

Before, I had never questioned what was really behind the concept of a chemical dependant, alcoholic, or addict. I had taken for granted the definition of alcoholism as a “universal” and individual disease, and the application of the Twelve Steps as the most effective method to date. Before, I had no clue of why or how the philosophy behind the Steps affected compulsive behavior; it seemed to have no relationship with the activity that, before I joined, I couldn't find a way to stop engaging in.

I consider myself an agnostic, and always have; my experience with Alcoholics Anonymous has not changed these notions. The idea that a supra-natural intelligence was related to the circumstances of my existence was something that I have always considered, will remain in doubt. However, within the community, whenever I asked for an explanation of why was it that the impulse for drinking disappeared after following the recommended Steps, ignorance provided the answer: "We don't know how it works, you can only experience it yourself, but it seems it does." The answers of the more religious members of the groups were, considering my curious nature and my agnostic notions, even less fortunate, since they were always based in faith.

Regarding addiction, I was always told that I was different, physiologically speaking; that I reacted to chemicals differently than other people, and that the Steps helped. A logical relationship between the ways one handles chemicals, and a group of Steps did not make sense. However, I always related addiction to chemicals.

Compulsive-over spenders and Debtors Anonymous challenged these notions. These were people who could not stop engaging in the activity of purchasing commodities compulsively, even though this was destroying their life very much so in the same manner that the consumption of heroin destroyed the life of an addict.

I was then motivated to engage in empirical research related to a community that I was already acquainted with. However, with the anthropological training I had received as part of my master's degree, and the knowledge of consumption from anthropological perspectives that I had acquired through my research, I could now participate in this community as a student as rather than a member. I had finally had my social group: The "recovering community".

I placed aside every notion I previously had regarding the "twelve-steppers" and the groups up to that moment, and began to submerge deeply into their world, their notions, their struggles and their pain, from an outsiders perspective. I engaged in participatory observation within the groups that at the moment I was already aware of, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Narcotics Anonymous, in Vienna. Asking members if they belonged to other groups, I began to discover a whole world that I had very little knowledge of. There are no Debtors Anonymous groups in Vienna; the closest Anonyme Schuldner resides in Bremen. However, I did have access to their Internet meetings. In Vienna I discovered, Anonyme Arbeitssüchtige, and a German-speaking group of Sexaholics Anonymous. I

also found out that Compulsive-Overeaters Anonymous have meetings in the UK, Holland and Ireland. That Gamblers Anonymous have meetings in Greece, Ireland, Finland, France, Italy, Denmark, Romania, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal, Latvia, Iceland, Czech republic, Croatia. And around other mass-consumption societies in the world I found that “Twelve-Step philosophy” is used to address all kinds of compulsive behavior. Clutterers-Anonymous is a fellowship of people that seek to free themselves from cluttering objects and goods compulsively. There’s Food Addicts and Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous, Sex and Love Addicts, Sexual Compulsives, and Sex Addicts Anonymous in addition to the already mentioned Sexaholics. Neurotics Anonymous, Emotions Anonymous and Emotional Health Anonymous, seek mental health through the Steps, where people affected with bulimia and anorexia are found, amongst other “problems”. If the specific issue is not addressed by any of these groups Celebrate Recovery and Recovery Anonymous groups, who use the Steps for life in a general way, are available. Many of these groups have Internet meetings that I had access to, but one of the most important realizations was that all of these followed the exact same Steps and philosophy as Alcoholics Anonymous, with the only difference that they changed alcohol, in their respective literature, for the problem that they addressed in particular.

I realized that the Twelve Steps had little to do with chemicals, rather than behavior. They were related to consumption, in every sense and every kind, whether it was chemicals, food, clothing, sex, people, relationships or gambling. According to James G. Carrier (2007) “Consumption is the meaningful use people make of the objects that are associated with them. The use can be mental or material; the objects can be things, ideas or relationships; the association can range from ownership and contemplation” (Carrier 2007:128). All over the world there were people who engaged in some kind of activity that was destroying their lives, and they did not have the ability to disengage without help, help they found within the “recovering community”, the Twelve Steps. People in the “recovering community” where not recovering from chemical consumption, they where “recovering” form something else. So my first question was: What is the “recovering community”, “recovering” from?

There are three variables found in every single group: 1) Harmful compulsive consumption of practically anything: food, sex, commodities, psychoactive substances, gambling, sex, etc. 2) Emotional pain related to their consumption patterns, which both motivated

compulsiveness and was created by it. 3) The practice of the Twelve Steps to overcome, both the pain, and the compulsive manner of their behavior.

However, there's the other variable, the context I had studied before, a set of cultural norms concerning economic behavior: Mass-consumerist culture and consumerist societies. By approaching the "recovering community" in a different manner than as a member, but rather using "Grounded Theory", trying to forget every single notion I had about them, about recovery, about alcoholism and about addiction. I finally managed to see this context as an alien; with anthropological eyes everything seemed different. Stepping away from cultural notions of the context, from the "normalness" and the "universality" of consumerism, the Twelve Steps seemed to be completely related to many patterns observed during my previous general study of consumerism. And so, the first real and concrete research questions began to formulate:

Could it be possible that addiction is culturally defined, and it is not a universally observed phenomenon? Could there be a relationship between what is defined as addiction or compulsive behavior, with the economic notions related to consumerism?

Everywhere I looked, different findings seemed to suggest an affirmative answer.

This work represents the combination of the two mentioned studies that melted into one. The first one represents a general theoretical and empirical study of mass-consumption and responsibility within mass-consumerist culture, and the second one, is an ethnographic investigation of a community, based on questions regarding its relationship with this previously studied context.

The melting of these two gave the present work its specific, research question, based both on a specific social group and a specific activity, within a specific context:

Do the "recovering community" and their philosophy act as cultural resistance to practices, beliefs and perceptions concerning mass-consumerist culture? Is the "recovering community" "recovering" from behavior induced in "mass-consumerism"?

After a general Chapter where the methodology is described, the work begins with an anthropological approach to the "recovering community", "addiction", and the context in

which they are observed: consumerism. The history and circumstances of how the “community of the Twelve Steps” was formed is exposed. Also, within this Chapter an academic problem that will serve, as an anthropological guide for analysis will be presented: the controversy that exists in the way addiction is defined. A deep anthropological problem was noted: academic ethnocentrism. A analysis of addiction and its relationship with culture, where some ethnographic studies that show that 1) addiction is not observed “universally”, and 2) there is a relationship between cultural constructions and addiction, will then be engaged. After this analysis is performed a preliminary conclusion is reached, within this Chapter: in order to understand addiction and the Twelve Steps, the context in which the “movement” is observed, must be understood as well. To do so, the Chapter continues, by studying the perspective of the context’s experts on the matter, the discipline within academia that pioneered in the study of consumption: economics.

The subchapter, in which “mainstream” economic theories are explored, serves as a crucial element of the present work’s analysis. As the theories are described and analyzed, a simple inference is reached: within hegemonic economic theory, all theoretical proposals are based in the relationship between costs and benefits, and how economic agents use valuations of these variables concerning their economic decisions. However, it is also noted that “mainstream” economic theory shuns from an analysis of how both costs and benefits are evaluated. And so, instead of shunning from rational choice, the present work embraces it, but attempts to go further. It attempts to reach those places that economic theory shuns from, and try to see if there is a relationship between the way benefits and costs are valued within consumerist culture, and the Twelve Steps.

Chapter four uses the theoretical approaches of Belasco (2008) Weber (2003), Corrigan (1997), Campbell (1987), McCracken (1988), Veblen (1912, 1953), Simmel (1903), Richard H. Robbins (2008), Mary Douglas, and Baron Isherwood (1996), Baudrillard (1988), Marshal Sahlins (1976, 2004) and Luigi Zoja (2000) to construct an approximation on how “Western” capitalist consumerist culture conceives benefits. And then, based in empirical experience, it is argued how the first Steps and the normative and dogmatic elements of the “program” are used as resistance to what was previously observed.

Chapter five attempts to accomplish the same as Chapter three, in this occasion, regarding costs. The approximation of how costs are perceived in mass-consumerist

societies is done based in empirical research and the theoretical proposals of Belasco (2006, 2008), Howard Coward (2010), Karl Polanyi (2001), Michael Carrithers (1996), Marcel Mauss (1996), Louis Dumont (1992), Alvin Toffler (1980), George Ritzer (2010), Joseph Stiglitz (2002) and Karl Marx (1984, 2002). Then an attempt to show how all the previously exposed is related to the second part of the Steps, is undertaken.

However, this work not only proposes to solve its research question. The research was initially directed towards economic theory construction, and it will also try to achieve this purpose. Three variables sit in the table: a context: mass-consumerism, a group: the “twelve-steppers”, the “recovering community”, and between them a lot of theory, economic, psychological and psychiatric. A relationship between all these is not easily seen, but when anthropology is thrown into the mixture and we step away from the “normalness” and the “universality” of things, wonderful answers appear to surface.

In the concluding Chapter, an analysis of how far the mentioned mission was accomplished will be performed. Was the research question solved? And most importantly, was the initial purpose accomplished? Was an approximation to economic troubles achieved? In this last Chapter the relationship between economic culture and consumption, consumption and addiction, addiction and the Twelve Steps, and the Twelve Steps and economic culture is finally tied together.

2 Methodology

As was mentioned in the preceding introduction, the present work did not begin as an ethnographic study of a particular social group, but rather as an attempt to contribute theoretically within the realm of anthropology to economic theoretical proposals. Therefore, although the previous changed through the development of the present, initially the primary sources were to be of theoretical nature and the empirical sources were going to be used as the supporting elements of the presented theoretical proposals. The social, cultural, geo-political and behavioral context was, initially, a broad one: the only limitations were the relationship between consumption and its consequences, social, political, economical and environmental, within “Western” capitalist, consumer driven economies. Therefore, my first theoretical context of study was economic anthropology.

In their book *Methodology of Investigation* (2007), authors Roberto Hernandez Sampieri, Carlos Fernandez-Collado and Pilar Baptista Lucio, consider that the stages of elaboration of a theoretical framework are basically two: “1) the revision of the corresponding literature and 2) the adoption of a theory or the development of a theoretical perspective” (2007:65).

Culturalist Warren Belasco’s *Food: the Key Concepts* (2008) represented the first piece of literature that served as guide for a literature revision. It was quickly noted from this introductory approach to the theoretical context, that two areas of knowledge had to be extensively explored and understood in order for any theoretical attempt related to consumption in a capitalistic context to be viable: the anthropological formulations and approaches to consumption, and every theoretical proposal regarding economics, that had been presented within the frame of our context of study.

Since the researcher had, at the moment, no formal training within the realm of economics, the latter represented a demanding part of the present study. Initially, both Marxist and mainstream economic approaches were studied. In this sense the help of my brother Rodrigo Saez Williams, who is an economist, was of fundamental value. He helped identify key pieces of literature (Nicholson 2006, Scott, 2000, Tversky and Kahneman 1987, Bentham 1907, Marx 1984 and Stiglitz 2002) as well as the problems that currently the field of economics is trying to solve.

According to the mentioned authors, the initial step towards the adoption of a theory or the development of a theoretical perspective, is to identify within the revised literature what of the following cases is present within the field of study:

- 1) A completely developed theory, based in abundant empirical evidence could apply to the work.
- 2) The existence of various theoretical approaches that can be applied to the work.
- 3) The existence of theoretical “pieces or fragments” with limited or moderate empirical support, that suggest potentially important variables and are applicable to the research problems (empirical generalizations or micro theories).
- 4) The existence of non-studied guides and ideas vaguely related to the research problem (Hernandez Sampieri, Fernandez-Collado and Baptista Lucio 2007:698).

We identified that within the realm of economics applied to consumption, all theories proposed fitted within case 3, and no consensual academic proposal could be observed.

However, an important feature of all observed theoretical proposals was noticed: none related directly, the consequences of economic behavior to consumption.

Based in this initial theoretical approach, the research project was provided with two complementing hypothesis that would serve as a guide, until these were focused into a specific empirically observed phenomenon. These were:

- 1) Consumption links the individual to the production process.
- 2) Most of today’s consumption is an unconscious practice of society in which hardly anyone realizes the power of their choices and the implications of their actions.

And, the initial purpose of the research project was a theoretical analysis of the capacity of consumer agency in today’s global society, and the manner in which costs are perceived within consumerist culture. Direct relationship between costs and responsibility was presented for the first time. And so, a new “revision of literature” was performed, in this occasion the anthropological formulations regarding consumption and symbolic meanings awarded to commodities was addressed.

The work of Marshal Sahlins (1976,2004), Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood (1996), and American anthropologist Richard H. Robbins (2008) lead the way. Research involving the notion of individualism within “western” culture was also realized. The first meaningful symbolic relationship between commodities and consequences noted within the context was what Belasco (2008:8) referred to as a “lack of interconnectedness”, between the commodity and the external consequences of its consumption. For this reason the two first empirical approaches to the subject were performed.

The first one was of qualitative nature. A reference of an economic enterprise that operated within the boundaries of the city of Vienna and seemed to be concerned with the relationship between producers and consumers, in the sense that they only produced and distributed “organic” products, was followed. After the framework for a semi-structured interview directed at members of said enterprise was elaborated, I presented myself in the installations of Biohof Adamah², located in 2282 Glinzendorf 7 Vienna, Austria, with the purpose to collect information, through participant observation, interviews and collection of documents.

I presented myself as a student of Universitat Wien, with the purpose of studying different forms of economic activity. Two of the staff members, Markus Niemann and Ruth Bartel, were kind enough to subject themselves to interviewing. Later, Markus showed me the precise manner in which Adamah, goes about their business. During the two days I spent at the enterprise, I was able to acquire all the information that I was looking for in the form of interviews, direct observation of the business methods and process they used, as well as various documents related to the way they “marketed” responsibility.

The second empirical research was of quantitative nature. Based on previous bibliographical research of the true and specific external costs related to coffee and t-shirt consumption (Ryan and Thein Durning 1997), a survey instrument was produced in the form of a questionnaire. According to Jeff Miller and Jonathan Deutsch (2009), a survey is designed to identify beliefs and attitudes of respondents” (Creswell cited in Miller and Deutsch 2009:120). The particular objective was to analyze the connection between valuation of certain costs related to the consumption of the mentioned commodities, and the connection between these valued costs and the commodities themselves.

² Biohof Adamah is a business enterprise located in the outskirts of Vienna. They distribute and produce organic foods, in manner that attempts to reduce both social and environmental costs.

The sample was chosen to be as broad as possible, with a single limitation; all respondents had to be economic agents within a consumer driven economy. These respondents were, of course, not hard to find. The survey was conducted both in the streets of Vienna and through the Internet. The survey instrument was also carefully elaborated considering that the information obtained had to reflect clearly four pieces of information:

- 1) If respondents were concerned about certain social and environmental costs.
- 2) If respondents consumed articles at prices that were directly related to the production of these costs.
- 3) If respondents were aware of this connection, and
- 4) If the respondents would be willing to pay for the monetary difference that could substantially change the production of these costs.

The answers provided suggested that most of the theoretical considerations that had been studied at the moment were in the right direction. So a third “revision of literature” was performed. In this occasion, related to resistance of cultural consumerist notions, with elements of “interconnectedness”, and therefore, responsibility. After a brief approach where Gandhi’s Swadeshi Movement surfaced, the community of Debtors Anonymous and the idea of concept of a shopaholic, surfaced as well.

Permission was asked to engage in deep ethnographical research concerning Debtors Anonymous and the “community of the Twelve Steps” or the “recovering community” as a whole, was asked. After approved, the research was engaged.

The main initial objective of the research was to analyze the social, political (power), and religious structures of the community, their values and beliefs, practices, as well as various cultural definitions within the community involving reward, work, remuneration, symbols rules and notions; through participatory observation, collection of “life stories” and interpretation of established organizational and normative elements. Authors Hernandez Sampieri, Fernandez Collado and Baptista Lucio (2007) consider that a ethnographical research may take the form of a “realistic or mixed” design, a critical design, a “classic” design or a micro ethnographic design. (Hernandez Sampieri, Fernandez-Collado and Baptista Lucio 2007:698) This ethnographical study fits neatly within the critical design, which is described as the following:

“The researcher is interested in the study of excluded groups from or within a culture (for example, an investigation in certain schools where certain students are discriminated for the ethnic origins and this translates into unequal circumstances). They analyze categories or concepts related to social matters as power, injustice, hegemony, repression and the victims of society. They pretend to clarify the situation of the relegated participants with a denouncing purpose. The ethnographer must be conscious of his own ideological position and maintain a reflexive attitude to include every ‘voice and expression’ of the studied culture” (Hernandez Sampieri, Fernandez-Collado and Baptista Lucio 2007:698).

The study is categorized within this frame, because its purpose was establishing if a relationship of resistance between the studied community and the context of capitalist consumer driven consumerist culture, was at play.

The study could be also categorized as a procedural ethnography, since “[...] certain elements of social processes are described” (Hernandez Sampieri, Fernandez-Collado and Baptista Lucio 2007:699). And, these are analyzed in a functionalistic manner in terms of how the Steps specifically respond to certain meanings concerning costs and benefits embedded within consumerist culture.

As was mentioned before, I already had personal experience within the “recovering community”. This proved to be an asset rather than a liability during my research. The most challenging notion to shed was the embedded belief within the “Twelve-Step community” that they are not to be considered a religious fraternity or association. Also challenging, were the notions of alcoholism, addiction and dependence as perceived within the community, notions that were completely challenged once experienced from an anthropological position. However, I did an effort to shed everything I had learned as being a member, and to question all these previously held perceptions.

This fieldwork took place between the months of April and June 2010. Twelve-Step meetings in the metropolitan area of Vienna were attended almost daily, and some meetings that were not available within these urban boundaries were attended electronically (through Skype). The “recovering community” has specific rules of attendance of meetings, and only in those considered “open” is attendance by people that do not have a direct interest in sobriety, allowed. However, my status as a member of

Alcoholics Anonymous proved to be very effective as means to be accepted as a student as opposed to a member.

The study began by resuming participation in the community. I attended the meetings in Nestroyplatz, Hamburgerstrasse, and Opergasse all in Vienna, Austria. Through the members I obtained information regarding other Twelve-Step groups in which these were also involved. Debtors Anonymous does not have presence in Vienna, however, Matt (no last names are used within the context of the Twelve Steps to protect anonymity), a member of both Alcoholics Anonymous and Debtors Anonymous referred me to web site where I could ask for information regarding Internet meetings. Three of these were attended and a life story was produced.

Pete another member of A.A. was kind enough to show me around the world of Sexaholics Anonymous in Vienna. I attended a German Speaking meeting, accompanied by him.

Pete was also a member of Anonyme Arbeitssüchtige, and he accompanied me to a German-speaking meeting in the Nachbarschaftszentrum, Vienna, Austria. In order to fully engage in participatory observation, I decided to reengage in the following of the Steps. I had already done this procedure before, while abstaining from alcohol. However, this initial engagement took place three years ago, before I had an anthropological background. Since, I'm a member of A.A. in order to fully participate as an observer I had to do the Steps of another group. Debtors Anonymous was not an option, since I hardly have any trouble abstaining from compulsive over-spending. However I had some issues regarding my romantic behavior that were not solved. Sexaholics presented an opportunity, not only to immerse myself within the groups as a student, but also to shed and face some unanalyzed guilt.

As of yet, I don't speak German, so I had to join the SAA web call Skype meeting. I bought a copy of Sex-Addicts Anonymous, and with Pete as my sponsor I began my SAA steps, specifying the double function that these would have in my life. As I performed the ninth-Step owed to my wife, I felt again the way the costs of behavior are conceived within the community. This Step involved an amendment of my behavior, which included the confession of two shameful events.

This is the nature of the Twelve Steps, facing yourself, your shadow, in absolute terms. In order to participate within the "Twelve-Step community", seriousness of action is absolutely needed. No, half-ways, no acting, will do. As a member of A.A. I had already

confessed to many misdoings, but not these. These events are used within the context of the present paper, but it is important to note that for me, they represent a deeper meaning than mere academic exploration. I, again, felt their meaning of responsibility.

Three more life stories were obtained, another one related to Debtors Anonymous, one related to Narcotics Anonymous and one related to Alcoholics Anonymous. But most importantly, the personal experience based in an anthropological perspective, needed to interpret the meanings embedded within the community subject of study, was also obtained.

Initially, the study of the “recovering community” was to be just another example of cultural resistance to consumerism. However, as the ethnographic research progressed, it seemed that too many of the studied elements within consumerist culture were related to the Twelve Steps”. And so, it was decided that the base of the present work would consist in the anthropological ethnographic study of this community.

Many theoretical conclusions were abandoned, much of the literature read proved to be useless, and the knowledge acquired through experience in the “Twelve-Step program” became the primary source of the present work. The research question changed to its present form.

In the phase of writing the thesis, the elaboration of theoretical arguments was resumed. In this occasion, only those elements that were specifically related to the ways the Twelve Steps reevaluate consumerist notions were used.

A final, revision of literature was engaged. This last time, it concerned the relationship “addiction” and compulsive consumption with culture. The results of this final phase tied everything together and the argument of the present work was finally produced.

Since the theoretical prepositions of the present work could be considered “new”, and they combine a number of previously unrelated theories from many social sciences, analyzed through an anthropological perspective, a methodology was needed in order for the elaboration of the proposed theoretical premises.

For this purpose, I followed the recommendations of the mentioned authors (Hernandez Sampieri, Fernandez-Collado and Baptista Lucio 2007) that previously proved to be useful during my legal studies. The authors consider that when “pieces or fragments” of different theoretical approaches are used for the elaboration of a new theoretical proposal, all the

proposed theoretical analyses that are observed within the phase of literature revision, have to be sorted out logically.

“Today, behavioral sciences –relatively- don’t provide of a great amount of theories that explain the phenomena they study; most of the time only *empirical generalizations* are available. [...] The studies [of the theories] are to be commented and related between each other, according to coherent criteria (chronologically, proposition with proposition o through the variable of study). In occasion the propositions can be interlaced in a logical manner in order to –tentatively- construct a theory. [...] When faced with *empirical generalizations*, frequently the theoretical framework is organized for each of the variables of study” (Hernandez Sampieri, Fernandez-Collado and Baptista Lucio 2007:88).

So following the previously exposed, three anthropological variables where identified concerning the theoretical approach of the work’s research question:

- 1) The meaning and symbolism that consumption and commodities are awarded in relation to costs, and
- 2) The meaning and symbolism that these same concepts are awarded in relation to benefits.
- 3) The way in which the twelve-steps reevaluated the meaning concerning the two above-mentioned variables

All theoretical proposals and *empirical generalizations*, which did not include these variables, were then discarded. The remaining theoretical proposals were ordered in a chronological sense, as to tell a story. And finally, patterns that they shared were used and contra-posed to them to formulate a theoretical proposal. The empirical experience regarding the Twelve Steps led the way. Ethnographic studies that were obtained during the various revisions of literature, as well as the two previous empirical studies concerning consumption in consumerist culture, were used to support and strengthen every single theoretical proposal.

Whenever, a possible question was identified, I returned to the studied literature and followed the same method to contra-pose and question our theoretical proposals.

After everything exposed in the present Chapter, the sources of information can then be enumerated and categorized, based in their awarded importance.

- Notions and information obtained during participant observation, and from previous empirical experience, concerning the Twelve Steps. This includes, information regarding organizational, structure, meanings, symbols and values, and the “life stories”.
- Theoretical proposals obtained through literature revisions, which are directly related to the research question.
- Empirical studies done concerning the meanings and values of costs and benefits within consumerist culture.
- Ethnographical studies obtained through literature revisions, which serve as direct reinforcement of empirical data towards theoretical proposals.
- Theoretical proposals obtained through literature revisions that serve as back up, or explanatory of certain theoretical proposals.

3 An Anthropological Approach to the “Recovering Community” and Consumerism

3.1 The “Recovering Community”, “Addiction”, and Compulsive Consumption

3.1.1 The “Recovering Community”

The “recovering community” is not an organization *per se*, there are neither leaders, nor are there hierarchically based institutions, there’s only people in pain, a book, and a philosophy.

An important fact of consideration is that “Twelve-Step philosophy” and the “recovering community” sprung out of a mass-consumer society, in fact, the epitome of mass-consumer culture: it sprung from within the economic and social culture of the United States of America. Up to this moment, “Twelve-Step philosophy” has spread to other parts of the world, but with absolute preponderance within what is colloquially considered as the “West”, or its periphery. Following a geographical and statist notion of what entails the “West” it is arguable that it has spread to other locations, since A.A. is to be found within the boundaries of many States. However, if consider the “West” as a set of cultural notions that have their origin in Europe and North America, after the advent of industrialization and commoditization of goods (in absence for a better word than industrialism, modernism, capitalism to describe the phenomena at hand), it is difficult to find a meeting elsewhere. Countries like Mongolia, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda, have few meetings, if not only a single one, and always located within their most populous urban areas. (Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Offices, Central Offices, Inter-group and Answering Services Overseas 2010 online)

The founding of the “Twelve-Step program” is considered to have taken place a day of June 1935 in Akron, Ohio, U.S.A. when a New York stockbroker known within the “recovering community” a Bill W. had a “talk” with a local physician known as Dr. Bob. Both individuals were trying to overcome a compulsion; even though they promised themselves many-a-times they would never drink again. They had correlated this behavior with the

severe problems in the life, however, time after time, they found themselves drinking again (Hazelden Foundation 1991: 5).

Bill, six months before, had already stopped drinking, on account of what he considered to be a “spiritual experience”. He had already visited a physician, Dr. Silkworth, regarding his problem. Silkworth was unable to “cure” him, but provided him with a plausible explanation, “[...] he thought alcoholism was actually a disease, a twofold disease both of the body and of the mind. He explained that Bill W. was allergic to alcohol, and that whenever Bill W. took a drink, it produced a physical craving for still more alcohol” (Ibid). This was the reason he could not stop, once he started.

During one of his most gruesome episodes of alcoholic withdrawal, a friend who in his time also struggled with drinking approached him with a discovery. The former is known as Ebbie T., and he had found a way to eliminate the desire to drink within a religious community called the Oxford Groups. The Oxford groups were made up of people who “[...] sought to practice first-century Christianity, using their faith to help them overcome whatever problems they had” (Hazelden Foundation 1991:5). Within the notions of pre-Constantine Christianity, they found solutions. Ebbie provided Bill with the guideline of the Oxford Group’s recommendations for a healthy life, and told Bill that if the directions were followed he would “recover” from his plight. Bill did as followed, and, effectively, his compulsion seemed to subside, this was the nature of his spiritual experience (Hazelden Foundation 1991: 6-7).

Bill was not a religious man, so “[...] he could not accept all the tenets of the Oxford Groups”. However, he identified five elements within the Oxford Group’s beliefs that apart from any particular religious doctrine, were needed for this “experience”: (1) a personal moral inventory; (2) the confession of his defects; (3) restitution to the people he had harmed; (4) continued helpfulness to others and (4) the belief in a Power higher than one’s self (Ibid).

He then proceeded with the elaboration of a “secular” program based in these principles. He failed at various attempts of “healing” random individuals he found in the streets. That is, until he came upon Dr. Bob, who was willing to follow Bill’s recommendations. Dr. Bob did not have a drink for the rest of his life. Nor did Bill.

They came to another conclusion; the “program” could not be enforced and only willing individuals could benefit from it. Therefore, Bill went back to Silkworth’s hospital and began working with alcoholics who were willing to follow his discovery. Dr. Bob, in turn, began a group in Akron. After forty people were and could stay sober, they decided that their discovery was worth taking to a further step. Various attempts at “organizing” hierarchically did not work. Alcoholics would not heed the recommendations of authority figures, and these in turn would find other interests within the organization apart from the purpose. Any form of enforcement would not work, so they found a solution in the writing of a book, and the formalizing of the program (Hazelden Foundation 1991: 9). This is the origin of the Twelve Steps, which are the following:

- “1) We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2) Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3) Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
- 4) Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5) Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6) Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character
- 7) Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- 8) Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9) Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10) Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong

promptly admitted it.

- 11) Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12) Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs” (Alcoholic Anonymous 2001:59).

The manner, in which the groups are to be organized, is also contained within the directives of the “Big Book”³. These mentioned directives are established within the “Twelve Traditions”, which are the following:

- “1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

³ The “Big Book” as it is un-officially termed within the community, is the most important piece of literature of Alcoholics Anonymous. It contains information on how the Steps are to be followed, as well “stories of recovery” of various of the original members.

7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities” (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001:563).

These twelve norms dictate the organizational structure of every Twelve-Step group that can be considered a “true” Twelve-Step group. From a first glance it would seem that Twelve-Step groups operate in a manner similar to a religious organization or even a sect. However, to reach this conclusion, their interpretation of God, and Higher Power, must be analyzed. This will be addressed later. For the purpose of this Chapter, the manner in which these twelve directives affect the structure, both political and organizational of the “groups” will be analyzed.

The first notion that comes to mind is the internal control systems. Who are the “established authorities”? How are they elected or appointed? How are the norms of the “organization” dictated and how do they control the behavior amongst their members in order for the “organization” to pursue its interests? Well interestingly enough, *there are no authorities!*

That's right. In fact according to them, and Tradition six, if there were any authorities at all, the purpose established by the first Tradition could not be pursued. The second Tradition establishes that "there is only one ultimate authority, a loving God. With respect of their own affairs, "[...], each group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience." Also, Tradition eight states that, "A.A. (or any other "Twelve Step-group") should remain forever non-professional". No one is paid to carry out the "responsibilities" of the group; if there were money involved, then other purposes could fill the interests of the members. Every single motivation must be the obtainment and pursue of sobriety. Providing the service for the purpose of remuneration, would then affect these motivations severely. In their own words, "Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed thus dividing the material from the spiritual" (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001:564).

Also, related to this point, Tradition nine establishes that the group "should never be organized". Tradition seven, states that every group "is self-supporting, declining outside contributions". According to the "Big Book",

"[...] Any public solicitation of funds using the A.A. name is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise [...] Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority" (Ibid).

And finally, as established in Traditions eleven and twelve, their relations with "the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity" (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001:565).

Three recurring concepts that they avoid can be observed: property, money and authority. As well as, three concepts that are pursued: spirituality, sobriety and anonymity. However, this does not tell us how is the "organization" organized, or how does it work in the practice.

Well to begin with, according to my empirical knowledge, Twelve-Step groups would hardly qualify as an organization. Allow me to elaborate:

Two addicts and a book that meet regularly in an established location and accept other members to join, is already considered a group within the community. This is actually the way groups begin, alcoholics, addicts or persons affected with any kind of compulsive behavior that either, already know the “program” or have access to a book, relate to other people with the same problem and fix a place and a date to meet. This constitutes the creation of a new meeting.

“Twelve-steppers” (as they will be occasionally mentioned in the context of the present work), meet each other continuously, in what is referred to as “meetings”. Within the “recovering community’s” jargon, the words “group” and “meeting” are used as synonymous. This is because the central element of every group is the “meeting”: a specific time and place where the members of the group meet. Normally all groups have an assigned place where all their meetings take place. Also, members may and normally do, belong and assist to many different meetings. The first and most famous variant of a recovery group is Alcoholics Anonymous. However, as said before, the Twelve Steps are used to overcome a variety of behaviors, and so every behavior has a different variety of group. For example, Alcoholics normally attend Alcoholics Anonymous, drug-addicts attend Narcotics Anonymous and compulsive-overeaters attend Compulsive Over-eaters Anonymous.

The meetings are used to discuss personal problems related to one’s compulsive behavior, and they way the Steps are used to overcome these problems.

But then, who is the leader of this group? The answer is no one; the purpose of the “program” does not need leaders. A moderator is chosen, depending on the group, to lead the meetings. However, this moderator is changed constantly, and always elected democratically by what is referred to as the “group conscience”. The group conscience is the collective will of the group members represented in individual votes, which normally meet once a month for this purpose. The discussion of these “conscience meetings”, normally involves issues related to:

- 1) The financial administration of the group, by those elected to perform said activities. For example, how the rent for the room where the meetings are held, is to be paid.

Following tradition seven, all financial resources are to be provided by the members themselves. This takes place at the end of every meeting, where, whomever chooses so, deposits a small amount of money in a receptacle, placed in the center of the table, or passed around for this purpose. All resources are normally kept within the boundaries of the room.

- 2) The theoretical subjects that are to be treated in different meetings regarding the Steps and the individual troubles of each member. For example, it has become customary in many meetings to dedicate each month, to the discussion of its corresponding Step. Meetings in January will verse around the First Step, in February around the second one, so on, and so forth.
- 3) Finally, the group conscience is sovereign regarding the mentioned aspects. There are no higher authorities, except the philosophy stated in the book, which can only be amended or reformed, at a global convention, were all international members are welcome to participate. This has only occurred three times, since the “Big Book” was written.

The general offices do not have any authority over the particular groups. Once a group is formed, then, the group informs the general offices of its existence so that in the case someone seeks help through the general offices these can refer the addict to an established group in his area.

“Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect a secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large metropolitan area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are in effect, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. tradition and the receivers of A.A. contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service office in Mew York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our over-all public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the A.A grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experiences servants of they hole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key of their usefulness” (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001:565).

This all sounds very promising, but is it true? From my empirical experience, it is. There is no other kind of incentive to belong or participate to any of these groups apart from “staying sober”. Health facilities that use the “Twelve-Step program” as a method to solve compulsive behavior patterns are not Twelve-Step groups. Twelve-Step groups do not encourage any one that does not seek their help to join, including people who have been commanded by a State authority to participate. Academic Shane Buttlar from Trinity College Dublin, who has also studied the organizational structure of the “Twelve-Step community”, has come to the same conclusions in his book *Benign Anarchy Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland* (2010).

So then, how does the system work, who passes on the “message”? The message, in itself, is the way to overcome addiction or compulsive behavior; it is nothing else than the practice of the Twelve Steps. Perhaps a general account of a new comer’s experience will solve many questions. The following description could be applied to any new member. I had a similar experience when I joined A.A. in 2001, in 2006 and when I joined Sexaholics Anonymous during the research for the present work:

For this purpose, I’ve created a fictional character; his name will be Little John. Let’s consider that Little John cannot refrain himself from buying useless commodities; his desire for clothing, new technology, and leisure, has turned into a financial problem and he has been recommended by a friend to attend D.A. The friend who recommended this action will probably lead him to his first D.A. meeting. Since, the old members will not recognize him, he will be asked if he is new to Debtors Anonymous. The desperation that has brought Little John to meeting, will probably overpower the shame he feels by being there, and he will answer honestly, “yes”. No record, of any kind will be kept of this, nor will he be asked to sign his name anywhere, in fact his last name is never asked, and he may address himself in any form he wishes. Since he is a new member then a “new member session” will take place. This is different form of session from the regular ones, in the sense that each member will tell “Little John” their story; the session is dedicated to him. The members will address issues as: why are they here? How did their compulsion start? When? How long have they been in the “program”? What Steps have they followed and how has their life turn out to be? Finally, little John will be given a copy of the “Big Book” and the meeting will end (as all meetings end) with the recital of the serenity prayer, which, depending on the version is always something similar to the following:

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change, the courage to change those I can and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Little John may or not come back. If he does, he is already a member. From the experiences related in the following meetings he will learn how the program works. If he is to follow the program, he has to choose the only authority figure in Twelve Steps, and that is his “sponsor”. He will follow his sponsor’s lead regarding the completion of the Steps, and only regarding this matter. It is him who chooses the sponsor, and he can always “fire” him for whatever reason, and choose a different one.

Who are the sponsors and why do they do this service if they are not paid? Sponsors are fellow addicts who have already passed through the completion of the first eleven Steps and are now in their twelfth Step, which constitutes the sponsorship itself. They believe that in order to obtain and be able to live in “sobriety”, engaging in said activity (sponsorship) will serve them of great benefit. However, as it is always within Twelve-Step groups, nobody coerces him to do so, except the fear of compulsion. As the “Big Book” asserts: “The [sponsor] has no attitude of Holier Than Thou, nothing whatsoever except the desire to be helpful; that there are no fees to pay, no axes to grind, no people to please, no lectures to be endured-these are the conditions we have found most effective” (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001:18-19).

Little John will then begin to practice the Steps, and continue to attend meetings, where experiences of how the Steps are being practiced, how these experiences have proven to solve emotional, social and material problems will be related. He will never be coerced to attend any, nor will his sponsor oblige him to do so. No registry of attendance is taken, no questions regarding the truthfulness of his statements will be asked. According to our interviewees, by the time he reaches his Ninth Step the compulsion to engage in his previous destructive activities will have diminished dramatically. It is at this point when Little John, will be available to be chosen as a sponsor by another new member.

This is of course the ideal situation. From our empirical experience, tales about sponsors that have “relapsed” and drawn their sponsees into activity, or have become sponsors for other purposes apart from those established by the Traditions, are not uncommon. However, they are, according to my sources and experience, the exception and not the rule.

So what is the nature of the spiritual experience? What does it change within the person who experiences it? How is it related to Silkworth's allergy? But then, are we to consider that shopaholics are allergic to shopping? Once alcohol or drugs are taken out of the equation, the latter explanation loses plausibility. However, empirical studies have shown that the most successful facilities that treat drug and alcohol addiction use the Twelve Steps as the base for their programs, and that,

“[...] clinicians only referring clients to twelve-step groups for treatment were more likely than those referring their clients to twelve-step groups and "twelve-step alternatives" to believe less strongly in the effectiveness of Cognitive-Behavioral, and Psychodynamic-oriented Therapy, and were likely to be unfamiliar with twelve-step alternatives” (Fenster 2006:239).

From the interviews and participant observation, it is observed that members of Twelve-Step groups feel a difference once they engage in the first Steps, but those who have undertaken the Ninth Step, conclude that it is after engaging in this particular Step when a deep and profound change is observed. If this change can be observed particularly with the completion of some of these Steps, then these particular Steps, when performed, affect one's perception of circumstances in a concrete manner. I believe the “spiritual experience” entails something concrete.

In order to pursue this assumption, the “nature” of “addictive” or compulsive behavior, must be addressed.

3.1.2 Defining Addiction: An Ethnocentric Problem

The term “addiction” has been a hard one to define amongst academics and practitioners of addiction studies. An un-authored article of the Hazelden Foundation (2010 online) quotes the statements of Carlton Erickson, Ph.D., director of the Addiction Science Research and Education Center at the University of Texas at Austin:

“Today the word ‘addiction’ is applied so loosely and to so many different things as to become almost meaningless. Listen for this word in daily conversation and you'll hear about much more than alcohol and other drugs. People also talk about addiction to gambling, sex, e-mail, work,

chocolate, television, shopping, cell phones, exercise, shoes and games [...] Professionals in the addiction treatment field generally recognize that 'addiction' refers to "dependence on alcohol or other drugs," but the general public does not. Our cultural confusion about "addiction" leaves basic questions unanswered. Despite medical advances, the general public may still wonder whether addiction is a disease or a failure of "willpower" (Erickson cited in Hazelden Foundation 2008 online).

Following this restrictive definition of what addiction entails, The United State Department of Labor (2010), defines addiction in the following way:

"Addiction is a chronic, progressive, relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive use of one or more substances that results in physical, psychological, or social harm to the individual and continued use of the substance or substances despite this harm. Addiction has two possible components, physical dependence and psychological dependence:

Physical dependence – A state of becoming physically adapted to alcohol or other drugs. There are two important aspects to physical dependence:

Tolerance – The need for higher and higher doses to achieve the same effects.

Withdrawal – The appearance of physical symptoms (e.g., nausea, chills, and vomiting) when someone stops taking a drug too quickly.

Psychological dependence – A subjective sense of need for alcohol or other drug, either for its positive effects or to avoid negative effects associated with no use" (United States Department of Labor 2010 online).

These two postures share the notion that "addiction" can only be considered so, if the compulsive behavior is related to substance abuse. However, as was exposed earlier, the most effective treatment for addiction is used for a variety of behaviors that do not include chemical consumption. The definition of addiction presented in the *Hazelden Foundation's Electronic Library* (Hazelden 2010 online) presents a contrary view to these postures. After defining addiction as "[...] the continued use of alcohol and other drugs even when that use is causing harm [...]", they state the following:

"Other addictions have much in common with alcohol and other drug addiction. Addiction to gambling, sex, food, work, shopping, and nicotine

are motivated by the mood-altering nature of the activity and the craving for more. The addictive behavior progresses to loss of control over the need to repeat the experience, despite negative consequences” (Hazelden Foundation 2010 online).

Similarly, a scholar of Addiction Studies, Craig Nakken (1996), equates “addiction” to compulsive behavior and provides the following explanation:

“Nearly all human beings have a deep desire to feel happy and to find peace of mind and soul. At times in our lives, most of us find this wholeness of peace and beauty, but then it slips away, only to return at another time. When it leaves us, we feel sadness and even a slight sense of mourning. This is one of the natural cycles of life, and it’s not a cycle we can control.

To some extent, we can help these cycles along, but for the most part they’re uncontrollable—all of us must go through them. We can either accept these cycles and learn from them or fight them, searching instead for elusive happiness.

Addiction can be viewed as an attempt to control these uncontrollable cycles. When addicts use a particular substance or an event to produce a desired mood change, they believe they can control these cycles, and at first they can. Addiction, on its most basic level, is an attempt to control and fulfill this desire for happiness” (Nakken 1996:1).

He considers that there are three specific highs: arousal, satiation, and fantasy. And that these can be provided by a number of activities, which include but are not restricted to, drug and alcohol consumption, gambling, sexual acting out, spending, eating and stealing. Arousal causes sensations of intense, raw, unchecked power, satiation gives the feeling of being complete and beyond pain, and it numbs the sensations of pain and distress.

According to him addicts always want to “come first”. “Their wants are all important. Objects have no wants or needs; thus, in a relationship with an object the addict can always come first” (Nakken 1996:13).

Nakken (1996) contends that addiction represents an attempt to fulfill an emotional need

that has gone astray. He finds that all different events and objects that can lead to “addiction” have one thing in common: their ability to produce a pleasurable mood change (Nakken 1996:1).

When addressing the reason of why the Twelve Steps work, he talks about a drive of connection. He believes that human being motivation for any activity derives from four distinct drives: The drive for pleasure, the drive for power, the drive for meaning and resistance to this drive. He argues that within the realm of meaning we find feelings of “humanity”, a desire to be part of the community, abilities to build healthy relationships, self-respect and self-esteem. Within power we find a desire to be powerful, a desire to overcome that which will destroy us, and desire to control, lead, and a predator mentality. The realm of pleasure entails the desire and ability to feel pleasure, the desire to please and bring pleasure to others, the desire to live in a trance-like state, and the attraction to the concept of transformation (Nakken 1996:67).

But between the drives for power and for pleasure, and the drive for meaning there’s resistance, since many of the elements he finds within the two latter drives pose a direct threat to the meanings within the other drive. He considers that resistance towards meaning entails a belief that things are more important than meaning, a desire to be all-important, a fear of meaning and “truth”, a fear of change and of transformation and doubts, mistrust of others and of self (Ibid).

However, there’s another drive that he identifies. This is the mentioned drive for connection, which supersedes resistance toward meaning and therefore regulates the need for power and pleasure (Ibid).

His theory of why the program works is fairly simple, he argues that since addicts form relationships with objects as opposed to people, resistance to meaning destroys the drive for connection, and Twelve Steps simply restore this drive (Nakken 1996:91-96).

From a psychological perspective the model may provide a plausible explanation. However from an anthropological perspective there are some elements that need to be addressed. For example, it would seem that the model considers its definitions of addiction to be “universal”, using concepts as happiness, peace of soul, as if they were embedded with the same meanings in all human societies.

His cycles are also completely filled with cultural notions; meanings of transformation and change depend heavily on the context on which they are observed. The need for pleasure and power could be argued to be “universal”, however the forms of how these are obtained and the activities that provide pleasure are relative within distinct societies. A British citizen may find pleasure in shopping or driving a sports car, but a member of another social group may not. The notion of a healthy relationship is also used, which varies not only from society to society but it could even be argued to vary immensely between individuals. In the words of Anthropologist Mark P. Whitaker (2007), who speaking about the conventional cultural relativism that American or British Anthropologists use in their studies, he states [...] insofar as there are behavioral differences between various populations of people. These differences are a result of cultural sometimes (societal) variation rather than anything else. (Whitaker 2007:478).

But what is of most important consideration is his categorization of what the drive for meaning entails. His approach is so specific that he even enumerates the fundamental notions of what a “meaningful life” is. I agree very much so with his definitions, but that does not mean that I’m willing to concede that everyone does. Meaning of life, self-respect, self-esteem, and the way the community is envisioned, varies categorically when comparing, “modern” to “feudal”, capitalist to socialist, and individualistic to holistic.

Although the two mentioned perspectives disagree on how to approach “addiction” academically, they all agree in one sense, “addiction” is compulsive behavior that translates into harm,

“Addiction leads to consequences in some or all of these areas of life: social, emotional, financial, legal, health, employment, family, and school. Problems in these areas of your life can be symptoms of the disease of addiction. Other major warning signs include craving for the drug, increase in tolerance, preoccupation with the drug, loss of control, blackouts, and all forms of denial: blame, excuses, rationalization, and minimization” (Hazelden 2010 online).

The first notion sticks to chemical dependence for a reason, by trying to amplify the definition; academics get entangled within a realm of relativity. And so, by taking away the

variable of chemicals, and allowing all other compulsive behaviors to be catalogued under addiction, only two variables are left: 1) a compulsive behavior, that leads to 2) harm. Harm is described in the most varied manner, social, emotional, financial, legal, health, employment, family and academics. So, could an individual who engages in compulsively in an activity that will permanently damage the environmental conditions his own children existence, be considered as an addict? From this perspective it would be hard to argue that his compulsive behavior does not translate into “family” harm. And, what about social harm? How many activities within consumerist production, could be argued to produce social harm?

Many activities that could also be considered compulsive by the same definitions, but are considered to be culturally acceptable, as for example the indiscriminate accumulation of money, when all material needs have been met (for various generations), are not included within the realm of addictions or compulsive behaviors.

It can also be concretely observed within the statements of Oliver, a member of Alcoholics Anonymous that I had the opportunity to interview, that his sense of “not-belonging” to his respective society has followed him through his entire life:

“I felt I never had approval before [...] I never had any kind of feedback in that sense. I did not know what was wrong or right. But in reality it was not about approval, why was I seeking approval? I felt something inside me that told me that something inside me was wrong. I felt this since I can remember, since I was a little kid. I kept pulling these feelings for my whole life, and carrying this feeling made me insecure and by making me insecure and wanted to put a mask to fit in what is known as “the establishment”; those unwritten rules that I could sense somehow. You have to dress in some way, talk in some way, walk in some way. If you want to win a girl's heart you have to be some way. But I never felt comfortable because I wasn't being myself. I was trying my best to be a part of this, and I felt that in the near future people would accept me” (Oliver 2010 personal interview).

And finally, what is of most interest is that these consumption patterns are described as medical and psychological pathologies (US Department of Labour 2010 online), which of course implies that they are considered as universal.

3.2 Culture and Addiction

However, and even though the term lies within cultural boundaries, an interesting fact is that even within the “Western” definition of “addiction”, the phenomenon is not universal. By this I mean *this specific phenomenon whether social or pathological, is not observed in every social group.*

3.2.1 *The Biwat of New Guinea and their Relationship with Betel*

A very interesting example is Dr. Pamela Watson’s ethnographic study of the Biwat of New Guinea *Does Abundant Supply of Drugs Lead to Heavy Consumption* (1991), which had, as an original intent, to determine if there is a relationship between the availability of drugs within a social context, and the harmful abuse of these substances by the members of the community in question.

The Biwat are a Sepik River society that depends economically on the production of betel (*Areca catechu*) and to a lesser extent tobacco. The Biwat population is numbered at about 1200 individuals. They inhabit four villages located on the banks of the Yuat River (Watson 1991 online). Within the community, drug crops are replacing food crops as the major agricultural and economic activity. According to Watson (1991) the reproduction of their social life is very much so dependent on these economic practices (Watson 1991 online). “Biwat people say that work has replaced head-hunting as a high prestige activity, and for this reason betel production is important, in its own right, in establishing leadership. Ownership of vast numbers of betel palms is living evidence of an individual’s capacity to work hard, to generate cash and to participate in Papua New Guinea development” (Ibid).

Betel is a highly addictive natural stimulant of the nervous system that “is a common drug of intoxication in Taiwan, India and the Pacific” (Osborne 2010 online). “Small doses result in a euphoric feeling, copious red saliva and an increased flow of energy. Larger doses produce a sedative effect in which reaction time slows markedly” (Watson 1991 online). According to Watson (1991), the Biwat need 100 palms to supply personal consumption needs. Nevertheless, every family plants an approximate of 5000, which results in a great amount of surplus. However, drug consumption is extremely moderate. Watson (1991)

reports that for within the three months in which she was engaged in participatory observation within the Biwat community, she noted only four occasions in which betel use “[...] produced marked alteration in levels of consciousness among adults” (Watson 1991 online). She also reports that at times adults complained about feelings of laziness, and that children and young adults may chew betel without censure, but addiction as described by “Western” parameters was absent. “Addiction is usually indicated by anxiety about continuity of supply and I saw no signs of this among the extended family with which I lived” (Watson Ibid).

Since controlling the supply of betel is not a possibility within the community because of economic reasons, she concludes that cause of this lack of compulsive consumption, is due to the cultural conceptions that the Biwat have regarding betel consumption. The Biwat are aware of the different effects that large amounts of betel ingestion have in opposition of small amounts, and betel consumption is welcomed and associated with an increased ability to work; however betel drunkenness is frowned upon (Watson 1991 online). Accordingly, the Biwat, unlike other Papua New Guinea communities, do not use betel in dispute settlement, in death or marriage ceremonies, in invitations, sorcery or love magic, which according to Watson (1991), seems to contribute to the moderation of their betel consumption (Ibid).

I am not, of course, implying that addiction is purely a “Western” phenomena, but rather, that there may be some social, and even cultural elements at play. We can see phenomena that would squarely fit within the “Western” concept of “addiction” in non-“Western” societies. For example, the consequences of opium consumption in China used by the East India Company as a weapon of trade war (Zoja 2000:34). However, psychologist and anthropologist Luigi Zoja (2000) notes that, “[...] drug consumption in so-called primitive societies is often quantitatively limited and qualitatively sheltered from abuse of individual pathologies” (Zoja 2000:7).

3.2.2 A Search for the Sacred or Hiding from Reality

The above-mentioned theorist proposes an interesting argument in favor of cultural factors influencing addiction. He argues that, in large part, compulsive consumption behavior in “Western” capitalist society can be attributed to a resurgence of the collective need for

initiation and initiatory structures: a desire for sacredness underlies our culture's manic drive toward excessive consumption (Ibid).

After a thorough trans-cultural analysis of the etymological origins of words related to addictive substances, Zoja (2000) concludes that an “outline of an unconscious collective paradigm or of a possible archetypal framework”, may be present. “Etymologically speaking “addiction’ is a phenomenon not automatically connected with *substances*, but with the ultimate corruption of substances who expect archetypal, magical, ritual, and esoteric results from them” (Zoja 2000:29).

Zoja distinguishes three main components of addiction:

“First, and varying in importance with the relative potency of the drug, there appears to be a physical, organic habit formation in the user.

Second, There develops a psychological habit, which tends to transform itself into a kind of conditioning, especially when individual codes of behavior are reinforced by a group and vice-versa.

Third, the presence of a para-religious element (we might also define this element as the ‘sacred’) which unlike the other two elements is neither acquired nor culturally conditioned but is rather an archetypal tendency. This element would be responsible for the spontaneous formation of rituals and for the drug addict’s tendency towards esoteric” (Zoja 2000:31).

According to him, and even though he mentions that this last element is not “culturally conditioned”, and therefore sustains that it is inherent to human beings, the cultural absence of these naturally needed initiation rituals, are behind the causes for addiction. He argues that, in a society without ritual, the drug addict seeks not so much the thrill of a high as the satisfaction of an inner need for a participation mystique in the dominant religion of our times: consumerism. For him initiation represents a passage from the profane to the sacred, however; above all it represents a “[...] persistent desire for personal regeneration [...] [And that] all things considered, the modern society is unable to provide institutional initiation” (Zoja 2000:3).

His theoretical approach to addiction and compulsive behavior based on a desire of the “sacred”, a desire of “initiation” that “modern society is unable to provide, seems interesting and plausible considering the spiritual characteristics of the “Twelve-Step program”, in which many individuals have found the solution to their addictive behavior.

Also, it could be argued that the characteristics of the “Twelve-Step program” provide this desired initiation in the form that Zoja describes it: “a passage from the profane to the sacred, and self regeneration” (Zoja 2000:2). Nevertheless, I believe that his approach leads us to a very complicated field of subjectivity, since it assumes that a desire for the sacred is somewhat embedded within human nature. Without getting into such specific terms, it can be agreed with Zoja (2000) that some kind of unfulfilled need does seem to be at play.

This being said, it is also not difficult to agree with his approach regarding the cultural factor, and the characteristics he awards those that are prone to compulsive behavior. He considers that those in need of the “sacred” the potential “adepts” may be individuals with complex personalities who are “[...] unsatisfied by the rules and truths of society. More often than not, he is a person in search of fellowship, and his search is not for ordinary persons, but for ‘masters’” (Zoja 2000:3). He is acknowledging that in order for addictive behavior to be present, there must be some kind of social in-satisfaction.

It is quite logical to assume that in order to cope with anxiety derived out of social problematic individuals will resort to drugs, alcohol or other means that may turn into compulsive activities. For example, in a compilation of essays edited by Jordan Goodman, Paul E. Lovejoy, and Andrew Sherrat (2005), Andrew Sherrat comments on Piero Camporesi (1989), who describes how in early modern Italy, fear of famine drove people to eat in abundance, “[...] especially of bread. But that bread was often adulterated, or even infected with ergo; and in any case, to stave off hunger, starving villagers ate a variety of mind-numbing herbs, while hunger itself produced hallucinations” (Sherrat 2005:3). According to Camporesi (1989), psychoactive substance usage in every culture may have hedonistic purposes; it can also be permeated with meanings and rituals; “[...] others were as always, the remedies of the desperate” (Camporesi cited in Sherrat 2005:3).

In Paul Roch Kretch’s article, *Envisioning a Healthy Future: A Re-becoming of Native*
40

American Men (2002), the author concretely exemplifies the point that is being argued. Roch Kretch argues that indigenous people in North America have learned to survive the “modern” world, and have attempted to gain a ‘limited foothold’ by “denying their ‘Indian-ness’”. This denial

“[...] greatly diminishes the reward and opportunity once offered to sustain a time-honored way of life and personal meaning-making. Without this rudimentary sense of usefulness and purpose, many Native men have turned to harmful chemical and behavioral addictions of as a means of either escaping hopelessness or maintaining the illusion of control” (Kretch 2002 online).

Roch Kretch (2002) argues that “Native Americans” lose the purpose of life once offered by their traditional cultural notions of existence and connection to their surroundings, within alcohol, they find something to look forward to in life” (Rock Krech 2002 online).”

In American society, there is a high propensity of “Native-Americans” to engage in addictive behaviour. According, to the U.S Department of Health,

“American Indians/Alaska Natives also have a high prevalence and risk factors for *mental health and suicide, obesity, substance abuse*, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), teenage pregnancy, liver disease, and hepatitis [...] Rates of illicit drug use are higher among American Indians and Alaska Natives (9.9 percent) than other major racial/ethnic groups. Alcohol abuse is prevalent among AI/AN youth and drinkers over 26 years old, and the use of tobacco among Indian youth has reached alarming rates” (Emphasis PSW) (US Department of Health and Human Services 2010 online).

Various studies have argued that “Native-American” alcoholism may be related to genetic causes. But then, are we to assume that tobacco-use, mental health, compulsive overeating that results in obesity and suicide tendencies are genetic related as well? All the mentioned health problems that according to the US Department of Health (2002), Native Americans are more prone to, are related to stress coping (liver disease and hepatitis are common amongst alcoholics).

The study of “addiction” leads us to question the very fundamentals of consumerist cultural

behavior and consumerist culturally embedded premises. Without a trans-cultural comparison that separates us from the idea that any observed behavior is “normal” or universal, “addiction” cannot be neither properly addressed, nor defined.

To step away from considerations that do not take cultural relativity into account, and define what is it that “Twelve-Step philosophy” entails from an anthropological perspective, a through analysis of consumption in mass-consumerist economies is of essential importance. In order to “take the bull by the horns” as it is commonly said in Hispanic societies, it important to analyze what “mainstream” economists have to say about the matter. As Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood state in their classic anthropological essay concerning consumption, *The World of Goods* (1996), “If there is to be any useful insight from anthropology for the theory of consumption, the eager anthropologist has to plunge into the trap-bestrewn forest, the most recondite area of demand theory, and try to see if any of the problems which interest economists there is likely to yield a new approach (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:68).”

3.3 Consumerism

3.3.1 Contemporary Economics

Contemporary Economics, more specifically referred to for the purpose of the present study as “mainstream economics”, place consumption and consumers as the most important element in terms of agency. In order to justify my last statement a focus in the theory of offer and demand, which acts as base for economic studies, must be done.

“Because it is impossible to describe the features of [...] markets in complete detail, economists have chosen to abstract from the complexities of the real world and to develop rather simple models that capture the “essentials”. Just as a road map is helpful even though it does not record every house or every store, economic models of say, the market for peanuts are also very helpful even though they do not record every minute feature of the peanut economy” (Nicholson 2006:3).

There is a wide variety of models within “mainstream economics” that attempt to explain different economic phenomena, nevertheless according to Nicholson (2006) all of these

share three common elements: "(1) the *ceteris paribus* (other things the same) assumption; (2) the supposition that economic decision makers seek to optimize something; and (3) a careful distinction between "positive" and "normative" questions" (Nicholson 2006:5).

The *ceteris paribus* assumption can be literally translated from Latin into "with other things the same," or "all other things being equal or held constant." It basically assumes that all variables except those that are under immediate consideration are held constant.

The careful distinction between "positive" and "normative" questions refers to an attempt of mainstream economics to step away from subjective valorizations of where the resources should be allocated. In other words, a "normative question" or a "normative theory" of economics would be one that takes a definitive stance about what "*should* be done". *Positive* theories, or scientific theories "[...] take the real world as an object to be studied attempting to explain those economic phenomena that are observed. Positive economics seeks to determine how resources are *in fact* allocated in an economy" (Nicholson 2006:7).

Nevertheless, the most important aspect of mainstream economics is the second mentioned characteristic, the assumption that decision makers seek to optimize something. This is related to "Rational Choice" theory. The mentioned theory can in very simple terms be described as the belief that a subject of analysis will act based on a balance between **costs** and **benefits** or rewards, pursuing a maximization of advantage, or maximization of their own well being (utility).

"In rational choice theories, individuals are seen as motivated by the wants or goals that express their 'preferences'. They act within specific, given constraints and on the basis of the information that they have about the conditions under which they are acting. At its simplest, the relationship between preferences and constraints can be seen in the purely technical terms of the relationship of a means to an end. As it is not possible for individuals to achieve all of the various things that they want, they must also make choices in relation to both their goals and the means for attaining these goals. Rational choice theories hold that individuals must anticipate the outcomes of alternative courses of action and calculate that which will

be best for them. Rational individuals choose the alternative that is likely to give them the greatest satisfaction” (Heath, Carling and Coleman cited in Scott 2000:129).

According to Nicholson “Rational Choice” theory is composed of three basic axioms, completeness, transitivity, and continuity (Nicholson 2006:69-70).

Completeness: If the agent is presented with two possibilities, he will come to one of the following conclusion regarding his preferences: Either one of the possibilities is preferable than the other, or the both are equally attractive to him.

Other theorists (Tversky and Kahneman 1987:68-70) also add the axiom of *dominance* in addition to completeness. In which if an option is preferred to another in one state and it is similar or at least of the same value to the economic or social agent in another state, then the dominant option will always be chosen. “Rational Choice” assumes economic agents will not be “paralyzed with indecision”, and will always decide the prefer ability of one of the choices presented to them. “The assumption also rules out the possibility that an individual can report both that A is preferred to B and that B is preferred to A” (Ibid).

Transitivity: Refers to the logical continuation of choice. If an economic agent prefers choice A to choice B and choice C to choice A, it is logical to assume that he prefers choice C to choice A. Nicholson states that the mentioned assumption has been subjected to empirical study in many occasions and that “[...] generally such studies conclude that a person’s choices are indeed transitive”. However, he also clarifies that these conclusions “[...] must be modified in cases where the individual may not fully understand the consequences of the choices he or she is making.”

Continuity or Invariance: If a social agent prefers option A to option B then it is assumed that options that are similar or resemble A will be preferred from B. Economists to use the mentioned assumption to analyze the response of individuals in small changes concerning prices and their personal income. However, Nicholson considers that “[...] assuming continuity does not seem to run the risk of missing types of economic behavior that are important in the real world” (Nicholson 2006:70).

When these three axioms are present it is possible then to rank the options that economic and social agents regards as valuable from “[...] the least desirable to the most.”

Following the terminology of political theorist Jeremy Bentham (1907: 2), this ranking is termed by mainstream economists as utility. Even though a whole thesis may be elaborated on the subject of “Rational Choice”, for the matter of the present work, the previous explanation will suffice to understand the main concept behind the theory as well as some critical arguments against it, that will be mentioned latter.

The final most important characteristic of “mainstream economics” is the theory employed for price or *value* determination. “The study of this subject is at the center of modern microeconomic theory and is closely intertwined with the fundamental economic problem of allocating scarce resources” (Nicholson 2006:8). Developed by Alfred Marshall (1920), the theory of demand and supply solved problems that earlier theoretical attempts to determine value (like the Labor theory of exchange value) (Ricardo 1821) (Marx 1984), could not address; like for example, the water diamond paradox. Early economists could not solve the problem that the difference in value from water in regards to diamonds. Water was a most useful good, and diamonds were not, however these had a much greater value in terms of exchange. The labor theory argued that water had no cost in production and diamonds did, nevertheless it did not solve the issue of goods that were exchanged at higher prices than others, even though the latter did not require so much labor for their production. By considering that demand and supply operate simultaneously in order to establish price, the water diamond paradox was solved (Nicholson 2006:10).

Two economic “laws” are the main conceptual elements of the mentioned theory. As its name implies, these are the law of demand and the law of supply. According to economist David Henderson (2010) from Stanford University, the law of demand is the notion that economists “[...] are most sure of”, and that, “[...] on this law is built almost the whole edifice of economics” (Henderson 2010 online). The law in itself operates in a very simple manner; it basically states that when the price of a good increased, all things being equal, then the demand for this good with decrease. If the opposite happens the demand will rise.

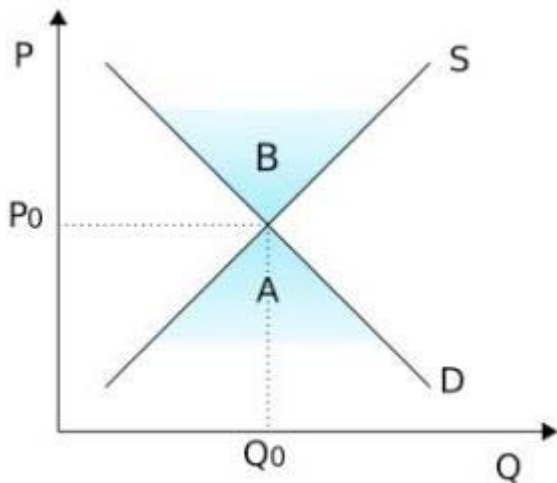
Henderson (2010) talks about various instances in which as the price of a good rises, the demand rises as well, however, he also states than most economists would regard these incidents as a violation to the *ceteris paribus* assumption, and that another circumstance is

at play. A very famous example cited by the author is one that concerns a famous car wax that was originally introduced to the market at a initial price of \$.69, and it faced “strong resistance”, until the price was increased by a dollar, time at which demand for the product soared (Ibid). Economist Thomas Nagle (1987) effectively argued the presence of a circumstance that altered the *ceteris paribus* assumption. This consisted on the assumption that “[...] because the quality of this particular product was so important—a bad product could ruin a car’s finish—consumers ‘played it safe by avoiding cheap products that they believed were more likely to be inferior’” (Nagle cited in Henderson 2010).

In order to solve other skeptical approaches to the law of demand, like for example the reasoning that no matter how high the price of water is to rise, the demand of water will never cease, there’s the concept of elasticity. Elasticity refers to those products that because of characteristics concerning consumption, economic agents are reluctant to decrease demand even if the prices rise. Nevertheless, even in elastic goods there is a change in demand. And, Henderson (2010) argues that if the costs of water availability rise, consumers will probably “cutback” from water consumption in other ways, like “[...] do[ing] larger loads of laundry or shower quickly instead of bath[ing]” (Henderson (2010 online)). The law is held so high by mainstream economists that Nobel laureate George Stigler (1966) commented that if “[...] a true counterexample, he would be “assured of immortality, professionally speaking, and rapid promotion” (Stigler cited in Henderson 2010).

This law in itself is also related to the theory of “Rational Choice”. Since price is considered a cost, then the logical conclusion following “Rational Choice” is that as costs of a certain activity, in this case the purchase of a product increase, the balance between costs and benefits, or utility, in which social agents engage when considering a choice, will be affected.

In turn, the law of supply works in exactly the opposite sense; it states “[...] the quantity of a good supplied (i.e., the amount owners or producers offer for sale) rises as the market price rises, and falls as the price falls” (Ehrbar 2010 online).



The theory operates in the following manner: the price of a product is determined by a balance between the quantities of a determined good or commodity supplied by producers and the quantity desired, and therefore, demanded by consumers. This will result in equilibrium between price and quantity. Generally, when demand exceeds supply prices of a particular item or service are generally higher and when supply exceeds demand, prices of a particular item or service are lower (Ehrbar 2010 online).

The most important factor that mainstream economists argue must be present in case the market is to regulate itself in terms of effectiveness based in theoretical considerations of “Rational Choice”, is competitive circumstances. “The underlying assumption is that through competition the actions of individual agents are subject to feedback that forces them either to become effective or to withdraw from such actions” (Hogarth and Reder 1987:6). They assume that if they prove to be ineffective then they will hire or require other agents to act in their behalf. Errors in the market would be corrected by means of feedback from the circumstances of competition, or the market would itself prove to make up for these errors as efficient agents take advantage of them and present rational alternatives, therefore eliminating those agents that do not act rationally within the same market. This is also the reason that economists do not have interest in modeling agents that do not act rationally, “[...] since they believe that these agents will not survive the market” (Ibid). Concerning prices and quality of products they assume that, even though producers have the incentive to elevate their prices “[...] they are limited by the law of demand: if producers insist on a higher price, consumers will buy fewer units” (Ehrbar 2010 online). And the same applies to consumers since; the law of supply limits them as well. Concerning labor, they assume that “higher the wage rate, the higher the quantity of labor supplied, because it makes sense that people will be willing to work more when they

are paid more (Ibid).” Al Ehrbar (2010) even cites an empirical study done by Finis Welch (1999), where this has been proven to be correct (Welch 1999).

Up to the moment the theory seems to address questions regarding value. But what about the production costs, labor, prime material, etc? How are these included in the price? According to mainstream economics where do these fit the model?

It’s actually very simple. In order to explain it, the definition of cost used by “mainstream” economists must be analyzed. Based on the idea of opportunity cost, which is defined as “[...] the next-best choice available to someone who has picked between several mutually exclusive choices” (Buchanan 1987:718). Nicholson (2006) defines economic costs in the following manner:

“The *economic cost* of any input is the payment required to keep that input in present employment. Equivalently, the economic cost of an input the remuneration the input would receive in its best alternative employment” (Nicholson 2006:8). In other words, the economic cost represents two things, the monetary cost that involves a decision, and the cost opportunity, that this decision implies. For example: Going to college, represents in terms of cost, the monetary cost of tuition and living expenses, plus the cost of not being able to work for that time, as well other personal costs like losing being away from your loved one’s, etc.

So, in order for a product to be economically viable, consumers have to be willing to pay for the costs of production, which are theoretically included in the price, as well as other costs that are implied in their decision. According to “Rational Choice”, if consumers do not find that the benefit or utility that a product will provide them does not surpass the payment of costs of production the product is not economically viable. Producing the product is not worth it. The possibility of production lies in the value that consumers award goods. It is implied in “Rational Choice” theory that when a consumer chooses a product he is aware of the implications of his choice, or in other words of the costs of his decision. And, it is precisely here that mainstream economics give consumers a high degree of economic agency, since they are the one’s, who in the end, decide if or not to pay for the costs of production.

What about the notion that the market, in optimal circumstances, will regulate economic activity in terms of effectiveness? Even though “Rational Choice” theory is very controversial, Walter Nicholson (2006) states that one of the reasons of its widespread acceptance is their “apparent empirical validity. As some of our extensions show, such models seem to be fairly good at explaining reality” (Nicholson 2006:6). According to two psychologists, Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, (1987) three powerful arguments are constantly used to answer questions regarding questions of lack of agent rationality and the theory of rational choice. The answers, they argue, always come formulated in one of these three arguments: the mentioned issues are, either “(i) restricted to insignificant problems, (ii) quickly eliminated by learning, or (iii) irrelevant to economics because of the corrective function of market forces” (Tversky and Kahneman 1987:89).

“It is important to note that economists accept the fact that economic agents, like ordinary people, are subject to errors and inconsistencies in decision making. However, the fallibilities of economic agents are assumed to be a random rather than a systematic nature. That is, since agents who make systematic errors would be exploited by other agents and eventually forced to withdraw from the market, they would no longer be subject of economic enquiry” (Hogarth and Reder 1987:6).

I have found some data published by the National Geographic magazine, that shows the status of the world today, and some consequences consumption in the USA, arguably the “emblematic” consumer driven economy:

“-Food waste has risen along with production and consumption. Discarded by grocers, restaurants and individuals, food waste is prevalent in American society.

-27% of food available for consumption in the US is discarded.

-20 million people could be fed each day if 25% of discarded US food was recovered.

-The U.S. consumes 23 percent of the world's energy though we constitute only 5 percent of the world's population.

-If everyone consumed like Americans, we'd need 5.4 Earths to sustain us. In contrast, Indians need only 0.4 of an Earth to sustain their consumption patterns, though this may certainly shift as their middle class continues to grow

-By 2010, 50 million people may be displaced by environmental disasters

-Farming and ranching guzzle 64 percent of the world's water while more than a billion people worldwide lack access to a safe water supply

-In the US 20% of the labor force works in the food industry, agriculture employs only 2%" (National Geographic: 2009).

Can't we consider these to be as costs as well? Why aren't they being solved by rational economic agents and their decisions? "Mainstream" economic theory does have a place for these costs, it analyses this phenomenon in the form of a variable to be considered in economic formulas. The term used in this context of economic theory is "externalities".

An externality is considered "a problem that may interfere with the allocational efficiency of a competitive market" (Nicholson 2005:585). From an economic perspective an externality is cost that has a "direct effect on the well-being of other's that is outside direct market channels" (Nicholson 2005:586). All effects not reflected in the market prices are considered externalities from an economic perspective, toxic waste disposal, jet plane noise, poor working conditions, etc. "An externality occurs whenever the activities of one economic agent affect the activities of another agent in ways that are not considered in market transactions" (Nicholson 2005:587). The market prices of today's economy are "fundamentally inaccurate, leading to misallocation of resources" (Nicholson 2005:586). For products to reflect within their price the true cost of their production, externalities, the implications of their production, as well as the implications of their disposal, would have to be considered. From an economic perspective, almost everything has an economic effect, from the depleting of natural resources, to the macroeconomic benefits of health care; therefore, most products placed on the market don't include all the cost of their production. For example, a Coca-Cola can that includes the full cost of its production in its price would have been pricier, since it would include its costs of disposal.

As it will be demonstrated empirically in the present work, the issue of externalities challenges severely the assumption that in a free market system, the market itself will regulate the economy through the rational actions of the economic agents. Two issues arise, issues that will be part of the main arguments of the present work:

1) The first one is that, since “Rational Choice” “[...] denies the existence of any kinds of action other than the purely rational and calculative”, and “[...] all social action, it is argued, can be seen as rationally motivated, as instrumental action, however much it may appear to be irrational or non-rational” (Scott 2010:126), and therefore, does not take into account the value that economic agents give to costs, if a social agent is in complete and absolute knowledge and complete and absolute consciousness of an external cost of the product that translates into an outcome that will affect the efficient allocation of resources, but does not value these costs and therefore buys the product, according to rational theory he would still be acting rationally. Various cultural issues may be at hand, and the meanings that consumer culture gives to commodities are a very important issue related to this point.

2) Secondly, it is also assumed by “Rational Choice” that the economic agent has the capacity to evaluate all the costs that imply his decisions concerning economic activity. Nevertheless, in the course of the present work, we have elaborated a study that clearly demonstrates, that in today’s consumer driven economies, there is a systemic phenomena that impedes consumers from evaluating these costs.

According with Douglas and Isherwood (1996), demand theory sits at “the very center” of economics, and from a following the previous analysis their following statement seems to be accurate: It is, “extraordinary that no one knows why people want goods [...]”, and that economists “[...] carefully shun the question [...]” (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:3). Tastes and the reasons behind choices are treated as a given, however these sit behind the all-encompassing theory of demand “that is used to explain everything else”, from changes in price to changes in income. In order to discover if a relationship between consumerism, and addiction is present, these “given” variables have to be analyzed according to meaning. The studies of two anthropological theorists are of particular importance: These are Marshal Sahlins (1976, 2004) and Jean Baudrillard (1988).

3.3.2 Economic Value equals Cultural Value: Jean Baudrillard and Marshall Sahlins

It is probable that if a group of extraterrestrial anthropologists came to earth to study our cultures, they would have a hard time explaining why there's a whole society of economic agents, that every two years, are willing to go through the trouble of, and assume the economic costs (which basically represents spending more than eight hours a day engaging in an activity that they dislike), of changing a higher priced transport vehicle for the one they currently own; when the latter has absolutely the same use-value that the new one. A completely "rationalistic" approach does not seem to provide an answer to this question. If use-value and exchange-value is not observed in the above-mentioned transaction, what constitutes the benefit valued by economic agents, in the mentioned case? These two authors offer an explanation: symbolism, meaning.

3.3.2.1 Sahlins

In *Culture and Practical Reason* Sahlins (1976) addresses what he considered to be an erroneous traditional distinction between "primitive" and "modern" societies that considered, that in the latter, "culture is precipitated from the rational activity of individuals pursuing their own best interests" (Sahlins 1976:1). Which in turn is a strong critique to the idea of the *economic rational man*, and to rational choice theory, or in Sahlins terms utilitarian theories.

He approaches the social sciences from all perspectives; Marxism, functionalism and structuralism, in order to argument in favor of his position and criticize those approaches the present a counter argument. The base of his argument is the power that culture has as a motivator for human economic behavior, as opposed to economic and biological determination.

According to Sahlins (1976), reason alone cannot explain human action, and modern society and therefore modern economics, cannot be understood without consideration of the meanings and the symbols that constitute this culture and therefore the goods produced within the cultural context. "[By] conceiving the creation and movement of goods solely for their pecuniary quantities (exchange-value), one ignores the concrete code of properties governing 'utility' and so remains unable to account for what is in fact produced" (Sahlins 1976:166). Sahlins (1976) asks himself, what it is that makes capitalist societies

different from so-called “primitive” societies and he later concludes that no substantial distinction is really observable in terms of rationality: capitalist societies are just as symbolically constituted (i.e., totemic) as primitive societies. It is just that our totems are intrinsically connected to bourgeois modes of production rather than kinship systems.

“The alternatives in this venerable conflict between utilitarianism and cultural account may be broadly phrased as follows: whether the cultural order is to be conceived as the codification of man’s actual purposeful and pragmatic action; or whether, conversely, human action in the world is to be understood as mediated by cultural design, which gives order at once to practical experience, customary practice, and the relationship between the two” (Sahlins 1976:55).

In the chapter preceding his conclusions, Sahlins (1976) then examines preferences related to clothing and food within “Western”/Capitalist culture, to exemplify his proposed relationship between culture and value. Of particular interest are his references to the particular cultural notions that govern the American diet.

“The exploitation of the American environment, the mode of relation to the landscape, depends on a model of a meal that includes a central meat element with the peripheral support of carbohydrates and vegetable-while the centrality of the meat, which is also a notion of its “strength,” evokes the masculine pole of a sexual code of food which must go back to the Indo-European identification of cattle or increasable wealth with virility” (Sahlins 1976:171).

Since meat is conceptualized culturally, in the after-mentioned manner there is a “corresponding structure of agricultural production of feed grains” (Ibid). Now, this economic phenomenon depends complexly on these “Western” cultural notions related to meat consumption. The American economy, and therefore the World’s economy would have dramatic changes, if American’s awarded the same value that they award meat consumption to the ingestion of dogs (Ibid).

3.3.2.2 Baudrillard

Baudrillard (2001) takes a similar stance on the cultural value of goods, his main interests lie within the systemic aspect of consumption. However, he approaches a specific characteristic of mass consumer culture that for the purpose of the present work proves to be highly effective in the development of this work's theoretical framework.

He mainly focuses in the relationship that exists between “needs” and symbolism in consumer driven economies. He begins his argument by stating that consumption is not related with the need of the product, but rather what the product represents, “[...] all consumption is the consumption of symbolic signs” (Baudrillard cited Bocoock 1993:67). In other words, he argues that needs have little to do with concrete products, “[...] nor with particular individual desires for particular individual objects” (Baudrillard cited in Corrigan 1997:19).

He also begins by critiquing the notion of the *homo economicus*, in which it is assumed that economic agents have a certain relationship with an object: for some reason the agent is attracted to the object, because the particular commodity will provide him with certain “satisfaction”. For Baudrillard, it seems that, from a mainstream economy point of view, these needs are assumed either to be innate, or unexplainable, “[...] they just are. If these needs are innate then there's no reason for them to expand” (Baudrillard cited Corrigan 1997:19). Nevertheless, there are needs that can be observed in today's context, that are not observed in other periods of “Western” civilization, or in other cultures for that matter. His conclusion is that needs are not located within the context of the individual. So the question arises, what then, is the origin of such these mentioned “needs”? Well, in agreement with many of the theorists we have quoted before, he theorizes that these needs are to originate from the symbolic meanings that are awarded to them by the capitalist system, in particular through marketing and advertising. “The meanings (of this signs) are generated within the system of signs/symbols which engages the attention of the consumer” (Baudrillard cited in Bocoock 1993:67). He strongly argues that in this sense the system is somewhat dictatorial, since the needs of the consumers do not derive from

themselves, but rather they are an imposition, produced by the same entities that produce the commodities that these needs are directed to.

“The truth is not that ‘needs are the fruit of production’, but that the *system of needs is the system of production*, which is quite a different matter. By a system of needs we mean to imply that needs are not produced one at a time, in relation to their respective objects. Needs are produced as a *force of consumption*, and as a general potential reserve within the larger framework of productive forces.” (Baudrillard cited in Corrigan 1997:20).

This argument can be conceptualized in the following way: it is not that producers through their marketing and advertisement strategies, engage in the production of needs towards specific goods, but rather that they engage in the production of a desire of needs in themselves. This is the reason why, at many times, it can be observed how the anticipation “[...] of consuming is frequently experienced as more enjoyable than the act of consumption itself” (Baudrillard cited in Bocoock 1993:68).

The previous arguments lead to the revolutionary idea that the consumption of certain article is not motivated by the promise of satisfaction of a need that the article was produced to satisfy. There are those who may argue that this is non-sense, since the purchase of an automobile is obviously directed at the satisfaction of a need of transportation. But if the last mentioned premise is considered to be true, then the following question needs to be answered: why would someone buy an automobile with the same characteristics of use-value, and assume a higher economic cost? Or why would someone buy an automobile destined for urban transportation, when public transportation (subway, buses, etc.) represents lesser costs in terms of money and time? It can be assumed that it is not the usefulness of the product, what drives the consumers desires but rather a “[...] certain degree of comfort or prestige [...] Social differentiation becomes the name of the game, and here there is no way to limit needs in any rational-utilitarian manner” (Corrigan 1997:20). Or in Baudrillard’s (2001) own words:

“[...]There are no limits to consumption. If it was that, which it is naively taken to be, absorption, a devouring, then we should achieve satisfaction. But we know that is not the case: we want to consume more and more. This compulsion to consume is not the consequence

of some psychological determinant etc., nor is put simply the power of emulation. If consumption appears to be irrepressible, this is because it is total idealist practice which has no longer anything to do (beyond a certain point) with satisfaction of needs, nor with the reality principle; [...] hence, the desire to moderate consumption, or to establish a normalizing network of needs, is naive and absurd moralism” (Baudrillard, cited in Bocoock 1993:68).

And then there’s the final and most interesting aspect of Baudrillard’s (2001) theoretical approach, the revolutionary way in which he analyses the relationship between symbolic consumption and labor, with regards to production. Since, consumption is not related to a large degree with subsistence, it deepens labor discipline through the creation of need, it is the logical step in the development of mass commodity production:

“[...] under subsistence conditions, one cannot be manipulated by ever increasing consumptions demands and so cannot be exploited as a force of consumption. Beyond subsistence, however, consumption forces people into an economizing and controlled labor force if they want to be able to live as proper consumers” (Corrigan 1997:20).

So, in other words, consumerists are the slaves of their own cultural created desires, of their created system of symbols and meaning. *“The system of needs is the product of the system of production”* (Baudrillard 2001:45).

3.4 Consumerism as Culture: My Precious Toys

Both the after-mentioned theorists concluded that exchange-value and use-value are not plausible concepts to describe value. Sahlins (1976) considers that the traditional distinction between “primitive” and “modern” societies is erroneous, because both societies are “symbolically constituted” and that “Conceiving the creation and movement of goods solely for their pecuniary quantities (exchange-value), one ignores the concrete code of properties governing “utility” and so remains unable to account for what is in fact produced”. Baudrillard approached “needs”, in a similar way, and concluded that these are not located within the context of the individual, but rather that they originate from the symbolic meanings that are awarded to them by the capitalist system (See Chapter 3.3.2).

So basically according to both these authors, value is a socio-cultural construction. Sklair (2002) defines consumerism as a culture and describes it in the following way: “the culture-ideology of consumerism is characterized by a belief that ‘the meaning of life is to be found in the things that we possess. To consume, therefore, is to be fully alive, and to remain fully alive we must continuously consume” (Sklair cited in Goodman 2007:344).

Nevertheless, there are those who ask themselves if this previously defined “culture/ideology” is in fact a culture. “For some consumption must be cultural because it is meaningful, for others, the term consumer culture is an oxymoron - what the masses consume cannot be a true culture” (Goodman 2007:345). So in order to proceed with this work's argument, a definition of culture must be provided.

In the Routledge Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology, authors Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer (2007:136), basically evade the task of defining the latter, on account of the difficulty this task represents, when considering all the different stances on the subject that the different schools of thought, culturalists and structuralists have taken. However, they cite one of the initial approximations to the concept, Benedict's (1943):

“For culture is the sociological terms for learned behavior: behavior which is not determined by his germ cells as is behavior of wasps or the social ants, but must be learned anew from grown people each generation. The degree to which human achievements are dependent on this kind of learned behavior is man's great claim to superiority over all the rest of creation; he has been properly called ‘the culture-bearing animal” (Benedict cited in Barnard and Spencer 2007:139).

The after-mentioned definition has been subject of controversy all through the history of anthropology, nevertheless, it points out one of the elements that many other definitions have also awarded the concept: culture is not biologically determined, it must be learned. However we must also use the term to be able to speak holistically of different societies with confidence that we are “designating something real and differentially coherent” (Clifford cited in Goodman 2007:347).

“In this case we are talking about “[...] the beliefs and practices that make a group of people distinct [...] Culture here refers to a local relatively

coherent, self-contained set of norms, presuppositions and practices that belongs to a localized social group and is passed to the next generation [...] this use of culture has been subjected to extensive criticism, but even its harshest critics still see its value' " (Goodman 2007: 336).

According to Goodman (2007) this is can be described as *differential culture*.

But then there is also, the need to go further when defining culture as just a phenomenon related with knowledge and independent of purely biological circumstances. "A typical definition for the first meaning of culture is given by Wuthnow (1987), who describes culture as 'built into all social relations, constituting the underlying assumptions and expectations on which social interaction depends'" (Wuthnow cited in Goodman 2007:347). This definition of culture does derive from a differential attempt to distinguish one set of social relations, from another, it refers merely to the set of relations present in all human societies, "the milk we receive from our mother's breast. Therefore for the purposes of the present the term *generic culture* will be used following Jonathan Friedman's (1994:73) terminology.

So, after the last three definitions it could be concluded that, to define mass consumption as observed in today's consumer society as, or part of, a culture the following elements are needed:

- 1) It is not natural, or in other words it must be transmitted from elder members of the society unto the new members,
- 2) It is not universal, or in other words, the practices in question must be different from those observed in other societies.
- 3) It is to be built into social relations.

During the course of the present work, some information has been found, that may prove to help categorize consumerism, not only as a cultural element, but also as the most important cultural behavior within "Western" capitalist societies.

One of the most interesting pieces of this mentioned data, is a quote of the message U.S. congressional members (2001) gave their citizens after the events of 9/11, reproduced by Richard H. Robbins (2008). As the country was "shocked" by the events that occurred on the mentioned date, members of Congress urged the citizens to "participate" in society.

“We’ve got to give people confidence to go back out and go to work, buy things, go back to the stores - get ready for Thanksgiving, get ready for Christmas, [...] Get out participate in our society’ (CNN 2001 cited in Robbins 2008:39)”.

Buy things; get ready for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Much can be inferred from this simple quotation. Not only are the political representatives of a State’s society equating social participation to mass-consumption, but they are also equating their most important religious celebration, Christmas, to the previous.

Another important clue, in which the way the notion of value is socially constructed within the context of capitalist consumerism, lies within the manner that governments measure development. Governments all over the world, still measure the development of a country, amongst other things, in GNP growth, which,

[...] is composed of goods and services that are produced for sale in the “market”—the generic term referring to the forum for economic transactions—and of non-market goods and services—those that are not sold in the market, such as the defense services provided by the Federal Government, the education services provided by local governments, the emergency housing or health care services provided by nonprofit institutions serving households (such as the Red Cross), and the housing services provided by and for persons who own and live in their home (referred to as “owner-occupants”) (Bureau of Economic Analysis of the U.S. Department of Commerce 2007:1).

The measurement basically calculates, “[...] the money value of all the goods and services produced and sold in a given time period” (Robbins 2008:5), however it does not take externalities into account. Which basically means that we calculate our wealth on how many toys we have, without considering how we are screwing each other up. By measuring our wealth in GNP we “are reducing the capacity on earth to support life, thereby literally killing the world” (Daly cited in Robbins 2008:39).

The preface of *Measuring the Economy: A Primer on GDP and the National Income and Product Accounts* (2007), a document elaborated by the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the U.S. Department of Commerce, begins with the following questions: “How fast is the

economy growing? Is it speeding up or slowing down? How does the trade deficit affect economic growth? What's happening to the pattern of spending on goods and services in the economy?" (Bureau of Economic Analysis of the U.S. Department of Commerce 2007:1) This hardly translates into "Are we satisfied?"

Marshall Sahlins (2004) engages in an interesting analysis concerning satisfaction and the concept of differential culture as provided before. Even though hunter-gatherer societies consume less energy per capita than any other group of human beings, he considers them to be the "original affluent society",

[...] in which all the people's material wants were easily satisfied. To accept that hunters are affluent is therefore to recognize that the present human condition of man slaving to bridge the gap between his unlimited wants and his insufficient means is a tragedy of modern times" (Sahlins 2004:1).

After the previous quote, GDP measurements, which are supposedly designed to evaluate economic development (Bureau of Economic Analysis of the U.S. Department of Commerce 2007:3), seem like cries for toys, "Are going to be able to have more toys next year? More toys, more toys, more toys."

Consumer culture has reached a level of intensity, in which the economic well being of a state, its possibility of employment, social services, etc. depend severely in mass consumption. "Societies driven by consumption have fed more people, clothed more people and housed more people than any other in history [...]", these same societies have "damaged the environment and created more trash than any others" (Goodman 2007:347). Goods need to be bought, dispensed and renewed, cars, computers, and clothing, just as the American representatives urged their population to do so, when faced with social crisis.

It would seem that even though consumer driven economies have provided an unprecedented capacity of production of goods, an unprecedented capacity to desire, is also observed. In this sense, Bocoock (1993) states:

"Consumption is founded on a lack - a desire always for something not there. Modern/post-modern consumers, therefore, will never be satisfied.

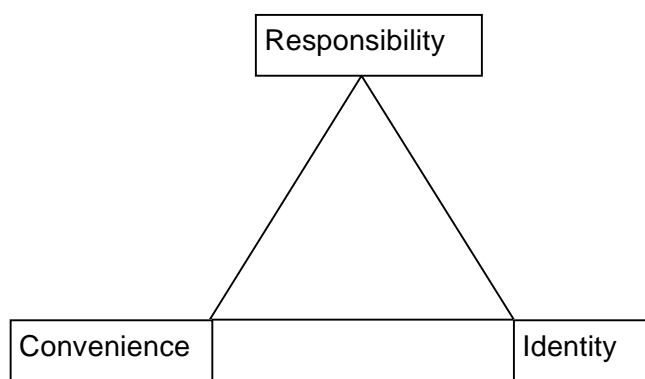
The more they consume, the more they will desire to consume [...] people living under the influence of post-modern capitalism's consumer culture will continue to desire the unattainable - that is the satiation of all their desires" (Bocock 1993:69).

So how did come to have this relationship with an insatiable desire of goods? Why would someone that has all of his material needs solved, would want to purchase a substantial amount of goods, which will not provide any kind of durable satisfaction and without considering the immense costs that the consumption of these goods represents?

Considering Sahlins's (2002) analysis on hunter-gatherer consumption and satisfaction, it is not difficult to sustain that the values awarded to material culture within mass-consumerist societies, are different from other societies, and therefore socio-culturally constructed. Satisfaction is an interesting notion for the context of the present work. In Chapter 3.2.2 the findings and conclusions of anthropologist and psychologist Luigi Zoja (2000) mentioned that addicts are "unsatisfied by the rules of society". Anthropologist of Addiction Camporesi (1994) acknowledged that psychoactive substance use was, at many times, "the remedies of the desperate." And, Roch Kretch (2002) noted how Native-Americans subjected to consumerist culture "have turned to harmful chemical and behavioral addictions, as a means of control (See Chapter 3.2.2). As, the historical background on the "recovering community" was exposed, it was concluded that the "Twelve-Step movement", sprung within the context of capitalism/consumerism. An analysis of contemporary economic theory was performed, and the most important conclusion that derived from it, was that theories based in rational choice, part from an evaluation of costs and benefits, to describe consumer behavior (See Chapter 3.3.1). And, finally Sahlins (1976) and Baudrillard (2001), both concluded that the value of commodities couldn't be addressed following "rationalist" perspectives, that meanings within capitalism are to be analyzed, just as in any "traditional" society (See Chapter 3.3.2) The present work, will not shun from "Rational Choice", but rather embrace it. Unlikely as it may seem it will also embrace cultural relativism. A theoretical framework was produced from the combination of the above-mentioned theoretical proposals: cultural in-satisfaction is related to the manner that the meanings behind the value of benefits and costs, are constructed within capitalist/consumerist societies. In order to accomplish the previously stated, the theoretical proposals of Anthropologist Warren Belasco (2008), regarding consumption of food, will be followed.

3.5 Responsibility, Convenience and Identity

American anthropologist Warren Belasco (2008) proposed that every decision concerning food consumption decision involves a “[...] tough negotiation - a pushing and tugging - between the dictates of identity and convenience, with somewhat lesser guidance from the considerations of responsibility” (Belasco 2008:8).



Even though Belasco’s model seems fairly simple compared to the economic models previously described (See Chapter 3.3.1), it will be observed, as the present work progresses, that mostly every single anthropological, sociological, economic and psychological theory, contain elements that can be identified with one of the variables of Belasco’s triangle. For example, if rational choice models are analyzed, in which, according to Nicholson (2006), “[...] individuals are seen as motivated by the wants or goals that express their 'preferences'” (See chapter 3.3.1), it implies a balance between costs and benefits, we can conclude that within Belasco’s “tough negotiation” represents the evaluation of this same balance. The dictates of identity and convenience represent the possible benefits. Every social benefit can be included within a person’s need to construct an identity a personality, a place within his exterior circumstances and within the social existence of his pairs. Convenience refers to all material benefits, from eating, sleeping, going to the bathroom, to not having the necessity of growing your own food. Also, costs of opportunity are included within these two variables, since paying a higher price is highly inconvenient, or taking a trip to your local beach, may not be regarded as the most impressive vacation plan amongst your pairs, but it is definitely more convenient.

And there's the third variable, responsibility. According to Belasco,

“Being responsible means being aware of one's place in the food chain – of the enormous impact we have on nature, animals, other people and the distribution of power and resources all over the globe [...] or calculation as the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy once attempted, ‘the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations’ (Belasco 2008:9).

Belasco's model (2008) provides hints as to where an analysis of the meanings and symbolism awarded to benefits and costs, within the work's context, is to be found. His model applied to food consumption will be applied to consumption in a general aspect. Benefits within consumerism, will be the first variable analyzed. Afterwards, the relationship between these meanings and the Twelve Steps will be addressed. It is wise to proceed on step at a time; the first hint mentioned is consumption related to identity.

4 Consumerism and Benefits

4.1 Identity: The Story of Consumerism

The relationship between, identity and consumerism is essential in today's context. In the late nineteenth century sociologists Thorstein Veblen (1912 and 1953) and Georg Simmel (1903) pioneered in the study of identity driven consumption. At the time of the mentioned sociologists, new department stores began to appear in the city centers. Bon Marché was the world's first department store, opened in Paris in 1852. "Enterprises such as Bon Marché were devoted to "the arousal of free-floating desire" (McKracken cited in Robbins 2008:17), the epitome of a place destined to show goods as "objects in themselves". "When Marshall Fields opened in Chicago in 1902, six string orchestras filled the various floors with music, and American Beauty roses, along with other cut flowers and potted palms, bedecked all the counters" (Robbins 2008:18). With the development of large scale a new form of urban landscape develop as well. Cities around manufacturing and government centers and facilities of consumption "[...] grew up to satisfy the social and psychological requirements of the inhabitants of the newly burgeoning towns and cities" (Bocock 1993:16). Simmel argued in his 1903 essay that with in these psychological requirements was the need of the individual to preserve his identity, "[...] the need to consume with in a repertory which is both distinctive to a specific social group and expressive of individual preferences" (Simmel cited in Bocock 1993:12). Consumption in the metropolitan arena was trivial to identity. A new powerful force was unleashed upon the free market economy, "a ceaseless pursuit of a distinctive" (Ibid), as the industrial and political elite continuously fought to distinguish themselves from the middle classes. Nevertheless, at this point the working classes still, did not have the economical capacity to participate in the after mentioned process.

The way the working class began to participate in practices of consumption as described above, and therefore, an era of truly mass consumption began, was according to Robbins (2008), somewhat of a coincidence: it is completely related to the introduction of the assemble line by Ford Motor Industries.

With the introduction of assembly line production two new phenomena that would change the characteristics of capitalist consumption came to the scene: 1) The development of standardized products for an undifferentiated mass consumer market (Blythe 2008: 356-357) 2) The possibility of high wages to a large work force (Ford astonished the world in 1914 by offering a \$5 per day wage, which more than doubled the rate of most of his workers) (Sward 1948:53). "The methods of mass production which were begun by Henry Ford in his plan manufacturing motor cars in Highland Park, Detroit, USA in 1910-1914, combined moving assembling lines, specialized machinery, high wages to a large work force and low cost production (Bocock 1993:20)." High wages, not only proved to accelerate production, but also turned Ford workers into Ford consumers. There is debate on whether mass production and mass consumption developed in Europe (particularly Britain), even in the post-war period, to the extent that it developed in the US, and the degree that 'Fordism' influenced this, but Bocock (1993) argues that by the 1950's mass consumption, "in a recognizable modern sense" was perceivable among every social class except the least economically fortunate sectors of society. "That is, they had sufficient income to provide for their basic needs and had developed an awareness of new objects, such as television sets cars, and experiences, such as holidays in Spain, which they could afford to buy" (Bocock 1993:22).

This period marked the beginning of mass consumer advertisement directed at a huge range of possible consumers that sprung from almost every socio-economical class. The focus was of a different nature. Product marketing not only mentioned the characteristics of the products themselves but also related them with the life style of the consumer. Smoking now provided manhood, "Clothing, perfumes deodorant, and so on, would provide means of achieving love; alcoholic beverages would provide a route to friendship; the proper automobile tires or insurance policy would provide the means of meeting family responsibilities (Robbins 2008:23)." Mass media, advertising and the social sciences targeted and differentiated consumers, respectively, according to occupational class. In the 1890's the producers and distributors in the U.S. began to concern themselves with the way products were presented to the public. "The goal of advertisers was to aggressively shape consumer desires and create value in commodities by imbuing them with the power to transform the consumer into a more desirable person" (Robbins 2008:18).

Nevertheless, even though income level was seen as important, some occupations that may have lower income than others were considered as carrying a higher social level than others. Educational level of occupations carried huge weight in these classifications, because the effectively influences consumption patterns. Bocock (1993) argues that a notion of a way of life was seen as linked to occupational classes, which not only included the common sense, that different economic classes have different ways of living, but also of daily work routines, household chores, and even moral values and ways of articulating emotion (Bocock 1993:28-29).

Identity was now largely constructed upon patterns of consumption of items “[...] such as clothing, footwear, popular music or sporting activities, including being a supporter of particular music groups, singers or soccer clubs” (Bocock 1993:28). These patterns represented now the basis to categorize consumers into different groups. “[...] Market researchers began to change the ways in which they saw the various groups of consumers during the 1980’s. Willis (1990) described this change as follows:

“The early history of marketing was precisely about separating consumer groups into socio-economic categories so that products could be aimed at them more exactly. Modern marketing, however, has moved on from delineating socio-economic groupings to exploring ‘new’ categories of life style, life stage and shared denominations of interest and aspiration. This is a crucial move since it attempts to describe market segments not from an ‘objective’ point of view, but from the point of view of the consumer. Far from begin the passive victim of commercialism’s juggernaut, the consumer has progressively been recognized as having substantial and unpredictable decision-making power in the selection and use of cultural commodities.”
(Willis cited in Bocock 1993:29)

In the “West”, everybody is now a potential consumer. Social class influences marketing, less than social category.

“Featherstone hints that ‘fixed status groups’, or social class in market researcher, have effectively disappeared as determinant of new patterns of consumption” (Goodman 2007:344).

Most products, soft drinks, razor blades, videogames and even cell phones, are marketed towards every level of income, towards the masses. The concept of the “Affluent Worker”, mentioned in Jayne’s text, is central to understanding this social phenomenon, “as workers were better paid and more secure in their jobs, there was a shift in the way work was viewed” (Jayne 2006:5), reaching today standards where, arguably, one is measured in the social ladder, very much so by the clothes he wears, the car he drives, where he spent his holidays and how big his house is. “The consequence of this is that social differentiation is argued to be based about our consumption practices rather than work and employment – in essence theorists argue that how we spend our money is now more significant than how we make it” (Jayne 2006:5).

4.2 Material Culture, Time and Ideology

From the previous exposition, it is easy to note, how emulation is completely linked to identity driven consumption. Emulation was theorized by Economist James Duesenberry (1949), as a critique to the established economic theory based in rational choice, that up until 1949 considered that: “(1) [...] every individual’s consumption behavior is independent of all other individuals’, and (2) that consumption decisions are reversible in time (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:26).” Emulation, according to Duesenberry (1949) can be very briefly described as: “[...] one culture in which high standards enter into the competition for differentiated social status” (Duesenberry cited in Douglas and Isherwood 1996:27). An important element of the theoretical approach that will be proposed later on, is the manner in which meanings inter-related between time and material culture, changed when affected by different emulation patterns. Sociologist Grant Mckracken (1988) theorizes that the emulation based in fashion, where material culture is related to the future, and no to the past, is relatively new phenomena.

The other element necessary for the development of said theoretical framework is the ideological notions behind consumerism. Max Weber (2003), will be initially followed, in order to explain ideological meanings of profits. Afterwards, sociologist Peter Corrigan (1997), who in turn follows the theoretical proposals of sociologist Colin Campbell (1987), will be addressed. He proposes a theoretical framework, where Baudrillard’s (2001) statements that “There are no limits to consumption” (see Chapter 3.3.2.2) may be explained.

4.2.1 Reconfiguration of Time Around Patterns of Emulation

McCracken (1988) follows the case of the court of Elizabeth I of England in regards to emulation, and he also links this to describe the manner in which patina replaced fashion, the old replaced by the new, and the past by the future.

McCracken (1988) situates the first reason of the mentioned reconfiguration of time regarding material culture, in the attempts of Elizabeth I of England, to centralize her realm. He argues that the first element of the Elizabethan consumer boom amongst nobles resides in the fact that Elizabeth put an end to the times where nobility “[...] could quite happily spend their days in their country seats, receiving their share of royal goods and favors through various intermediaries, [...] and insisted that everything come directly from her and not from go-betweens” (Corrigan 1997:3). This resulted in obliging the members of the nobility to attend London if they required anything and participate in the “ceremony and theater of the court”. Which in turn had its own purpose, and this was related to the belief that a political theater of splendor grants legitimacy to a political establishment. “So Elizabeth not only managed to proclaim her power through the magnificence of ceremony, but she also managed to get the nobles to pay for part of this” (McCracken, G., cited in Corrigan 1997:3).

The second reason is closely related to what has been mentioned in the previous paragraph. At home, in the countryside the social ranking and authority of the noble class was not in question; they were duly treated in relation to this social status. But, within the Elizabethan court reality was of different nature: they found themselves to be just one amongst many, they were subjected to a level of equality amongst their peers, and this was something that the noble class was not familiar with.

“One can easily see the problem these poor fellows faced: how to get the queen to notice them, how to stand in a crowd. They were driven to further expenditure above and beyond what the queen expected for her ceremonies of royal power, as they wore magnificent clothes than the next, gave better feasts and more gifts, perhaps built better town houses. In McCracken’s words, the nobleman was ‘drawn into a riot of consumption’ (Corrigan 1997:3).

However, of more interest is how these patterns affected the social life and the established cultural perception of family consumption beyond the limits of the court. According to Corrigan, the focus of family consumption at the time

“[...] was not limited to the nuclear core, as it would be the case today. Goods that were not purchased or produced for mere subsistence, were purchased for a different intention, they had the purpose of establishing social honor and the prestige for a number of generations. One used the goods of an earlier generation to capture and continue their honor, and one bought new goods with a view of increasing the honor both of one's present family and of one's descendants” (Corrigan 1997:3).

However, the new consumption habits of the noble classes affected this dramatically, since, in “the consumer hothouse” of the court, forced him to spend vast sums of money in order to socially differentiate, and survive politically. This resulted in a significant decrease, of spending aimed at his family's prestige; value awarded to the future was replaced with value for the present. The final outcome was that the individual became the center focus of consumption (Corrigan 1997:4).

This also leads directly to the advent of fashion within the English noble class, which is clearly embodied in the after-mentioned shift of temporal consumerist values. Within the “mainstream” conception of value, even though, all considerations depend on a balance between demand and offer, the value of a commodity always ends up reflected in money (see Chapter 3.3.1). Economists would argue that \$10 dollars of “new” money, *ceteris paribus*, will always be equal to \$10 of old money, however, as Corrigan states, “At the risk of offending economists, logicians at mathematicians, we may say that no [...]” (Corrigan 1997:5). Old money represents, in many circles, a higher level of status and prestige. It means that a certain social category, has been able to succeed economically over time, has learned how live in conditions of prestige, and has also been able to maintain their position of success over years, giving the perception of this category's economic and social status, a natural state of being, an apparent natural legitimacy. “For the Elizabethans, it took five generations of riches before a wealthy family could be considered ‘gentle’” (McCracken, G., cited in Corrigan 1997:5). New money does not hold this “natural” proof of legitimate status. Even these cultural perceptions regarding temporality

still subsist concerning money; the story of material culture is a different one. The same value relationship between time and money could be observed regarding material goods in sixteenth century England. The material proof of the passage of time, reflected in items of everyday use, furniture, cutlery, and even buildings, awarded them social value. “They took on a new surface thanks to the knocks they experienced as part of long-term existence, and this new surface was known as patina” (Corrigan 1997:5). An expensive item provides evidence of wealth, but it silent about your social past and your upbringings. Since patina could not be easily acquired, and for the expert eye there is a visible difference between the authentic and the artificial, patina represented an effective material proof of what we earlier referred to as “old” money, and therefore proof that one is a legitimate member of the upper classes.

So when material temporal value, placed fashion in a similar social status differentiator as patina, various consequences regarding material culture took place. Since, material objects of a similar value could no longer distinguish social status legitimacy, “old” wealth slowly began to lose its distinctive aspect from the “*nouveau riche*”, in many areas of consumption. The wealthy were now easier to emulate, and the middle classes began to do so. This in turn, this drove the upper classes to emulation-driven consumption, in order to differentiate themselves from the imitator, and so on, and so forth (Corrigan 1997: 7-8). The final consequence is an explosion of status driven competition, based in the acquisition of the new and the innovative.

4.2.2 Ideology: Profits and Consumption as Means to Themselves

In *The Protestant Ethic and the spirit of Capitalism* (2003) Max Weber provides some insight on the cultural values behind the capitalist notion of the need to accumulate as a purpose in itself by analyzing the bourgeois protestant culture of Britain and Holland. According to Robert Boccock (1996), this Calvinist worldview holds the ideological background of twentieth century consumption. Weber (2003) contrasted the earlier Catholic mode in which private accumulation, and individual calculation was discouraged with the protestant mode, which encouraged it. Concerning doctrinal matters

“[...] the first pointed to blessings in the hereafter as the reward of good behavior, while the second regarded blessing in this world as a

sign of behavior being justified; in ethics, religion and the religious calling were specialized in Catholicism, set apart from and superior to gaining a living in the lay condition, but in Protestantism the distinction disappeared, and all ways of gaining a livelihood were treated as a religious calling in itself” (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:13).

However, protestant asceticism discouraged the pursuits of pleasure therefore profit was reinvested in business instead of spending them on a luxurious life style. According to mentioned author this affected capitalism aiding in the growth of business and the concept of *profit as a means to itself*. “Puritanism, especially in its Calvinist form, exercised considerable influence upon the early bourgeoisie of agricultural and manufacturing capitalism” (Bocock 1996: 11). This would initially explain the circumstances leading to the accumulation of capital, but not for the accumulation of leisure oriented commodities.

Peter Corrigan (1997) follows Colin Campbell (1987), in his attempt to explain such dilemma. Campbell (1987) argued that the industrial revolution entailed a revolutionary change not only at the level of production, but also dramatic changes at the level of consumption. Corrigan (1997) argues, “[...] just as Protestant ethic provided the spirit of production, Romanticism, with its cult of the expressive individual, was central in providing the spirit for consumption. If the working classes were fundamental to the development of production, readers of novels were fundamental to the development of consumption” (Corrigan 1997:2).

Ironically Romanticism spawned as a reaction to industrial society, and everything it stood for, especially against the “[...] materialist and rationalist philosophies and that reason and science that were so important during the period of Enlightenment” (Corrigan 1997:11). It advocated a revolution of feeling against reasoning, imagination vs. the intellect and human emotion, one’s inner world in opposition to one’s exterior circumstances. “The Romantic Movement was marked first and foremost by a reverence for the mysteries of the natural world. Rather than trying to explain or rationalize the world itself, those who later would be deemed Romantics embraced its mystery and grandeur (Casey 2008 online).” Concerning the issue at matter, the most important consequence of Romanticism, was that it represented a dramatic change in the way the individual was seen in opposition to the society to which he belonged. Romanticism highly valued the uniqueness of every

individual. This, in turn, changed the perceptions of what a person is: his differential qualities came to hold more importance than the characteristics, which tied him to his pairs in terms of similarity. "If in pre-Romantic times the individual was seen as linked to society in formal ways and perhaps was an individual only through these links, the Romantics saw an opposition, rather than a continuity, between the two: self and the nasty society outside came to be understood as opposing, rather than complementary, concepts" (Corrigan 1997:11). According to Campbell (1987), within Romanticism individual uniqueness came to be seen as a duty:

"What the romantics did was to redefine the doctrine of individualism and the associated idea of improvement and advancement. Instead of individuals improving themselves in this world through hard work, discipline and self-denial they substituted the idea of individuals 'expressing' or 'realizing' themselves through exposure to powerful feelings and by means of many varied intense experiences" (Campbell cited in Corrigan 1997:11).

It is noted from the above quote the idea of seeking new and diverse forms of gratification, within Romanticism, and therefore the relationship of the experiencing individual with "modern" consumption.

The idea of the "self" is embedded within Romantic ethics, and so do the ideas of self-development and self-expression (Corrigan 1997:11-12). Campbell (1987) mentioned various differences between the artistic behavior of pre-Romantic Europe, and after. For Campbell (1987), the artist during this period was considered the "specialist of the self", "geniuses whose works expressed their superior sensibilities" (Corrigan 1997:12). We can experience today, the embedded notions of artistic individuality, by a mere visit to an art museum. If told that Michelangelo, or Rembrandt, would routinely ask their apprentices to help, and even do pieces of their work, it is probable that we would feel cheated and question the authenticity of a the work of art in question (Ibid). Our contemporary idea of an artist derives from this relationship between expression and the self. Nevertheless, the purpose of pre-Romantic art was not that of self-expression, art was produced with moral purposes and social purposes; it had a social meaning in which the artist may or not be included (Corrigan 1997:11). This also entailed dramatic changes towards concerning the notions of how art was to be experienced. Art produced for moral or social purposes corresponded an audience that also sought the moral or social messages behind it. But art

intended to express the inner world of an individual was intended to be consumed by an attempt to “[...] re-create the experiences and feelings of artists as expresses through the work. So one way of attending to the duty of experiencing widely and deeply as an essential element of the cultivation of the self was to consume cultural products in this sort of way” (Corrigan 1997:12).

However, the products that had the deepest impact in transmitting this set of notions to the general public were not visual works of art, but rather the literary genre of the Romantic novel (Corrigan 1997:13). Campbell (1987) maintains that novels were widely distributed, and consumed to a great degree by middle-class women of the time. In the same way that, during that specific period, visual art was consumed by re-creation, novels also became a form of experiencing feelings and circumstances beyond the context of every day life. Novels became quite sensationalist (Ibid). Campbell (1987) argues that the fact that society now read for amusement and entertainment, rather than for instruction or morals, was a “shocking development” (Campbell cited in Corrigan 1997:13). Novels were accused of creating dissatisfaction. Readers were “[...] plunged into an imaginative world of apparently infinite possibility, a world which showed up the constraints of [their] own lives and experiences and made [them] unhappy with [their] lot” (Ibid).

Very much so, in the same manner that the movie industry affects the values and notions of today’s consumer society, novels, to a lesser degree began to spread these notions at the time. As “[...] more and more people groups of people picked up the habit of reading fiction and so more and more groups social classes became discontented with their station and experiences in life. People wanted more and more in order to fulfill themselves, and traditional constraints on behavior began to seem intolerable” (Corrigan 1997:13).

If Weber (2003) squarely places the ideology behind the need of profits as means in themselves, in the ethics of Protestantism, here a convincing account of the ethics behind consumption as a means to itself squarely placed behind the values of Romanticism, has been provided.

4.2.3 The Creation of Consumers: Children and Stories of Material and Capitalism

The findings of Richard H. Robbins (2008), related to the “appropriation of childhood” by consumerist culture, through symbolism embedded within stories, theme parks, and festivities, have an astonishing similarity with Campbell’s (1987) description of the ideology embedded within Romanticism.

The celebration of Christmas, especially using the image of Santa Claus, began to be commercially target towards young audiences and their material desires. By 1840, Christmas was already a time for toy giving, and by the 1870’s the beginnings of a commercially targeted holiday were seen. But it wasn’t until the early twentieth century that symbols related to Christmas and to capitalism began to intertwine (Robbins 2008:30).

It is effectively noted how the symbols of Christmas were added combined with the symbols of capitalism in the very mythical explanation of how Santa’s toys are produced: “Commodities (toys) were manufactured by happy elves working in Santa’s workshop (no factories in the North Pole and certainly, no Chinese assembly plants) and were distributed, free of charge, to good boys and girls by a corpulent grandfatherly male in fur trimmed clothes” (Ibid). Most children in the U.S. and increasingly in other parts of the world are brought up believing the mentioned story. Nevertheless, the myth of Santa Claus represented only the beginning of the use of symbols and meanings to promote child consumption and in the process, create the notions needed to relate emotional need towards material towards commodities.

Two historical occurrences that had a deeper impact in transforming childhood will now be explored: Frank Baum’s Emerald City, and Walt Disney World.

Robbins (2008) begins his illustration of the appropriation of childhood by consumerist culture, by addressing the characteristics of children’s stories before and after the 1900’s. In his descriptions of story content and comparison of these, with other types of story telling, we find substantial similarities with Campbell’s (1987) former mentioned analysis regarding Romanticism. Robbins (2008) comments that the most popular stories in pre-1900 “Western” culture were those of he Grimm’s brothers. However, these stories as

Robbins (2008) illustrates “lacked the power to produce the necessary mind-cure impulse to consume” (Robbins 2008:30). There were had dark elements, contained gruesome and bizarre plots, and similar to pre-Romantic literature, each of them contained a moral lesson. New tales began to emerge the mentioned period, tales whose characteristics contrasted with these earlier stories, stories in which the world was “[...] presented as a happy place full of desirable things. The leader in this reconstruction of the child’s universe was Baum” (Ibid).

In addition to his career as a storyteller, Baum also took interest in the art of window display, and he became an advisor to many department stores. He combined his love for the theater with the world of retail commodities, in order to show these of to their best advantage. Quality did not matter as much as the capacity they had to “look good” and to “arouse in the observer the cupidity and longing to posses [them]” (Leach cited in Robbins 2008:30).

His philosophy has much in common with what Robbins (2008) refers to as “mind-cure movements of the late and early twentieth centuries” (2008:31). The ideology behind these consisted in an attempt to abstract guilt from the act of consumption. For example Robbins (2008) quotes Baum in statement he expressed in the *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer (1890)* “[The] good things in life are given to be used”. Saving was “alright according to Baum as long as the purposes behind “the rainy day” theory did not serve as an excuse to avoid living as fully a we can and therefore consuming (Leach cited in Robbins 2008:31).

His stories were filled with mechanical inventions, and landscapes that contained goods of all sorts, fruits, candies and cookies, etc. According to Robbins (2008) it is possible to interpret *The Wizard of Oz* as a tributary story of our ability to create illusions and magic, to allow people to believe in themselves in spite of themselves. The Wizard himself is an ordinary man, who had no magic at all, but could accomplish the difficult task of making everybody believe in a dream the did not exist. As he left Emerald City, the citizens gave him a euphoric farewell, symbolizing the gratitude they felt for the creation of Emerald city, for a place based in illusions, illusion that this common man was able to give them, even though they were never real. “The Wizard of Oz represented a new spiritual-ethical climate that modeled itself as a version of the child’s world in which dreams of self-fulfillment through consumption were banished” (Robbins 2008:30).

After this analysis of the meanings and symbols related with consumption and embedded within Baum's mythological story telling, Robbins (2008) then goes on to describe another much greater and more sophisticated corporate movement of mind-cure impulse which surpassed by far the level of apprehension that was accomplished by Baum: Disney and the creation of Walt Disney World.

“Walt Disney World is the ultimate sand painting of the culture of capitalism. [...] A corporation has used millions of tons of concrete, wood plastic and glass to create the ‘home of childhood’, a miniature universe that promotes innocence and trust, that allows people to leave the ‘real world’ behind, and that encourages (in fact insists) that participants put themselves in the hands of Disney” (Robbins 2008:32).

And what is message behind this sand painting, the message the sits behind the elaborated world of Disney?

Robbins (2008) encourages us to look at the manufactures displays, and artificial wonders within its boundaries. Here he identifies two main aspects, from which Disney's message can be appreciated, its depiction of American and Western history in general, and its representation of progress and the future (Robbins 2008:32-36).

The story of the “West” through Disney is a “highly idealized” account where history figures such as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Edison, Davy Crockett, Mark Twain, Abraham Lincoln and Leonardo Da Vinci are used as ambassadors and spoke persons of Disney's message (Robbins 2008:33). “There is conscious attempt to present the history of capitalism without the warts. Disney World designers are quite forthright and unapologetic about their intent. As one Disney spokesperson explained, ‘We are not telling the history like it really was but as it should have been.’ (Fjellman cited in Robbins 2008:33)” A phrase that reminds us of George Orwell's Big Brother and his interpretation of history.

The center of Disneyland California and the Magic Kingdom Park in Orlando, is Main Street, U.S.A. as its name implies, it is the idealized version of what American and consumer culture should be. The street is characterized by an array of stores and services placed within turn-of-century American architecture, where people are defined by “what they sell. (Robbins 2008:33)” It cultivates nostalgia for past that did not exist, a past that

isn't what it was but rather what it should have been, without classes, crime or conflict, where consumption is celebrated without remorse. It shares all the elements of Santa's commodity driven mystics, goods are the pathways into satisfaction and therefore the absolute.

Epcot Center, in turn, presents the corporate view of progress. "[...] Exxon, presents the history of energy, while AT&T does communications. Transportation is presented by General Motors, the land by Kraft, the home by General Electric, and imagination by Kodak (Robbins 2008:30)." Every aspect of life is presented, and it is presented through the eyes of consumer driven capitalism. The message transmitted through Epcot is that of an equation of technology with progress, and progress with nature. History is defined as the accumulation of means that have made possible our present status of comfort through the use of commodities, and this, in turn, is equalized with absolute satisfaction. The future is near, or it is here, and it's a pleasant one.

"Our economy,' said Macy's board chairman Jack Isodor Straus, 'keeps on growing because our ability to consume is endless. The consumer goes on spending regardless of how many possessions he or she has. The luxuries of today are the necessities of tomorrow'" (Cohen cited in Robbins 2008:25).

4.2.4 Consumption as Means of Control: Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood

In the present work Douglas and Isherwood's classic treaty on consumption *The World of Goods* (1996), has been extensively quoted. This work is also for importance for the development of the theoretical framework. Therefore, their own theoretical approximations must be addressed, even if very briefly.

They begin their theoretical approach by an attempt to explain what rationalist theorists evade. Why people want goods? What is their use? "[...] Why do people want what they want? It's all about control. Our answer requires us to make an assumption: we assume that there is a comprehensive, fundamental set of human wants which concerns control over other humans (and also escape from being controlled)" (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:xxvi).

Douglas and Isherwood (1996) believe that it is an attempt to control communication. They criticize utility theory, which according to them “[...] supposes that wants come out of individuals’ own private perceptions of their needs, so it is not an auspicious for an idea about consumption that puts social interaction first” (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:xxv). They criticize the economic model, which is still sunk in assumptions about individual sovereignty concerning consumption by socializing the latter and making it an inherent part within the context of culture. According to them consumption, and particularly goods, are used as markers for the “categories of culture”. “Instead of supposing that goods are primarily needed for subsistence plus competitive display, let us assume that they are needed for making visible and stable the categories of culture” (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:38). The main purpose of goods, beyond their capacity to fulfill needs related to subsistence is then that of communicators, cultural communicators.

The other use they grant consumption is also social, and it’s related to the influence they have regarding the construction and maintenance of social relationships. They describe and give various examples of patterns of consumption within rituals associated with the after-mentioned processes, “[...] consumption is a ritual process whose primary function is to make sense of the inchoate flux of events” (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:43).

And finally, they conclude that, in a general sense, it can be observed how individuals, to make sense of their context, which is obviously always a cultural context, use consumption and goods. According to them the theory of demand lacks these assumptions of social motives behind “wants”.

“The rational individual must seek as large a scale of operation as needful to maintain his synthesis or adapt it in the light of rival views. The risk for him comes from an alien view that is more comprehensive in scope than his own. Thus seen, his concerns are a direct reflection of the division of labor in the productive side of the economy. As producers seek benefits of scale to lower the costs of production, they expand horizons of knowledge and force consumers to do likewise” (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:53).

So, in conclusion, goods are used as conventional ways to aid in the social construction of meaning by practices of consumption. They also, point out that different classes within

industrialized societies have different goods at their disposal, and different ways in which they construct, control and contain cultural meanings.

4.3 A Culture of Compulsiveness: The Theoretical Approach of the Present Work

By using elements of all the theoretical approaches previously mentioned, the promised theoretical framework, in which meanings related to the value of benefits, within mass-consumerist societies are constructed, and their relation to the Twelve Steps, will now be formulated. To aid my deduction efforts, the question presented at the beginning of Chapter 3.3.2, needs to be readdressed:

In terms of “Rational Choice” theory, why would an individual, every two years, be willing to go through the trouble of, and assume the economic costs (which basically represents spending more than eight hours a day engaging in an activity that he dislikes), of changing a higher priced transport vehicle for the one he currently own; considering that the latter has absolutely the same characteristics than the new one? (see Chapter 3.3.2)

If everything that has been exposed so far is analyzed closely, a very illustrative pattern can be observed. Allow me to elaborate:

Two elements that sit behind capitalist production and consumerist consumption ideology have been identified:

- 1) Profits as means to themselves, and
- 2) Consumption as a means to itself (see Chapter 4.2.2).

Weber (2002) gave a congruent and plausible explanation for the first one (see Chapter 4.2.2), and even though the second one was harder to answer, various theorists came up with various plausible solutions. So the question arises, has enough empirical and theoretical evidence to propose an approach to the content of these needs, been presented? There are two patterns that all the mentioned theorists identified.

McCracken (1988), Simmel (1913) and Jayne (2006) all describe the first one: emulation driven consumption related to a need of the individual to differentiate himself from his

peers. McCracken (1988) analyses this pattern in the Elizabethan court, where nobles consumed to get political attention from the Queen (see Chapters 4.1 and 4.2.2). Simmel (1913) identifies this pattern in post-industrialized cities, where middle classes consumed to fulfill the “psychological requirements to preserve their identities.” And, Mark Jayne (2006) identifies it in present mass consumerist societies (see Chapter 4.1).

However, the second pattern identified by the other theorists is of more interest, and even proves to provide some explanations to previously mentioned one. McCracken (1988) argues that the transition from patina to fashion also implied a symbolic transition in the way the upper classes conceptualized the value of goods: value of the past became value of the future, and the center of consumption was shifted from the family to the individual (see Chapter 4.2.2).

But, what is the future? The future is not something that you can “have” or “posses”, because it has not occurred as of yet. A future valuable is, therefore, a debt: it implies a promise for something yet to come, and something yet to come always implies anticipation, *desire*.

Then, Veblen (1953), when speaking about “conspicuous consumption” talks about how department stores such as Bon Marché, were devoted to “the arousal of free-floating desire” (see Chapter 4.1)

Campbell (1987), describes how Romanticism changed the symbolic meanings of art, and through Romantic novels the literate society began to experience feelings and circumstances beyond the context of everyday life, which, in turn led to people being “[...] discontented with their situation and experiences in life. People wanted more and more in order to fulfill themselves, and traditional constraints on behavior began to seem intolerable” (see Chapter 4.2.2).

And finally, we come to Robbins (2008), who describes how various events of American history took part in the appropriation of childhood. And what are the characteristics of these events? Well, Baum’s marketing combined his “love for the theater” with the world of retail. Quality was not as important for him as the way things looked, so as to “arouse in the observer the cupidity and longing to possess them”. In other words, this translates into an unrealistic presentation of commodities. He also argues that this unrealistic

representation of reality is present in Baum's Wizard of Oz, where a new spiritual-ethical climate modeled as a version "[...] of the child's world in which dreams of self-fulfillment through consumption." And finally, Disney, where the Magic Kingdom "cultivates nostalgia past that did not exist, a past that isn't what it was but rather what it should have been, without classes, crime or conflict [...]" and Epcot expresses the message that "the future is near, or it is here, and it's a pleasant one" (see Chapter 4.2.3).

What can be deduced from what has been previously presented? *The value of commodities has shifted from their use-value to a promise for something yet to come, or even for something not existent: for a dream of eternal satisfaction, based in illusions and stories that have little to do with the actual context of the consumers.*

Monogamist love in Hollywood is portrayed as an all-satisfactory, all encompassing enterprise. Capitalist success is also portrayed in this very manner. Cigarettes, Absolut Vodka, and Ermenegildo Zegna suits will get us sex and social approval. However, once these things are achieved (if they are achieved at all) consumers realize that the cultural promise has not yet been fulfilled, and so they keep searching within the cultural established values. Everything is commercialized as promise, a dream. And it is believed that this satisfaction, even though it is not here, it will be, somewhere in the future, somewhere in our dreams. "I'll be happy when I get the next promotion, when I finish school, when I get my PhD, when I can buy these things I want", seems to be the story of every "Western" individual. It's no wonder that as Baudrillard says, "the anticipation of consuming is frequently experienced as more enjoyable than the act of consumption itself" (see Chapter 3.3.2.2).

According to "Rational Choice" theorists, the economic agent, when presented with a choice will balance the costs and the benefits of said decision (see Chapter 3.3.1). In the previously stated example, of a consumer buying a car that has the same use-characteristics that the previously owned one, but different monetary cost, *the individual cost is real*. It implies hours and hours of work engaging in an activity that he most likely does not enjoy that much.

However, the benefits are not as real as the costs. The individual cost of mass-consumerist culture is neither dreamlike, nor intangible, it represents hours and hours of work, engaged in activities, in which in most cases the agents probably do not find self-gratification from something else than the remuneration. The use-benefit is non-existent

because his previously owned car already provided it, and the other benefit, the real value that he awards this car, is a symbolically embedded illusion, the dream and the hope that once he has the car he will be satisfied. Just to find that three months after the purchase he already desires a new one. *The individual costs (and we will address the social and external ones later) and the benefits of our society and our economic system just don't add up.*

Since all of these are culturally embedded values, then emulation comes strongly into play. As Baudrillard (1988) correctly assumes “under subsistence conditions, one cannot be manipulated by ever increasing consumption demands and so cannot be exploited as a force of consumption” (see Chapter 3.3.2.2) *Or in other words, without the promise of self-fulfillment related to the consumption of commodities, the system would not work; the masses would cease to accept the costs of their economic activity, because it is just not worth it.* “Rational Choice” is not so erroneous after all, however it does not take these cultural factors: we produce needs that are impossible to satisfy and individual costs that are real.

The theoretical proposals of the two final mentioned theorists in the exposition will now be addressed and added to the present theoretical formulations. According to Douglas and Isherwood (1996) consumption “is all about control” (see Chapter 4.2.4). However, I don't agree that it's about control of information. I believe that they are right regarding their initial assumption about the relationship between consumption and control, but I think, that after our previous analysis of what consumers value, is the control they can momentarily have for this set of culturally created needs, social constructed in-satisfaction: *Consumption in this cultural context represents an attempt to control culturally produced dissatisfaction: uncontrollable desires.*

A definition that also sits very closely to the approach towards addiction taken by Craig Nakken (1996), he described addiction as an attempt to control uncontrollable life cycles (see Chapter 3.1.2).

Following the previous hypothesis about the cultural reasons behind mass-consumption, the underlying reasons behind the amount of perceived addictive and compulsive behavior in consumerist culture can also be found. For, it is difficult to imagine a more perfect example of a society that produces social in-satisfaction.

One might then say, but then why isn't everyone who belongs to mass-consumer societies engaged in some form of compulsive behavior? To begin with, even though the economic culture does, in the great majority of consumers and enterprises hold these values, people may have spiritual conceptions of reward, or other more healthy means to cope with the contradictions between costs and benefits, like yoga. Then, there is of course, a large amount of individuals who are satisfied by either by their professional activity, or by the activity in which they engage most of their time, and who are therefore rewarded by their lifestyle and not by the illusion of future betterment or future satisfaction.

This being said, a research conducted in 1993, by MiKyeong Bae, Sherman Hanna, and Suzanne Lindamood, concluded that 40% of American households are considered to be "over-spenders":

An original analysis of the BLS Consumer Expenditure Survey shows that almost 40% of U.S. households spent more than their income in 1990.

Overspending is common among U.S. households. The results do not indicate whether particular households have continued overspending, or whether overspending was rational according to life cycle needs. The lack of a uniform relationship of overspending to age suggests that overspending is not closely tied to life cycle stages.

A majority of households with takehome incomes below \$21,000 per year overspent. At the mean values of age, household size and other demographic variables, the predicted amount of overspending was over 50% for income levels below \$26,000 per year. Almost 10% of households with incomes of \$62,000 per year overspent, but at the mean values of other demographic variables, predicted overspending would be less than 2% (Mikyeong, Sherman and Lindamood 1991:24).

So basically, over-spending is not related to life cycles, and lower incomes households seem to over-spend more than higher income ones. This, however, does not imply that higher income households don't spend excessively, but rather that their income difference allows them to spend without amounting debt. Nevertheless, of most interest is the amount of households that spend in a way that could affect their legal and financial well-being. I'm not implying that members of these households could be officially considered to be

“shopaholics”. But even the categorization of shopaholic or problematic spender, debtor or workaholic in Recoveries Anonymous, Debtors Anonymous and Workaholics Anonymous, is not defined in any categorical way, basically anyone who is engaged in any of these activities in a way that is affecting their life and cannot disengage is welcome to attend and define himself as the latter mentioned categories. And, as it is the case with Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous, the rooms are not filled exclusively by extreme cases.

Finally, overspending is a phenomenon that can be easily researched empirically, since the data related to income and consumption can be easily acquired. This is not the case with other activities that may result in compulsion, and it would be probably very interesting to see the amount of over-eating, over-sexing, over-working, over-gambling, drug and alcohol abuse, eating-disorders, etc, which affects significant well-being, present in American society.

In Pual Roch Kretch’s (2002), after-mentioned quote, he argued that Native Americans turned to chemical dependence as a means of escaping “hopelessness” and maintaining an illusion of control, once their denial of the self and the reward and opportunity that their “time-honored way of life and personal meaning-making” provided before, were not present (see Chapter 3.2.2).

Zoja (2000) also realizes some of these elements, “Ethnology, cultural anthropology, and history have taught us that a certain amount of drug use has always existed, and generally becomes accentuated when a society feels itself in a state of crisis. In the most dramatic cases, the introduction of and struggle against a drug occurs when an entire culture is collapsing, usually because of the arrival of European ‘efficiency’ and mercantile frenzy” (Zoja 2000:34).

This argument is further enhanced when one of the most used Twelve Step slogans is considered, “Accept life on life’s terms” (Hazelden 2010 online). However, the concept of life is embedded with cultural meanings. Life for the pre-Columbian population of North America has a completely different meaning that what it has today. What life are these people in recovery trying to accept, and why is it so difficult to accept that a slogan is needed to remind us of the falseness and remember life’s true terms? It is the life of the consumer-driven peoples of the globe. It is here where life’s terms are not so easily identified.

And even though substance related compulsion might be observed in many cultural contexts, it is hard to imagine the observance of commodity buying-compulsion somewhere else than in mass-consumption driven economies. When social un-satisfaction is present in other societies, resorting to psychoactive substances to numb the pain may be understandable, and various issues, non-systemic, non-cultural, may be at play. However, when consumerism, that as has been tried to prove to prove, (see Chapter 3.4) is the main social activity of consumer driven economies becomes an addiction in itself, the reasons behind social dissatisfaction, and many of the reasons why individuals resort to psychoactive substance abuse, are not that unclear. *A society that seeks profit as means to itself, and consumes as a means to itself, produces cultural behavior that is compulsive behavior in itself.*

4.4 Why Does the Program Work: The Traditions and The First Three Steps

Why then, does a spiritual program provide the solution? Based in my empirical experience, this issue will be addressed now, by analyzing the elements that compose the “Twelve-Step program” thoroughly.

To begin with, the social interaction of members with similar issues helps. As Zoja (2000) affirms, “Individual drug users are very prone to group phenomena. A group’s code of behavior in the streets for example, the way its members acquire and take their drugs, seems to have not only a practical function but also a ritual one (Zoja 2000:13).”

However, this doesn’t illuminate much. The problem at hand must be addressed, and the specific elements of “Twelve-Step philosophy” that deal with this problem. *If consumption represents a method of coping with culturally produced dissatisfaction, by an attempt to control it, then compulsive consumption is nothing more than this attempt brought to up to the extreme.* Drugs, alcohol, eating, having sexual relationships, And the “illusions of grandeur” experienced while pursuing the American dream by consuming commodities, spending money or gambling are all activities in that chemical dependent individuals associate with satisfaction. And all these activities are also an artificial form of satisfaction for the specific desire that is attempted to fulfill through their engagement: You may not feel like a loser in society once you sniff some coke, but after a few hours the feeling of

self-worthlessness will come back and in a higher intensity. They all represent an obsession with control, therefore, any possible solution to these compulsions, must also address the issue of control.

The relationship that the “Twelve-Step program” has with this issue will now be addressed. In order to do so, two different elements of “Twelve-Step program” must be analyzed, its dogmatic element, or in other words the set of values that define their beliefs and their organic element, which is composed by the set of rules that defines the mode of organization.

4.4.1 The Organic Element of the Program: The Twelve Traditions

As was previously exposed, (see Chapter 3.1.1) basically in the organic structure of these “fraternities” an avoidance of authority, and control by means power, money or property, is observed. Other means, which point towards a reluctance of formal control as well, like anonymity of the members, are also observed. Every choice has to be taken by the member and never should other members have the “formal” intent to affect this choice. If they do, it is not as the “group”, but rather as the individual, and no coercion in any way is applied to follow, either individual, or group recommendations. This also draws the older members of the fraternity, to participate willingly in the “carrying of the message”, making sobriety of compulsion, a means to itself, in complete opposition to compulsion as a means to itself, as we have observed in “consumer driven economies”.

4.4.2 The Dogmatic Element of the Program: The First Three Steps

The dogmatic elements of the Twelve-Step program, these are embedded within the Twelve Steps. The first three Steps, and their relationship with control will now be analyzed. The first three Steps, in their Debtors Anonymous version are:

1. We admitted we were powerless over debt--that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

As said before, there are various elements of the “program” that at a first instance may suggest very strongly the social group matter of the present study could be considered a religious movement. However, in order to come to this conclusion, what a religion is, anthropologically speaking must be analyzed in contraposition to what these three Steps really directed to. Before addressing their relation to religiosity, the symbolic content of the Steps will be analyzed.

It has been proposed that compulsive-consumption or addiction is a compulsive attempt to cope with in satisfaction by means of engaging in an activity that the individual associates with satisfaction.

The following is the content of the first Step: admittance of the powerlessness over debt, and life’s unmanageability. It is clearly observed how this first Step is directed to affect a relationship between the individual and his attempt to control. By admitting your powerlessness over debt, you also admit your powerlessness over control. And, by admitting that your life has become unmanageable, you also admit that, this compulsive attempt of control has produced the exact opposite outcome that you intended in the first place. You cannot control your debt, and therefore you cannot control your spending, and your attempts to control this have made your life “unmanageable”. It can be concluded that the first Step is completely related to a reevaluation of the individual’s relationship with his compulsive activity, as a means of controlling un-satisfaction. Information gathered through the interviews also sustains that the followed intuition is directed towards the right direction. When Oliver, one of the already mentioned interviewees is talking about the negative feelings that he coped with, during his years in “activity”, and the way the program has influenced him to perceive them differently, he expressed the following:

“So, after I went to twelve step program I realized that many of these feeling where ‘mind-made’. Basically even though the scenarios were true I made them worse, I made them mine. I lived by those scenarios [...] The program has given my the sight of seeing life not in terms of good and bad just what life is, and this is undeniable” (Oliver 2010 personal interview).

The content of the second Step will now be analyzed: faith that a power greater than oneself can restore you to sanity. In the first place, the Step is tacitly calling the individual insane, since only a person lacking sanity is in need to restore it. So, to begin with, the second Step is referring to this compulsive behavior as insanity. According to *“Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions”*, the second most important piece of Twelve Step literature; sanity is defined as *“soundness of mind”*. A member of the Wednesday A.A. group in Hamburgergasse 3 in Vienna gave me another, more interesting definition, that I found many members of other Twelve Step groups are familiar with, he defined insanity as *“the continuation of the same activity, expecting different results”*, which sounded not only witty and humorous, but very much logical as well.

The other more important element of the Step in question is the acceptance that a *“Power Greater”* than ourselves will restore us to sanity. Since the Twelve-Step movement, emanates from *“Western”* culture and its related symbolism, the first idea that I had about this power, was that of the Abrahamic, or Christian God. However, as I dwelled deeper in the meaning of the concept, I found out that this was not the case at all. Neither the Big Book, nor the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, describe in any way this Power Greater than oneself. They do; however, point in various occasions that *“spirituality”* is needed, in order to overcome the compulsive behavior. Something that initially suggests that Luigi Zoja’s (2000) intuition about the relationship between addiction and a search for initiation in a spiritual context is well guided. But asking around between members of the groups I found some definitions of *“Higher Power”* that were very much so, of a secular nature. I was amazed to find that many of the members considered themselves agnostics, in opposition to those that were religious. The latter brought their pre-established definitions and conceptions of divinity, as provided by the respective religious denomination that they belonged to. In the Viennese meetings you’ll find a lot of Christianity, some cases of Judaism, and I have found two cases of Hinduism, within Alcoholics Anonymous. Sexaholics Anonymous, (which has only German speaking meetings), is populated mainly by Christians, as is Workaholics Anonymous, or rather its German version, Anonyme Arbeitssüchtige (AAS). However, both A.A. and Narcotics Anonymous share a great amount of members who are not only non-religious, but also openly challenge the idea of *“organized religion”*.

Brent, a recovering drug addict, from the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area, gave me the following definition of a higher power:

"I have always considered myself an atheist, so I challenged the idea of a 'Higher Power' from the start. God is just a word; you may give it any definition you want. People talk and discuss the idea all the time, but no one defines what the hell they're talking about. A guy, who knows everything, doesn't need intelligence, a guy who decides all, doesn't need time. Everybody talks about it, but no body describes what the hell their talking about. Initially my power was the group. I trusted them, and followed them. But my sponsor told me that the group also makes mistakes and he does as well, so that eventually my Higher Power had to be something more profound, 'whenever I was ready', he said.

It wasn't after my second relapse, that I fully understood this concept of a 'Higher Power'. In the treatment facility, a counselor made me draw myself in the condition that I arrived to the treatment center. I drew this image of a fucked up dude, shakin' with the fuckin' anxiety of withdrawal, you know, about to puke and all that crap. I drew the best I could, and then I had this pretty funny image of me all fucked up, looking in the mirror. Then the counselor asked me: So, that's the Highest Power in this universe huh? It got me thinking, and then he said: 'man, you don't have to believe in anything, do you realize that? It's not God, as your parents told you. It's just the fact that you are not the Highest Power in the Universe.'

You wanna know what the higher power is then? My higher power is that door that you see in front of you. You can't cross it unless you open it can you? Can you control the future, or the past? You can't! Can you control what you feel when someone calls you a nigger, or a loser? When you parents tell you are good-for-nothing loser? You can't! You can react to it in different ways, but the feeling is gonna be there whether you like it or not. So then you got two choices? You can either try to control the world around you, try to control your feelings by suppressing them, or can just accept the situation as it is, and then looking within yourself. Most of the time you realize that whomever is trying to screw you is another victim in his own eyes, you know. Nobody can hurt you unless you let 'em. Is it the word, that's hurting me? O rather the feelings I have about myself when that word is spoken, and the power that I give to the fucker that utters it?

My higher power is reality man, a reality that I could not live with before, and a reality that you know to exist because it's contrary to your fuckin' desires. 'God grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change', I can't change anything except myself, everything else, I can just influence. The only moment I can control is this one, this is the most important moment of my life, not what's past, or what is goin' happen. I can only control my actions now. That's it! Everything else is higher man; everything else is my 'Higher Power'. Everyone here has a different definition of the 'Higher Power', but we all know what we're talkin' about when we say God. God is just a word, and no matter what you think about it or how you define it, everybody here talks about the same thing when they say it: it's all that shit you can't control. That's it. There's not much to it" (Brent 2010 personal interview).

So that's it, there's not much to it. From this perspective it doesn't seem that much as a desire of initiation, more that "accepting life on life's terms" as the so simply put it.

And, finally the third Step is reached: "make a decision to turn our lives to this Higher Power". Which is basically accepting that the dream that these individuals were looking for, is not going to be fulfilled by the means they were trying to obtain it. "Insanity is doing the same thing and hoping for different results". They have not achieved satisfaction by compulsiveness, so they change their previous Higher Power, their previous God: the illusion that they will be satisfied following the norms and patterns established by the symbols and meanings of mass-consumption, changing their idea of satisfaction from the future, to the present. In this sense Oliver speaks about his former "Gods" or what he refers to as "golden calves", and how he changed these objects, and people's perceptions of him that drove him to compulsive emulation, towards an acceptance of the present moment:

"People tend to do Golden Calf's of objects, I can clearly see how in my history, in my life my Golden Calf was alcohol. I had a tendency to see people as Golden Calf's I see salvation in objects that are in my surroundings [...] I identified with alcohol because it gives you a feeling. I had a tendency to make 'golden calves' of people situations, institutions and people [...] For example I had a tendency of making the Catholic Church at least in some time of my life a Golden Calf. I don't have anything

against any religion, but the Catholic Church is mind made. What I learned in the program is that mind has errors.

Basically the spiritual program tells you that there is a higher power. This could be life, life is a higher power, there's technology, nature and science, these are all higher. These things are by itself a higher power.

People are not below you or above you, but at the same level.

This word spiritual has lost its true value as a word. Spirituality just means that you have to be at peace with whatever the surroundings are. You don't have to be a scientific person, or have super powers to see reality [...] reality is that within a circumstance you can only do three things: you can accept it that circumstance, you change it if you have the capability or can exist that circumstance, if you have the capability to exit it [...] But this is the truth; there is no science that can contradict what I have just told you.

In other words there would be someone who can deny that there is nothing higher. There could be some who could deny but probably he could be considered a sick person or a delusional person, which I was before I joined the Twelve-Step program I tried to control my environment but I never could. My definition of higher power can't be explained into words, because my personal experience with a higher power, has been of a feeling or sensual something that cannot be explained in words. Something finite cannot explain something infinite.

I still have plans, but now I accept that plans will never go exactly as I thought they were" (Oliver 2010 personal interview).

It can be noted here how he identifies a correlation between not having a Higher Power and his former need to control. I conducted a survey within the members of the Wednesday meeting, and 7 out of 11 members changed their professional activity after they entered the program, to something that they found "more satisfying".

All their "slogans" also suggest, that our previous assumptions are well guided:

“One day at a time” – The previous, can be very easily translated into, “don’t live neither in yesterday, nor in tomorrow.” As Brent said, “this is the most important moment of your life”.

“Live and let live” – Control is an illusion, live your life and forget about the illusion of controlling others.

“Let go and let God” – Similar to the previous one, let go of you attempts at controlling and trust those things that are “superior to you”.

“Progress not perfection” – Neurotic perfectionism is described by Parker and Atkins (1995), as the lack of ability “[...]to feel satisfaction because in their own eyes they never seem to do things good enough to warrant that feeling [...]” (Parker and Atkins 1995:173-176), which is also related both to in-satisfaction, compulsiveness and control.

“Go with the flow” – Acceptance, lack of control.

(Hazelden 2010 online)

A meditation book named *Twenty-Four Hours a Day* (1975) is issued to every patient in the Hazelden Foundation, the institution that “invented” the 28-day program, which is based in “Twelve-Step philosophy”. The poem they chose as introduction to their “meditation book”, is vivid example of the philosophy related to the present moment, that we have tried to explain:

“Look to this day,
For it is life,
The very life of life.
In its brief course lie all
The realities and verities of existence,
The bliss of growth,
The splendor of action,
The glory of power-

For yesterday is only a dream,
And tomorrow is only a vision,
But today, well lived,
Makes every yesterday a dream of happiness
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Look well, therefore to this day.

Sanskrit proverb

By Kalidasa,

Indian poet and playwright,

Fifth century A.D.”

(The poem was chosen by an A.A. member of the Daytona Beach Group)

(Hazalden Foundation 1975)

So, it seems that “Twelve-Step spirituality” can translate itself in a reevaluation of life, changing the dream of satisfaction established by the cultural meaning of our consumer driven society, to faith in “reality”, and in the present moment. The message of the poem may be interpreted as “As, long as you do what according to your knowledge and principles in life is “correct” in this moment, everything else, is beyond your control, including the dreams of future self-satisfaction.”

However, just as it was seen earlier, one of the most important meanings and symbolism awarded to commodity consumption, within mass consumerism culture/ideology is that of future promise, the “Twelve-Step program” also awards the meaning of promise within its Steps. The so-called “promises” are read before the closure of every meeting. But, it is very easy to note how these so-called “promises” are in complete contraposition to those awarded by the culture the program is designed to resist. They are the following:

“If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations, which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves” (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001:83-84).

Are they promising satisfaction through material means? No, quite the contrary, they promise happiness, peace and the absolution of self-worthlessness and economic fear, by the elimination of material desires and an interest in other human beings.

4.5 Religion

Before reaching the final conclusion regarding the relationship between the organizational structure and these first three Steps with and the previous conclusions concerning compulsive behavior and addiction; the issue of their relationship with religious organizations must be tackled. Probably the most influential definition of religion in Anthropology today is that of Clifford Geertz (1973):

“A religion is a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, persuasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Geertz cited in Van Der Veer 2007:482).

Based on such a definition it could be concluded, that indeed, “Twelve-Step philosophy” does have some of these elements. There are abstract symbolic meanings embedded within the philosophy that affect dramatically their formulations of a general order of existence. The symbols establish as well, persuasive long-lasting moods and motivations. And, finally it could be argued that these conceptions are clothed with such an “aura of actuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.”

Nevertheless, this definition must be analyzed within the context that Geertz (1973) provides it. Within his definition religion is seen as “[...] symbolic communication, in which a ‘symbol’ is simply seen as a vehicle for its meaning. These symbols synthesize the ethos of a society and its worldview. [In his interpretation], ritual plays the important role of making the worldview seem real. One of the ways ritual may do this is by resisting historical change” (Geertz cited in Van Der Veer 2007:482). Maurice Bloch (1985) produced a study concerning ritual within the Merina in Madagascar in order to address the previous. He argues that ritual “[...] refers to the other-worldly, which is removed from historical events, and that its form of discourse (singing, dancing, the use of material

objects – activities that have no ordinary referential meaning) also distances from the everyday” (Bloch cited in Van Der Veer 2007:482). The ritual provides a worldview, in which the day to day, is either hidden, or denied, and the world presented by the ritualistic practice is seen as more realistic. From Bloch’s (2007) point of view, the ritual also serves for other means, and these are related to the legitimization of domination, whether gender hierarchy or state domination. Ritualistic practices contain, many a times, an “antagonistic discourse”, used to conquer and subjugate death, and therefore extended to cultural categorization of what is “demonic” or “weak” (Ibid). This perspective differs from Geertz’s (1973) in the sense that it allows for attention to antagonism and violent conflict between groups. However, these two anthropologists do agree in the distinction of ritual from other social practices, and therefore defining it a separate category of human behavior. “Ritual thus becomes a universal category of symbolic behavior and part of a larger universal category, called religion” (Van Der Veer 2007:482).

Nonetheless, there is a fundamental problem in defining religion in such a universalistic manner as the two mentioned authors have. These universal definitions, derive from a historic genealogy of religious understanding that stems from concrete historical events in the history of “Western” culture and the “Western” understanding of the separation between the religious and the secular as different epistemological forms of knowledge and justification, that developed strongly in the “Enlightenment”. Talal Asad (1993) delineates this “modern” understanding. He argues that even though, the separation between the religious from the secular has always existed within the historical development of Christianity, “[...] a major shift occurred in the seventeenth century when the Roman Catholic Church lost its ultimate authority to draw this line” (Asad cited in Van Der Veer 2007:483). From this point onward religion came to have a particular and ‘universal’ connotation within the “West”, exemplified in the notion of “natural religion” as a fundamental element of every society, but also individual, in the “deepest sense”, is embedded within the inner worldview of every individual. This notion of “religion”, which, as said before, is shared by both the mentioned authors, is not universal and very much so ethnocentric, “[...] it would not be understood in Medieval Christianity nor, for that matter in a number of non-Western societies” (Ibid).

Asad’s (1993) genealogy of universal definitions of religions, calls for “[...] a social history of religion with an emphasis on the social conditions of particular discourses and practices [...] [and] [...] only through historical analysis can one deconstruct the common place

dichotomy of a supposedly secular and modern West and a supposedly religious and backward rest” (Van Der Veer 2007:483). Within the social sciences it has been common to conceive non-Modern forms of religion, specially when they are not a form of Christianity, as systems of belief that translate into irrational behavior, they have come to stand for irrationality, as opposed to their Modern and Western rational counterpart. Nonetheless, the issue of rationality within consumer culture/ideology has been previously discussed, as well as Sahlins’s (1976) considerations related to this very conceived distinction of traditional and modern societies (see Chapter 3.1.2, 3.3.2 and 3.3.2.1). Sahlins’s (1976) asseverations, on how modern societies are also embedded within symbolism and meanings, have already been mentioned. The symbolism and meaning that Sahlins (1976) awards meat, and the economical repercussions that these meaning translate into, is particularly interesting regarding this matter (see Chapter 3.3.2.1). Further more, in what way the mentioned example concerning rationality and the economic decisions that involve the purchase of a new car with the same use-value, than the old one, without understanding the symbolic meaning of this particular commodity within the cultural context in which is bought? The purchase would very well be described as rational behavior to a New York car salesman, but no so much to a member of a community that shares different symbolic meaning in regards to material culture. Rationality in itself is also subjective, and dependant on cultural meaning.

With this in mind, it could also be easily argued, that without the assumptions of rationality awarded to modern ideologies, the mentioned theorists definitions and descriptions of religious practices could very well fit the description of these “modern rationalistic” ideologies as well. Both, consumerism as a culture/ideology and Marxism serve to categorize social notions as “weak” or “demonic”, their symbols and meanings also “synthesize the ethos of a society and its worldview.”

An analysis of the characteristics of “Twelve-Step philosophy” and organization should shed some light in the matter.

Concerning the issue of the synthesizing of the ethos of a society and its worldview, it could be argued, that yes, “Twelve-Step philosophy” does influence dramatically these conceptions. However, the Twelve Steps were never designed to address the general worldview of its members in regards to his contextual existence as a whole, but rather “Twelve-Step members” found that a different worldview changed dramatically their

behavior with regards to addiction and compulsion. So, the first difference that can be identify, is that religions, as described by the mentioned authors, are of a generalizing nature, where as to “Twelve-Step philosophy”, is particular, and related to a specific activity and a specific purpose: overcoming their compulsive behavior.

Secondly, in regards to the assumptions that religious practices present a worldview in which the day to day, is “either hidden, or denied”, and the world presented is more “realistic”, a definition of what is implied to be considered real is absent. If “reality” is the cultural conception that material consumption will satisfy a human being in an absolute manner, some time in the future, is considered as “real”; and the belief that the individual is not “the highest power in the universe” and that his context is opposed to his desires, implies hiding or negating this reality, then yes, it can be concluded that the philosophy in question does indeed fit the description. However, I’d have a hard time assuming this description of reality.

Finally, after describing the organizational structure of “Twelve-Step groups”, their absolute compromise to a lack of formal authority, professionalism of its members, hierarchy, and therefore their rejection to the involvement of issues of politics, money and property within the program, I believe it would be hard to argue that practices within the groups serve means related to the legitimization of domination, whether of gender hierarchy or state.

So, could it be argued that these are religious practices? Well, yes. I will not argue that from a “Western” and “rationalistic” point of view, the society that is subject of the present study could be not argued to be a religion. Possibly, these arguments will be strongly based in the use of the word God or “Higher Power” within the philosophy. However, what would happen if these words were changed for others? For example: “reality” for God, or “natural order” for “Higher Power”. The program would still have the same effect. However, it is probable that arguing the religious case would be harder.

4.6 Conclusion on the First Steps

If the program is analyzed in relation to its purpose, is it not hard to conclude that its nature, whether religious or not, constitutes an attempt to divert the user’s need for control. It is possible that the use of the culturally established symbols embedded within religiosity have helped this purpose dramatically, since these are symbols already embedded with

powerful meanings. Meanings related to reward, fluffiness, happiness and peace that could very well compete with those imposed by consumerist culture. If the erroneous differentiation of “Western” opposed to “traditional”, based on “rationally” is taken out, and consider both consumerism and “Twelve-Step philosophy” are considered to be two separate systems of symbolic meaning that are at odds with each other, whether rational or not, the philosophy can be analyzed in a much broader sense as a reevaluation.

From “Rational Choice” perspective (see Chapter 3.3), these first Steps address a reevaluation of benefit. In general terms they address a reevaluation of reward. These Steps represent a reevaluation of benefits and rewards; from the illusory, to the concrete, from the future, to the present, from the dream of control, to the reality of opposition towards desires. A deconstruction of the dream provided by “Western” mass consumer culture, to an acceptance “life on life’s terms.”

In all the interviews (Oliver, Brent, Matt and Emmanuelle), the interviewees identify this “promise”. Oliver argues that the main characteristic that he awarded drinking, the reward he most valued from engaging in the activity was a promise:

“When I first met alcohol [...] my parents taught me that [drinking] was something cultural. The feeling and sensation that alcohol gave me was that of a promise [...] it promised me that I was going to be funnier [...] that I could have guts to do the things that I was afraid of [...] it promised me that everything was going to be OK. Alcohol has an anesthetic effect [...]” (Oliver 2010 personal interview).

And before, he mentioned that money was played a huge part of his “disease”:

“Before I felt that I deserved everything. I always wanted to make money [...] and approval, I would like to underline this word because it is a big part of my sickness” (Oliver 2010 personal interview).

In very similar terms, Matt another of the interviewees, describes his relationship with the purchase of commodities and the reasons he believed these would bring him absolute satisfaction:

“Well, I realized that I needed to be famous somehow, because everybody on TV had Big houses and big smiles and they were more happy than anybody I’ve ever seen. So I moved to California, nice people, beautiful women [...] and lot’s of money. I just kept dreaming of a different life that I was gonna have [...] I started enjoying my life less and less, and started listening to the voices around me and those voices are not the friendliest voiced ever. You gotta keep fit you gotta be looking right,

I started buying shoes left and right, going to the nightclubs [...] in Hollywood you need to get the girls fancy drinks like cosmopolitans and margaritas. In order to get into these places you need to dress right or have the right car [...] before I knew it I was living like a rock star but I wasn’t making any real money. Older gentlemen that were wealthier that I could ever imagine started giving me money for [...] request of solicitation of company and I started becoming something that I didn’t wanna be” (Matt 2010 personal interview).

The first three steps change the way “twelve-steppers” give meaning to reward or benefit, plain and simple.

And finally, in the previous conclusions of what does consumption entail within mass-consumer culture, and therefore what compulsive consumption is related to these conclusions (see Chapter 4.3), the proposed way that Twelve Steps approach these issues, fits the other side of the puzzle, and therefore hints, that the present work is in the right intellectual direction.

5 Consumerism and Costs

5.1 Responsibility

Up until now a plausible explanation for the usefulness of the first three Steps as a revaluation has been provided. However, if the proposal is to seem plausible in general terms, then the next Steps must also fill a similar role. If it is to be assumed that many of the causes of compulsive behavior rest within cultural meanings, then the next Steps must also be related to the revaluation of meaning. I believe they are, and just as it was previously done, before addressing how these Steps fill the previously stated purpose the meanings they attempt to reevaluate will be analyzed.

The previous analysis began with Belasco's (2008) triangle. According to him every decision concerning consumption, involves a tough negotiation between the dictates of identity, convenience and responsibility (see Chapter 3.5). The conclusions regarding the meanings and symbols that lie within the conceptualization of the value of benefit within the mass-consumerist context, proceeded from a study of identity. Therefore, the other dictates of Belasco's (2008) triangle, convenience and responsibility, will now be approached.

According to Belasco (2008),

“Being responsible means being aware of one's place in the food chain – of the enormous impact we have on nature, animals, other people and the distribution of power and resources all over the globe [...] or calculation as the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy once attempted, ‘the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations’”(Belasco 2008:9).

Contemporary economic theory, does take these into account. The bases of a “rational” choice represent a balance effectuated by the economic agent when pressed for a decision between the costs and benefits implied in the latter. However, as was analyzed before, economic theory shuns from doing any subjective evaluation of how economic agents value these variables. It also assumes that rational economic agents have the sufficient elements to consider these costs in case they value them (see Chapter 3.3.1).

Responsibility, in economic terms, represents the consumer's value for costs, whether those included in the price or those external to it. In Thoreau's (1854) words, "the 'amount of life exchanged' to get your meal from farm to fork" (Orr cited in Belasco 2008:6), that as economists have very well termed this is, at many times, "external" to production (see Chapter 3.3.1).

In the course the present work, glimpses of how our society values costs have been noted. For example the concept of how modern States calculate their wealth and annual economic progress in terms of GDP was approached. But it was also concluded, that these measures, do not take into account the external costs that State economies produce (see Chapter 4.2). I agree, many of these costs are not in possibility of being calculated today, but as it will attempted to prove, most of them can (if systemically approached), and have been calculated in the past. Nevertheless, in today's context, they are only evaluated when they translate into an immediate obstacle to the economy. They are important, only when related to economic growth, as it is understood in our cultural context (see Chapter 4.3). Buddhist Scholar David Loy (2000) comments that it is "[...] intolerable that the most important issues about human livelihood will be decided solely on the basis of profit for transnational corporations"(Loy 2000:16). He then cites the following data, and asks himself the following question concerning consumerist cultural values:

"In 1960 countries of the North were about twenty times richer than those of the South. In 1990 -- after vast amounts of aid, trade, loans, and catch-up industrialization by the South -- North countries had become fifty times richer. The richest twenty percent of the world's population now have an income about 150 times that of the poorest twenty percent, a gap that continues to grow. According to the UN Development Report for 1996, the world's 358 billionaires are wealthier than the combined annual income of countries with 45% of the world's people. As a result, a quarter million children die of malnutrition or infection every week, while hundreds of millions more survive in a limbo of hunger and deteriorating health [...] Why do we acquiesce in this social injustice? What rationalization allows us to sleep peacefully at night?"

He answers himself with an argument that echoes Sahlins (1976). As scholar of religion, he categorizes consumerism as the latter, and argues that the values embedded within this new holistic way of approaching the circumstances of our reality, operate in such a

manner that instead of creating cultural notions directed towards the realization or awareness of our relationship as individuals with our surroundings, they do exactly the contrary. "Employment is simply a cost of doing business, and Nature is merely a pool of resources for use in production. In this calculus, the world of business is so fundamental and so separate from the environment [...] that intervention in the ongoing economic system is a threat to the natural order of things, and hence to future human welfare" (Loy 2000:16).

Is fairness considered within the actions of economic agents in the present context of study? Sticking to rational choice, aren't there costs also affecting the individual? Do individuals care absolutely nothing about the impact of their actions on the community? These ideas remind me of Hobbes's (1996) proposition on "man, being the wolf of man". Nevertheless, this does not make sense biologically. Humans cannot fulfill their needs individually, as tigers, crocodiles or other species can. By biological logic, humans must have a natural concern of costs for their community and surroundings, or as has been colloquially termed, a "conscience". I remember my parents caring for myself in terms of direct consequences of their actions. But in retrospective, I also remember certain naivety concerning the consequences of many of their actions that influenced heavily the environmental conditions of my life today. "We're committing grand larceny against our children", was the charge put by environmental moralist David Brower when describing our reliance on waste full, unsustainable resources and technology" (McPhee cited in Belasco 2008:10).

Various ethnographic and historical studies, that show how systems of value, both in past and present societies have embedded within themselves, this very relationship of awareness between one's actions and the circumstances of one's surroundings, will be addressed in the next chapter.

5.1.1 Non-consumerist Notions of Costs

In his essay Population and Consumption, Contemporary Religious Responses, religiosity scholar Harold Coward (2010) from the University of Victoria, identifies various religious traditions where the latter is exemplified. "In the Jewish tradition the mystical thought of the Kabbalists suggests that humans must learn to limit themselves – their rate of reproduction, their use of natural resources, and their production of fouling wastes"

(Coward 2010 online). According to Coward (2010), Kabbalists reason that if God is omnipresent, then the only way for creation would be to “make room”, or in other words to limit Himself. Therefore, in the same manner, in order for a possible coexistence with our environment and future generations to be sustainable they must limit themselves. “Space” used by humans and human actions, is shared with their existential surroundings, the more humans occupy it, the less the surroundings on which we depend, will.

He also describes similar notions embedded within Hinduism. He cites Vasudhas Narayanan’s studies in relation to the Hindu epics, and puranas on dharma (righteousness, duty and justice) “When *dharma* declines, humans take it out on nature. It is in the *dharma* rather than the *moksa* or enlightenment texts that Narayanan finds resources for a Hindu response to the problems of population pressure and excess consumption” (Coward 2010 online). Coward (2010) mentions that Narayana has identified various texts with teaching that translate into concrete practices related to the issues at matter, in which the cutting of trees is discouraged and the planning and respect of nature is encouraged, “[...] even to the goddess Parvati teaching that one tree is equal to ten sons!” (Coward 2010 online)

Furthermore, when Karl Polanyi (2001), in his classical economic essay *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (2001), addresses the economic characteristics of “primitive” societies, he reaches some conclusions that are of interest to our present case. According to Polanyi (2001), in the time of the mentioned work’s writing, the economic hegemonic view considered that market and economic characteristics based in individualistic gain, were commonly in rule within all human societies. “No less a thinker than Adam Smith (1776) suggested that the division of labor in society was dependant upon the existence of markets, or, as he put it, upon man’s ‘propensity to barter, truck and exchange one thing for another’” (Polanyi 2001:45). However, he argues that up until Adam Smith’s (1776) time, the propensity of individual directed economy that the latter refers to, was “[...] hardly observable up on a considerable scale in the life of any observed community, and had remained at best, a subordinate feature of economic life [...]” (Polanyi 2001:46). Division of labor does not forcefully imply individualist economic pursuit. According to Polanyi (2001), division of labor can be traced historically much earlier than individualism and profit oriented market economies. The phenomenon is as “old as society”, and it springs from differences inherent in the facts of sex, geography, and individual endowment (Ibid). In fact, he asserts

that economic activity, opposite to be governed by individual's desires to obtain and possess goods, was in fact ruled by the need of social prestige, an issue that up until very recent times was not related to economic viability, but rather completely related to one's relationship with one's society as a whole:

“The outstanding discovery of recent historical and anthropological research is that man's economy, as a rule, is submerged in his social relationships. He does not act so as to safeguard his individual interest in the possession of material goods; he acts so as to safeguard his social standing, his social claims, and his social assets. He values material goods only in so far as they serve this end. Neither the process of production nor that of distribution is linked to specific economic interests attached to the possession of goods; but every single step in that process is geared to a number of social interests, which eventually ensure that the required step to be taken. These interests will be very different in a small hunting or fishing community from those in a vast despotic society, but in either case the economic system will be run on non economic motives” (Polanyi 2001:48).

As an example, Polanyi (2001) used the case of a tribal society, particularly a Western Melanesian community, in which, according to him, in case of survival the individual's economic interest is “rarely paramount”, since it is the community's effort and not the individual's which keeps its members from starving. In opposition, the maintenance of social ties of extreme importance, since disregard to the socially constructed norms related to generosity and honor, the individual would find himself cut off from the community. And, secondly, but most importantly, is the relationship that this social code of conduct has with the individual in economic terms. Since the individual depends in the community, in the long run, the fulfillment of reciprocal social obligations, serve the individual's best interests (Polanyi 2001:48-49). In societies as the previous, social prestige is meaningfully related to different activities than those related to individual economic affluence. Reinforcement of communal activities through practice takes place; “partaking of food from the common catch or sharing the results of some far-flung and dangerous tribal expedition” (Ibid) awards generosity and communal behavior a great “premium” measured in terms of social prestige. This behavioral pattern described by Polanyi (2001) could be argued to hold similarities with emulation. However, emulation practices as described here, follow a very different pattern than those studied before (see Chapters 4.1 and 4.2.1). “The human

passions, good, or bad, are merely directed towards non-economic ends. Ceremonial display serves to spur emulation to the utmost and the custom of communal labor tends to screw both quantitative and qualitative standards to the highest pitch” (Polanyi 2001:49). Even, reciprocity is not directed at the actions of particular individuals towards other particular individuals, but rather by “[...] a procedure minutely articulated and safeguarded by elaborate methods of publicity, by magic rites, and by the establishment of ‘dualities’ in which groups are linked in mutual obligations” (Polanyi 2001:49).

Polanyi (2001) then, asks himself a question: if modern ethnographers agree that in communities such as the one described before there is an observance of a lack of the motive of gain, a lack of the principle of laboring for remuneration, of the principle of least effort, and of any institution based on economic motives for that matter, where are then, the incentives of efficient economic production and distribution?

To answer himself, he proposed two principles of behavior that can be observed in such communities: the principle of *reciprocity* and the principle of *redistribution* (Polanyi 2001:49).

To explain and exemplify the principle of reciprocity, Polanyi turns to various ethnographic studies, but particularly those of the Trobriand Islanders of Western Melanesia.

According to Polanyi (2001), in the mentioned society, reciprocity works in regard to the sexual organization of society, family and kinship, and redistribution is “[...] mainly effective in respect to all those who are under a common chief and is, therefore, of a territorial character” (Polanyi 2001:50).

In said society the matrilineal relatives of the family share the obligation of economic sustenance. Therefore, the male in a familial unit is not responsible for his wife and children but rather for his sister and her offspring, whom he will provide with the best specimens of his crop. “[The male] [...] will mainly earn credit due to his good behavior, but will reap little immediate material benefit in exchange; if he is slack, it first and foremost his reputation that will suffer” (Polanyi 2001:50). Since the economic sustainability of his wife and children does not depend on his immediate action, he depends on the principle of reciprocity. Civic virtue is therefore meaningfully related to “social prestige”. The economy is only a smaller element of the larger social institutions connected with “good husbandry

and fine citizenship”. Emulation then operates in a manner that guarantees, the economic sustainability of the society as whole (Ibid).

Redistribution is also effective. Within said community the village headmen deliver a large amount of the island’s produce to the Chief. This is kept in storage, and it serves various economic purposes such as maintaining the existence of labor division, taxation for public purposes, foreign trading and defense provisions. However, “[...] as all communal activity centers around feasts, dances, and other occasions when the islanders entertain one another as well as their neighbors from other islands (at which the results of long distance trading are handed out, gifts are given and reciprocated according to the rules of etiquette, and the chief distributes the customary presents to all) [...]”(Ibid), the functions of this storage regarding a “economic system proper are absorbed by the” [...] the intensely vivid experiences which offer superabundant noneconomic motivation for every act performed in the frame of the social system as a whole (Ibid).

The previously cited Paul Roch (2002), identifies the same pattern within American “Aboriginal” societies, where according to him, the role of the individual within hegemonic American cultural values where a man worth is measured in accumulation of wealth, has never sat well in Aboriginal Communities “[...] and has often led to a growing alienation from one’s people. The foremost of Indigenous values are related to group, family, and community welfare. These are held in esteem far above any self-need or desire” (Bearheart & Larkin, Coyhis, cited in Roch Kretch 2002:1). P. Stewart one of the interviewees that he mentioned, even contended that “[...] the Native man who tends to be an achievement-oriented individual, is often identified as the oppressor and suffers rejection by others in the community, his own family, or by both” (P. Stewart personal interview, cited in Roch Krech 2002:1).

Based on the previous stated, is not difficult to argue that a notion of costs related to one’s community and environment, can be observed amongst many social group. From the previous exposition two recurring characteristics are found. 1) The first one is represented by a lack of practices that give meanings to the economic activity of the community over the individual’s. Here, individual reward is related to one’s position in society in terms of social prestige regarding good, civic behavior, as opposed to individual wealth, and therefore economic individual profit is not awarded value in itself. 2) The second one, which seems to be related, is an awareness of not only one’s position within the

community, but also with his context in a holistic manner, the “awareness” of the impact of one’s actions, but, what about consumer driven societies? How are costs this work’s context of study?

5.1.2 Value of Costs within Consumerism

GDP calculations of modern states, as a determinant of economic progress (See Chapter 3.4), serve as proof that a responsible value of costs in our society is different from the previously mentioned systems of value.

But it is to be assumed that individuals within consumerist culture are completely devoid of these notions and they are destined to continue this production of “external” costs, due to this lack of awareness? I don’t believe so. In fact, two cases (Adamah and Yunus’s Social Business 2010) in which business enterprises, regulate the impact of their consumption, will be analyzed during the completion of the present work (see Chapter 5.1.3)

And, what about the left? Ever since the Enlightenment, political groups have incessantly fought for political and economic fairness? As Kahneman, Knetsch and Thaler (1986) express in their essay *Fairness and the Assumptions of Economics*, “The absence of considerations of fairness and loyalty from standard economic theory is one of the most striking contrasts between this body of theory and other social sciences - and also between economic theory and lay institutions about human behavior” (Kahneman, Knetsch and Thaler 1986:285). Considering production, these costs are external, considering consumption they are not; not if consumers value them, but do they?

In order to address this question of value and costs, I have engaged in my own empirical research related to the subject.

5.1.3 Empirical Research

I initiated my investigation in Biohof Adamah; a commercial enterprise located in the outskirts of Vienna, which promised to be an example of a market offer of responsible consumption within a consumer driven economy. After asking for permission, I toured the establishment, learned about their procedural mechanisms, as well as the origin of their products, the amount of sales, and the external costs that they avoided in order to offer a

product, that contained elements of production and distribution responsibility, as part of its added value.

Markus Niemann, a collaborator of the project, was kind to answer my questions. The first issue of interest is the way that they describe themselves in opposition to other food distribution companies. In interview, Marcus explained that they use the word *Arbeitsgemeinschaft*, to describe the relationship between producers, distributors and workers that participate in said project. The philosophy behind the name the use to describe themselves is embodied in the direct knowledge they have of the conditions of production related to most of the products they distribute.

Specifically concerning some of the costs that were mentioned in the initial chapters of the present work (see Chapter 3.1), a difference between the amounts of food discarded by Adamah, in comparison to the “mainstream” food industry was observed. As was mentioned before, according to National Geographic, 27% of the food produced for consumption in the US, is wasted. However, Adamah, uses a system of ordering which greatly diminishes the quantities of “discarded” product. Adamah’s clients, order their food via the Internet with anticipation. Every client chooses from a variety of products that are to be delivered in a basket the same day every week to 4,000 to 5,000 families. Since there are minor changes to the amounts and diversity of products that these family baskets contain, Adamah can efficiently calculate the products that need to be distributed every month, consequently reducing their product waste to less than 10% (Neimann 2010 personal interview). However, there are costs to pay, for example the availability of these products, since they can only be bought either by internet, personally at the establishment, or whenever they offer them in a stand at the *Naschmarkt*. Furthermore, the difference of production methods entails production costs, and therefore Adamah’s products are about 30% higher than their equivalent in the market. It is easy to conclude, that some external costs, have been included in the price (Neiman 2010 personal interview).

The empirical research concerning Adamah, led me to conclude that in a consumer driven society, an offer of responsibility, will find a demand for responsibility. So, my next step was to attempt to discover empirically, what is the relationship between value and externalities within a “mass-consumer” society. In order to do this, I engaged in a different empirical approach, based in our findings in Adamah, and data I had acquired related to

the external costs of two everyday products: coffee and t-shirts (Ryan and Thein Durning 1997).

The following questions were addressed to 135 random individuals, who participate economically within what, according to this work's descriptions (see Chapters 3.3, 4.1 and 4.2), could be considered a "mass-consumer" culture. 50 questionnaires were presented to random individuals in the streets of Vienna, and the rest correspond to the answers of individuals within the Internet. The questions and the possible answers provided were the following.

After a section of general information, concerning age, occupation, gender and political views, the respondents were asked: 1) Do you believe that social inequality and lack of environmental sustainability is one of the main political and economic problems of our time? And the possible answers for the question were,

- a) Yes. They are the most important global issues of our time.
- b) They are important; nevertheless some other stuff is of more concern.
- c) They are irrelevant.

Then the following questions followed: 2) Do you value the lack of ocean oil pollution and the lack of pesticide pollution in drinkable water? 8) Do you value working conditions and worker well being of under developed countries? 9) Do you value the environmental conditions of the rain forest? The possible answers for these were:

- a) It concerns me deeply
- b) It concerns me
- c) It doesn't concern me much
- d) I could not care less

I then asked, Do you know where the fabric of your shirt/t-shirt/blouse, or the soles of your shoes were, made and under what conditions? The following possible answers, were provided:

- a) I know precisely where and what are the circumstances behind their production.
- b) I am at this moment aware of the country where it was produced.

c) I don't know.

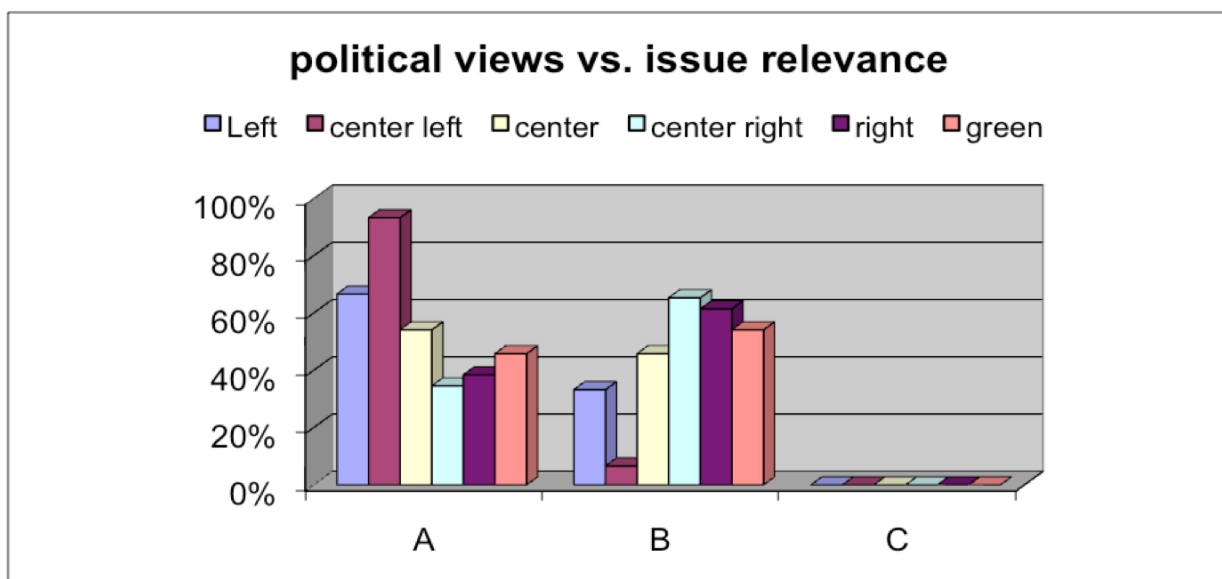
Finally, the respondents were asked if they owned a colored t-shirt, and if they drank coffee regularly. To which a yes or no answer sufficed.

The costs, provided by the Sightline Institute in Seattle (1997), regarding coffee and t-shirt production and related to the initial questions were then enumerated: the environmental impact of these two products, as well as the economic consequences and the labor conditions that their production implies in third world countries.

The respondents were asked about the awareness of the mentioned facts. And, finally it was asked, that in case they could have this information present at the time of purchase, if they'd be realistically and honestly, willing to pay an increase of 20 to 50 percent of the final price of the product mentioned, if hypothetically speaking, this increase would prove to significantly aid in the solution of the issues. The possible answer was yes, no or maybe.

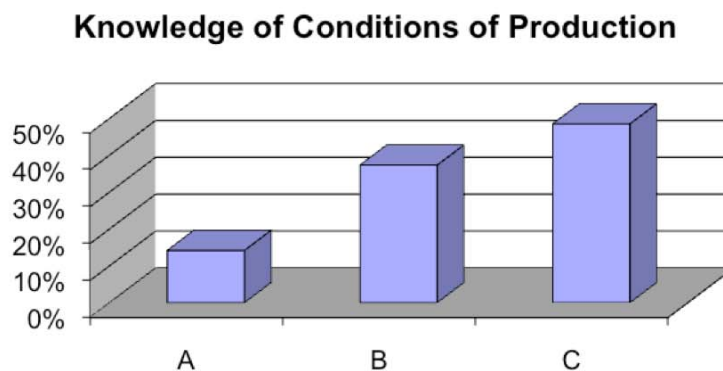
The results of the described empirical research are the following:

-The following graph shows how, according to what they stated their political preferences were, people responded to the question concerning social equality, and environmental sustainability. Answers: A) Yes. They are the most important issues. B) They are important, but some stuff is of more concern. And, C) they are irrelevant.



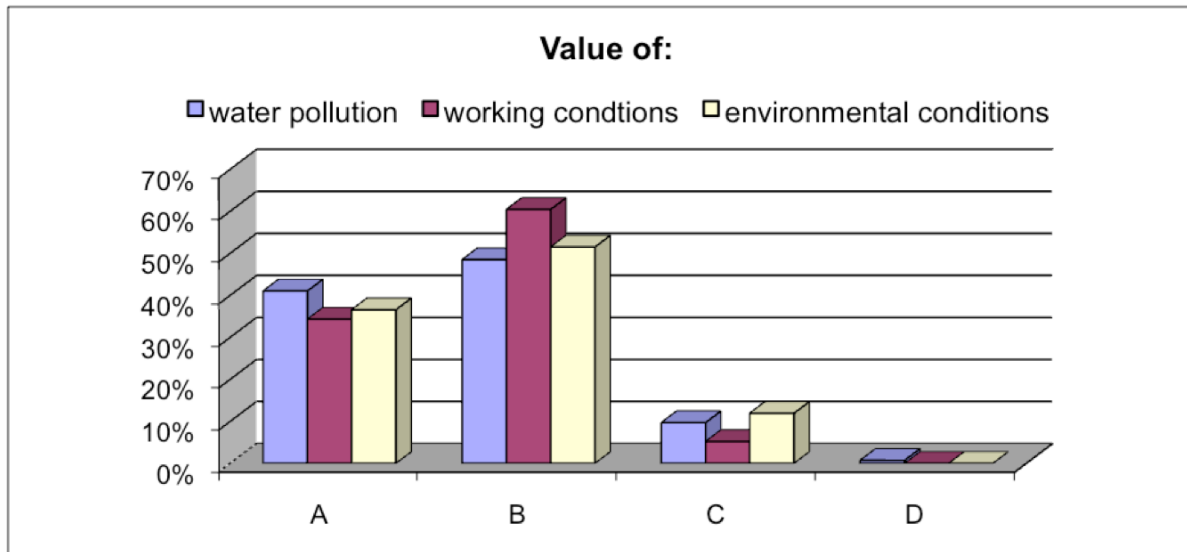
It is clearly observed, how the majority of people who consider these issues as the most important, consider their political preferences to be situated in the center-left. Followed by the left, and then the center. People on the right and center-right, have very similar views. 35% on the center-right, and 38% on the right considered these issues to be the most important of our time. And 65% and 62% respectively answered choice B. What is very interesting is that those who classified themselves, as purely green, answered in very similar terms to the right. And of course, no one, answered choice C. Nobody considered these issues to be irrelevant.

The following graph, shows the percentage of people that, when asked where and under what conditions were the soles of their shoes and the fabric of their shirt was made, chose one of the following answers: A) I know precisely where they were made, and how, B) I am only aware of the country of production, and C) no idea whatsoever.



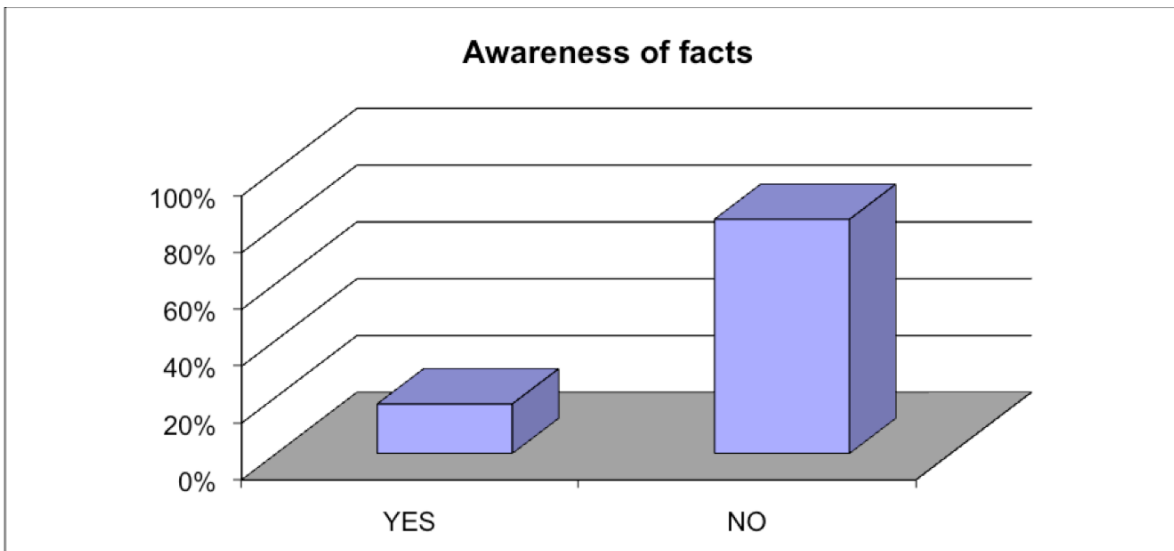
14% of people considered that they were aware of the place and circumstance of production of their goods. 37% percent knew only the place were they were produced. And, 49% had no clue whatsoever, even though the goods themselves state the location.

-The next graph is an extremely important one. It shows the concerns for three issues: water pollution, working conditions of “underdeveloped countries”, and environmental conditions of the rain forest. Answer A) corresponded to deep concern. Answer B) stated, “It concerns me”. Answer C) said, “It doesn’t concern me much”, and, finally answer D) stated, “I could not care less.”



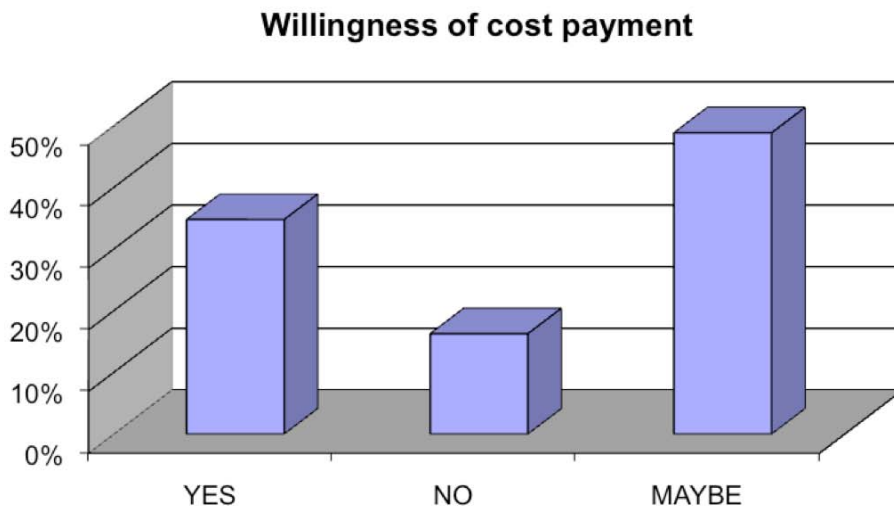
People considered having a “deep concern” of these issues in the following percentages: water 41%, working conditions 34%, and environmental conditions 37%. The second answer, “concern” plain and simple was chosen in the following percentages: water 49%, working conditions 60%, and environmental conditions 51%. Only 10% percent considered not being “much” concerned by water pollution, 5% by working conditions, and 12% by environmental conditions. And only 1% said that water pollution was of no concern of his. This answered was not received for neither working nor environmental conditions.

- The next graph shows the percentages answered corresponding to the knowledge of the external costs researched by the Sightline Institute, related to the production of t-shirts and coffee, which were enumerated before the question was asked.



83% percent answered that they had no knowledge whatsoever, of any of the costs enumerated.

- And finally the next graph shows the answers to the question: If you were aware of such mentioned facts related to your consumption, and you would also be aware that, hypothetically speaking, an increase of 20% to 50% of the final price of the product mentioned would significantly aid in the solution of these issues, would you be realistically and honestly willing to pay for these costs.



Only 16% of the interviewees answered that they would not realistically and honestly pay for the costs. 35% percent considered that they would definitely pay for them, and 49% that this payment would be under their consideration.

Basically the results show that people do care for the external costs that the production of their goods entails. It also shows that economic agents in the vast majority, don't make this connection, and see the commodity as an entity in itself, since most of them do not even know the country where their commodities were produced. A vast majority had no knowledge whatsoever of the external costs of production. And only a minority of people wouldn't consider the payment of these costs if they were included in the price. Which is to show that we were correct in our first assumption that an offer of responsibility would find a market.

But then the question arises, what about demand? Following "Rational Choice" theory (see Chapter 3.3.1), if we do value our relationship with our surroundings, why doesn't this translate more significantly into our economic decisions? If we are concerned of the effects our decisions, why is there such a palpable ignorance of their true costs? Why haven't there been stronger efforts within "consumerist-driven" communities to acquire information? And, finally, how is this all related to the compulsive consumption and the next steps of the "program"?

In order to answer these questions a thoroughly analysis the two elements related to a lack of responsible consumption identified before has to be engaged. Following the same method that was used to find the meaning behind reward and benefit will be used to find the meanings of cost within "mass-consumer" society.

The first element that can be identified is the nature of Western "individualism". The second is the nature behind a lack of awareness between actions and surroundings within consumerist culture. Since, individualism is related to the latter, it will be addressed first, in the following chapter.

5.2 Individualism and the Lack of Interconnectedness: The Story of Consumerist Responsibility

5.2.1 Individualism

Speaking about individualism Louis Dumont (1992) states, "In the last decades, some of us have become increasingly aware that modern individualism, when seen against the background of the other great civilizations that the world has known, is an exceptional

phenomenon” (Dumont 1992:23). However, concerning the individual as a single biological, spiritual unit, Marcel Mauss in his classic essay *A Category of the Human Mind* (1996) clarifies that “[...] there has never existed a human being who has not been, aware, not only of his body, but also at the same time of his individuality, both spiritual and physical” (Mauss 1996:3). But, then, in the same publication, he agrees with Dumont, considering that “[...] those who have made of the human person a complete entity, independent of all other save God, are rare” (Mauss 1996:14). These statements that incite to question, what is then the nature of the notion termed in the social sciences as individualism? From the previous it can be concluded that individualism has little to do with the conception of a human being as individual entity, however, at the same time, from the previous analyzed cases cited by Polanyi (2001) (see Chapter 5.1.1), it can also be concluded that not all societies part from this physical and spiritual unit, to construct notions related to social and economic behavior. In order to solve the apparent paradox at question, it is imperative to analyze the manner in which various concepts related to the notion of person and individual.

Dumont (1992) solves the confusion at hand by specifying two different notions that are incorporated into the conception of a human as an individual being. The first is what is related to Mauss’ s (1996) initial statements on the physical and spiritual individuality, in Dumont’s (1992) words, it is “[...] *empirical* subject of speech, thought and will, the individual sample of human kind as found in all societies; and [the second one is] [...] the independent, autonomous, and thus essentially nonsocial moral being, who carries our paramount values and is found primarily in our ‘modern’ ideology of man and society” (Dumont 1992:25). By specifying this distinction it is then easy to follow through with Dumont’s (1992) conclusions regarding individualism, as a socially constructed notion of the individual in regards to society, and vice versa, society in regards to the individual. “From [this] point of view, there emerge two kinds of societies. Where the individual is a paramount value I speak of individualism. In the opposite case, where the paramount value lies in society as a whole, I speak of holism” (Dumont 1992:25).

The previous analysis and definitions mark the beginning of a theoretical framework behind individualism, and the differences between “modern” and “traditional” economic behavior observed by Polanyi (2001). However, as of yet, the reasoning or circumstances that led to these notions in modern “Western” culture have not been addressed. These are

of particular importance the present work, because I believe, that within these notions are the values that the Twelve-Step program interferes directly with.

5.2.1.1 The Person

Mauss (1996) following an evolutionist approach, proposes that individualism has had a slow development that required various centuries and circumstances. He clarifies that his interest is not directed towards notions of the human being as a unit, the first of the mentioned inceptions, or in his words “the linguistic and psychological” which he refers to as the “self”, but rather a second notion, that of the individual in society, which, following “Western” and Roman tradition Mauss (1996) refers to as the person (Mauss 1996:1-2).

He begins his analysis by describing the characteristics of the “self” in various totemic societies in North America, where the clan is conceived as composed by various characters, or persons. For example, amongst the Pueblo of Zuñi, the social characteristic of person is not acquired until the individual becomes the members of a clan. This “social personality” is characterized by the use of ceremonial masks, and it is not considered to be intrinsic to the individual who possesses the characteristic for the moment, but rather it is an inheritance of their forefathers in the form of reincarnation: he who holds a particular social personality is believed, and treated for the purposes of all social practices, as the same deceased individuals who held this attributed formerly during their lives. They are the same “person”, even though they also are, a different individual (Mauss 1996:4-6). He concludes his essay stating how human’s different cultures have come to conceptualize individuals as “characters”, based on the roles that they perform within such societies. He considers that our current notion of the “self” is based on the Roman notion of person with its corresponding roles. And that it was not until the advent of Christianity, that a metaphysical element was added to our notion (Mauss 1996:20-23).

Another author, Michael Carrithers in his essay, *An Alternative Social History of the Self* (1996), criticizes Mauss (1996), and as his title implies, he proposes an alternative perspective. “[...] Mauss (1996) rendered as a single story what is in fact a complex plot, made up of at least two different and distinguishable subject matters, one of which, the story of the self or *moi*, Mauss (1996) systematically distorted or ignored” (Carrithers 1996:235). According to the author, even though Mauss (1996) did identify the difference

between the “linguistic and psychological”, from the social notion, he treated them, for social purposes, as synonymous, and as if the conception of one, was directly related to the conception of the other. He argues that both notions have a different story and only by considering his so, can a notion of being, be approached. So, he initiates his approach by complementing the previously mentioned differentiation.

*“Personne will mean the subject of narrative which Mauss tells most convincingly, that of the social and legal history of the conception of the individual in respect of society as a whole. The *personne*, that is, is a conception of the individual human being as a member of a (1) significant and (2) ordered collectivity” (Carrithers 1996:235). And, then the “self” or “moi” is “[...] defined as a conception of (1) the physical and mental individuality of human beings within a (2) natural or spiritual cosmos, and (3) interacting with each other as moral agents (Carrithers 1996:265).*

Basically two different notions related to the conception of the individual can be identified, 1) his internal reality as a unit, 2) and his external reality as an individual in society: the person.

I agree with both the mentioned authors. I agree with Carrithers (1996) that they are two different notions and have developed according to different circumstances. But also, I agree with Mauss (1996) in the sense that the conception of person has influenced, the way social actors conceive themselves internally in the “West”. Furthermore, following Dumont (1992), I’d like to propose that this precise incorporation sits at the base of “Western” conception of the self, where person and individual are commonly used as synonymous.

The notion of person in the “West” will now be specifically addressed. Adding to what has been mentioned before, Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown (1940) exposes the complexity the two different notions in the following way:

“Every human being in society is two things; he is an individual and also a person. As an individual he is a biological organism. Human beings as individuals are objects of study for physiologists and psychologists. The human being as a person is a complex of social relationships. As a person, the human being is the object of study of the social anthropologist. We

cannot study persons except in terms of the persons who are the units of which it is composed” (Radcliffe-Brown 1940:194).

Since in “Western” societies, social relationships are regulated by the state, the conception of person is legal. The definition of person provided by the Duhaime Legal Dictionary (2010) is the following:

“An entity with legal rights and existence including the ability to sue and be sued, to sign contracts, to receive gifts, to appear in court either by themselves or by lawyer and, generally, other powers incidental to the full expression of the entity in law” (Duhaime Legal Dictionary 2010 online).

It is clearly seen how human is not included in the definition. In fact a person is an entity, without consideration to what its nature may be. As Mauss (1996) exposed, a person is any entity with capacity to formally perform a social role. Examples of legal persons within ‘Western’ culture are States, organizations, business enterprises and basically every entity that acts within society with defined individual legal attributes. The German Civil Code, categorizes legal persons as the following:

Section 21: Non-commercial association

An association whose object is not commercial business operations acquires legal personality by entry in the register of associations of the competent local court [*Amtsgericht*].

Section 22: Commercial association

An association whose object is commercial business operations acquires legal personality, for lack of special provisions under *Reich* law, by state grant. The grant is in the power of the state [*Bundesstaat*] in whose territory the association has its seat (Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch 2010 online).

The previously stated is clearly observed within these examples as well. As Mauss (1996) stated, this division of the external-social self from the internal, is not observed solely in “Western” society.

Meyer Fortes, in his work *On the Concept of the Person Among the Tallensi* (1973) boldly states that this difference between “social role” or “*personne morale*” (Fortes 1973: 318-319), is common to societies in a general aspect. Mauss noted this within the Pueblo of Zuñi.

Etymologically speaking the word person has its origin in the Latin word *personare*: *per* means through, and *sonare* is the imperative of *sono*, which in turn means to sound, make a noise, resound. *Personare*, according to Mauss (1996) is the “mask thorough, which the voice of the actor resounds” (Mauss 1996:14). Not every member of Roman society had legal personality, or in other words could formally voice himself within society. Three elements were necessary: *status libertatis* (legal freedom), *status civitatis* (citizenship) and *status familiae*, which represented that the individual in question was not under the authority of his *pater familias*, or the head of the household. (Mackenzie Mackenzie and Kirkpatrick 2009:881-84). The lack of any of these legal attributes or status translated into the loss of legal personality or *capitis deminutio* (Mackenzie Mackenzie and Kirkpatrick 2009:80). Even though the Romans did not conceptualize their State, or better said their collectivity, as a defined society, as a person in the way we now do, they did award personality to collective entities. These were denominated *corpora*.

There were three basic elements of Roman law: the *personas* or *personae*, which were the only subjects of law, the things or *res*, and the actions or *actiones*. Slaves did not have personality. They were not subjects of law but rather objects of law, and their personal union in marriage, was not recognized formally by Roman society. Likewise, legal acts performed by non-Roman citizens, like purchase or sale of goods, marriage, etc., did not have formal recognition in Roman society and were regulated by the traditional customs of the society that they, respectively, belonged to. With the revolution of the Plebe, Roman citizenship was awarded to all individual members of the empire, and the distinction of person and individual began to be less noticeable (Mackenzie Mackenzie and Kirkpatrick 2009:83).

Since Roman Law is the institution from whence the “Western” present notion of person evolved, the previous will serve as an approach to the first of the “two different and distinguishable subject matters” that “make up” the complex story of individualism identified by Carrithers (1996). The other element is what Carrithers (1996) refers to as the “*Moi*”, which has distinct similarities to what Dumont (1992) refers to as “outworldliness”, and for the purposes of this work I will term “Internal Individualism”.

5.2.1.2 Internal Individualism

Dumont (1992) finds this “out-worldly” worldview in various different societies. Within societies of the Hindu religious tradition, he observes two complementary features: an external holistic social arrangement, where “[...] society imposes upon every person a tight interdependence which substitutes constraining relationships for the individual as we know him”, and on the other hand, “the institution of world renunciation which allows for the full independence of the man who chooses it” (Dumont 1992:25). According to Dumont, (1992) those who follow the latter see the material world as relative and distant, “devoid of reality”. The renouncer is self-sufficient, concerned only with himself. His thought is similar to that of the modern individual, but for one basic difference: we live in a social world; he lives outside of it (Dumont 1992:26). Renouncers live in individual seclusion, or within a community of apprentices that follow a “teacher”. Similarities between these types of Hindu communities and Christian monasteries is considerable, in the sense that spiritual liberation resides in the renunciation of the external world (Ibid).

Since, “outworldliness” can also be found in the “West”, in early and contemporary Christianity, as well as in some philosophies of classical times, Dumont (1992) asks himself if individualism in the West has the same origins.

“What is invaluable for us here is that the Indian development is easily understood and indeed seems ‘natural’. On the strength of it we may surmise: if individualism is to appear in a society of traditional, holistic type, it will be on opposition to society and as a kind of supplement to it, that is, in the form of the outworldly individual. Could we then say that individualism began in the same way in the West?” (Dumont 1992:26).

Carrithers’s (1996) theories of the “moi”, strongly suggest an affirmative answer to Dumont’s (1992) question.

Carrithers’s (1996) analysis parts from the experiences of Anton Gueth, a catholic German who in 1905 traveled east to become a Buddhist monk. What is interesting of Carrithers’s (1996) argument is that Gueth parted upon his trip with religious Christian notions of the “moi”, that seemed to be in essence, but not in dogma, compatible with the Buddhist

notions (Carrithers 1996:253). As he immersed himself, in the Buddhist worldview, he began to change his dogmatic notions for secular one's, until according to Carrithers (1996), he achieved a "rationalistic" notion of the "self" or "moi", which is described by the mentioned author in the following way:

"The Buddhist view is one which is at heart moral as well as universalistic. True, the analysis of the *moi* is aimed at one's own purposes. One is to regard the constituents of one's individuality and individual experience from the view point of what is skillful (*kusala*), cleaving to those states of consciousness and those acts which conduce to one's peace and well-being, and avoiding those which are unskillful. There is nothing moral in this. But this description of states of mind and acts – skillful and unskillful – is in Buddhism always fundamentally linked to another description of states of mind and acts: whether they are good or evil (*puñña* or *papa*)[...] What is well, skillfully done for oneself is the same as what is good, well done for others.

The reasoning behind this is that first, all beings wish well for themselves. Second, the form of that well-wishing is that they desire peace, security, freedom from harm or anxiety. Therefore, third, by acting to secure others' peace and well-being, the others will respond in like manner. What is good for me is good for you as well, and vice-versa; we all share the same precarious plight, between birth and death, subject to forces beyond our control. The Buddhist analysis of the *moi* is one which is profoundly moral and social, but the society which it envisages is that of all individuals acting face to face, each action of one individual affecting the welfare of another individual as well as his own" (Carrithers 1996:254).

Dumont (1992) argues that before the advent of Christianity, "outworldliness" was already present in the West. Based on Carrithers's (1996) illustration of Buddhist worldview (in which it is easy to find to strong similarities with Dumont's (1992) "outworldliness", the analysis of some elements of Western stoicism, which according to Dumont (1992), jointly with the Cynics and Epicureanism, paved the way for the Christian worldview will now be addressed.

In his book, *Philosophy and Spirituality* (2000) Mexican anthropologist Inkram Ataki, narrates the teachings of Stoic teacher Seneca, where a message of renunciation can be observed:

"[...] The Wiseman cannot lose anything: he has placed everything within himself, and left nothing to wealth or fortune, he is in solid possession of his assets, sine his satisfaction depends on virtue and not in the fortuitous elements of existence that can increment it or diminish it [...] fortune does not provide virtue, and therefore it cannot take it away.

[...]The spirit can only mature when in control of his traveling humor, the first sign of a ordered spirit, is the capacity of man to remain within stillness, in his own company" (Antaki 2000:241).

When asked, "Why is it the you have decided to renounce, even when stoics speak of so much commitment?"(ibid). Seneca answers, "Meditative contemplation is highest form of action [...] The Wiseman does not respond to insult. He admits the insults harmful purposes. Wisdom does not grant insult access to the soul. Since she is not harmed by the shamefull actions of others; insult cannot take space that has been previously occupied by moral good and virtue" (ibidem).

And then, concrete influence of Stoicism within Christian though, can be observed within the Stoic principle of "Natural Law", that according to Ernts Troeltsch (1922), was borrowed by the founding fathers of Christian Doctrine:

"Its leading idea is the idea of God as the universal, spiritual-and-physical, Law of Nature, which rules uniformly over everything and as universal law of the world orders nature, produces the different positions of the individual in nature and society, and becomes in man the law of reason which acknowledges God and therefore is one with him [...] The Law of Nature thus demands on the one hand submission to the harmonious course of nature and to the role assigned to one in the social system, on the other an inner elevation above all this and the ethico-religious freedom and dignity of reason, that is one with God and therefore not to be disturbed by any external or sensible occurrence" (Troeltsch cited in Dumont 1992:33).

Troeltsch (1922) considers that the Church used premises within the previously described concept to construct their social doctrine, “ [...] a doctrine which, albeit imperfect and confused from a scientific viewpoint, was to have practically the utmost cultural and social meaning, was indeed to be something like the Church’s dogma of civilization” (Troeltsch cited in Dumont 1992:33).

Dumont (1992) examines early Christian notions of State, prince, and slavery within the framework of “outworldliness”: they established that the world should not be judged; only God may do this. In similar sense the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, which considered poverty to be a virtue, are also related to his separation from the material world.

“As to the social level, the perennial rule of the Church is well known: it is not a rule of property, it is instead a rule of use. It matters little to whom the property belongs provided that it is used for the good of all, and in the first place of those most in need, for, as Lactantius put it, justice is a matter of the soul and not of external circumstances” (Dumont 1992:36).

Dumont (1992) proposes that the individualistic worldview of “Western” culture commenced as this “outworldliness” or in my own words “internal individualism” began to venture within the social establishment, as opposed to the individual internal sphere.

Dumont (1992) traces the beginnings of this process with Constantine’s conversion to Christianity, which in turn translated into the Christian State. “The Church could not go on devaluing the State as absolutely as she had hitherto. The State had after all taken one step out of the world and toward the Church, but by the same token the Church was made worldlier than she had ever been” (Dumont 1992:44-45). Nevertheless, structural inferiority of the State in regards to the Church was maintained at this point; Church leadership resented any intromission of the State into their sphere of jurisdiction: the inner world. Dumont (1992) quotes Pope Gelasio’s letter to Emperor Augustus, where this relationship is described:

“There are mainly two things, August Emperor, by which the world is governed: the sacred authority of the pontiffs and the royal power. Of these, priests carry a weight all the greater, as they must render an account to the

Lord even for kings before the divine judgment [...] you must bend a submissive head to the ministers of divine things and [...] it is from them that you must receive the means of your salvation. [...] In things concerning public discipline, religious leaders realize that imperial power has been conferred to you from above, and they themselves will obey your laws, for fear that in worldly matters they should seem to thwart your will" (Dumont 1992:46).

The policy was maintained until 753. However, the Church saw the imperious need to find a protection on a closer political entity than the Eastern Roman Empire, and therefore, Pope Stephan II crowned Frankish King Pipin as "Patrician of the Romans" and "protector and ally of the Roman Church", breaking with the after-mentioned policy, and marking the beginning of the Pope's political inference (Dumont 1992:49).

"What is of primary importance from our viewpoint is the ideological change that is here initiated and will be fully developed later on, independently of what will happen in fact to papal claim. With the claim to an inherent right of political power, a change is introduced in the relation between the divine and the earthly: the divine now claims to rule the world through the Church, and the Church becomes in worldly in a sense it was not heretofore" (Ibid).

Dumont (1992) comments that this change will be followed by various events in the history of the "Western" world that will conclude with the final complete and absolute incorporation of this "internal individualism" into the outer world (Dumont 1992:85-97).

Within all the traditions that have been mentioned so far, the "out-worldly" views, the theories of "moi", or "internal individualisms", can be observed. Hinduism, Buddhism, Stoicism and Christianity, all, share a group of premises:

-They all consider the intrinsic equality of individuals in relation to the absolute.

-Within these "worldviews" a notion that the problems of human kind find a solution within the human interior as opposed to the exterior circumstances of existence, is also noted. Human beings can be emotionally and spiritually independent of the world that surrounds

them; this translates to an avoidance of judging those circumstances that are exterior to individual, again the solution is internal.

-In consequence, a respect of everything external to one develops, as well as the lack of need to control of those external elements. The individual's main responsibility lies within his actions. However, this internal responsibility and search for individual internal well-being, as well as the respect for external circumstances beyond the individual's control, will translate into well-being for others. All these "worldviews" consider a strong interconnection of everything in existence. This is exemplified by the Buddhist notion "of all individuals acting face to face, each action of one individual affecting the welfare of another individual as well as his own", and by the Stoic Law of Nature, where it is through the internal world, where individuals are connected with their external reality. The most important value is internal well-being, so the most important costs are also those that affect this internal well-being. The responsibility with the other is, of an internal nature, and this translates into an external one.

At this point it is important to consider what has been mentioned before, the other notion, the "external" and "social" elements of the individual (the "Western" notion of person), where the self, was seen as an entity in possession of legal rights and existence. It is clearly observed, that all the premises that constitute the notion of the "Western" person are external and social, and opposed to internal and "outworldly".

By incorporating the premises embedded within "internal individualism" to the Roman notion of person, as a purely external entity in relation to society, all the premises within "internal individualism" tradition are transformed into something completely different:

-The idea of intrinsic equality of individuals in relation to the absolute, transforms itself, into the idea of equality of persons in the legal sense: towards the law of man, which is the ideological base of liberalism. The *ancien regime* had the seed of liberalism within itself. This incorporation is clearly observed on the Declaration of Human Rights.

-The notions that consider that the solution of the individual to rest within his internal circumstances and well-being, translate into the notion that these now rest within his external well-being. The ethical, which is an internal notion, becomes the material, which is an external one, leading to the way "Westerners" quantify their well-being in external means.

-But most importantly, the idea of “interconnectedness” of one’s actions with his surroundings is lost. Internal Individualism represents an ethical philosophy/worldview that regulates the individual behavior by the individual himself. All, external costs have their corresponding internal costs, and these are the costs that the individual is bound to analyze and consider within these traditions. The internal costs, are an important part of the Laws of Nature, through which justice, well-being, or “skillfulness” are measured. The most important element of internal individualism is the individuals search for inner peace, and therefore the diminishing of internal pain. These, are also the binding matter between the individual and his surroundings. As Carrithers’s (1996) argues, “The Buddhist analysis of the ‘moi’ is one which is profoundly moral and social.”

“External Individualism” represents the opposite: a demand for external respect of one’s actions, and a normative regulation of social respect. However, considering costs, it also encourages the individual to only consider the direct external costs of his actions, and therefore the idea of “interconnectedness” that lies within the internal in the former mentioned tradition, is lost. Ethical considerations are now paramount in the social sphere as opposite to the individual one. Society’s well-being is considered society’s problem, and individual well-being is a material problem, not an ethical one. If it is considered that from a biological perspective human kind, belongs to a social species, and that, apart from few exceptions, humans are found in communities and are unable to subsist individually, it is contradictory to believe that individual actions will not affect the rest of one’s peers, and that common well-being is not interrelated, “interconnectedly” to individual well-being, and vice versa, as Buddhist tradition affirms.

5.2.2 Consumption vs. Prosumption: An Historical Lack of Connectedness Between Individual Costs and external Circumstances

The “external individualistic worldview” led to one of the most important separations of “interconnectedness” regarding consumption, and this is represented by the way persons, be it physical individuals or social collectives conceive the costs of their consumption, as unrelated to the costs of production. As it was tried to be proven with empirical data, individuals within “mass-consumption culture”, do value the costs that are related with their consumption, however, they are neither aware of them, nor do they consider that they should be (See Chapter 5.1.3). As was mentioned before, within the notions of “external

individualism”, costs are perceived to be external and individual, I would like to argue that in terms of consumption this led to a separation of the process of production-consumption, into two different processes conducted by different individuals.

It will be discussed why this is the most important element on why “Rational Choice” theory hardly applies with paramount efficiency within our society (see Chapter 5.3).

Belasco (2008) argues that the idea of the interconnectedness that exists between our economic lives, or most accurately stated, between every human action and every human choice made, and our surroundings, is as old as culture itself. He accounts how this notion can be traced back to the Greeks, present in the myth of Prometheus, who paid with eternal suffering man’s capacity to eat a cooked meal; and, in the mean time, conquer various elements of his surroundings. He further complements his arguments by mentioning other traditional tales, in this occasion, observed within the context of Native American tribes, where “people (humanity) steal fire to cook and to warm themselves; but with their few technological edge come “[...] dire consequences, including forest fires, rain, and mosquitoes” (Belasco 2008:81).

In very similar, but rather more precise terms, both George Ritzer (2010) and Alvin Toffler (1980) consider the historical distinction of consumer and producer to be erroneous. Arguing that all production is related to consumption and part of the same process. They have created a new concept for academic consideration called prosumption (attributed to Toffler 1980). Toffler (1980) considers that in pre-industrial societies, what he calls the “First Wave”, the distinction between producer and consumer was not evident at all “[...] most people consumed what they produced. They were neither producers nor consumers in the usual sense. They were instead what might be called ‘prosumers’” (Toffler 1980:266). He argues that it wasn’t until the industrial revolution when a wedge was driven into society, which “[...] separated these two functions, thereby giving birth to what we now call producers and consumers” (Toffler 1980:266).

The change, according to Toffler (1980), began as agricultural society based on “production for use” changed into an industrial society based on “production for exchange”. He does, however, consider that the situation is hardly as simple as previously described, since in both economies some production for use and production for exchange existed.

However, Belasco (2008) argues that myths, such as the previously observed within “traditional societies”, which contain identification of costs related to human activity, can be observed even today. In the 1960’s when American society was starting to confront the environmental issues concerning their consumption, science fiction writer Robert Heinlein (1966) came up with a very powerful quote, which has become a common slogan regarding economic life “There ain’t no such thing as a free lunch”. Furthermore, according to Sociologist Claude Fishler (1999) the European Panic over the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) which was caused, in part by feeding animal residues to animals, “[...] was perceived as punishment for some human misbehavior that was caused, in the first place, by attracting some sort of a sanction, the most common description of this behavior being the conversion of herbivores into carnivores and even cannibals” (Fischler cited in Belasco 2008:81).

However, Belasco (2008) argues, that complementing these tales of unintended consequences (costs), are other notions, very similar to the ones embedded within consumerist culture that were studied before (see Chapters 4.2.2 and 4.2.3). Dreams of a return to Eden, the mythical place from which humans were banned and turned into savages (Ibid). He mentions the European Medieval Legends of Cockaigne, where a pre-Fall paradise was envisioned and dreamt. “Work was forbidden [...] and food and drink appeared spontaneously in the form of grilled fish, roast geese, and rivers of wine. One only had to open one’s mouth, and all that delicious food practically jumped inside. One could even reside in meat, fish, game, fowl or pastry, for another feature of Cockaigne was its edible architecture” (Ibid). Belasco (2008) argues that fantasies like such were present within the context preceding the “Age of Exploration”, and what Christopher Columbus referred to as “The Spiceries”, the Spice Islands of the Orient. The discovered territories promised to be such places, and in many a cases the resembled the dream, since as diseases decimated the indigenous populations, good and profitable land seemed “free” for the taking, and slave labor seemed to provide profit without work in exchange, without cost (Belasco 2008:82).

Belasco (2008) reasons that much of the colonial policy at the time was directed to the realization of this very same vision. As Hasia Diner (2001) states, “[...] for immigrants the New World’s streets may not have been paved with gold, but they certainly seemed full of cheap food, especially meat – the food that most enticed European peasants” (Diner cited in Belasco 2008:82). The institution of slavery remained under formal and institutional

protection for more than 300 years. The policy of “white” territorial expansion remained official throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The U.S. Federal Government subsidized population replacement of “Indians” and “Mexicans” by “White Americans”. It subsidized the draining of wetlands, the irrigation of dry lands, the education of high-tech farmers, and the development of the infrastructure needed to transport agricultural products to the towns and cities, using petroleum and other fossil fuels. “Favoring large-scale industrial food production that would supply the most food with the least money, federal policies hurt small-scale subsistence farmers and destroyed the same rural communities they helped to create a few generations earlier” (Belasco 2008:82).

The same pattern can be observed within British Imperial policy. As “cheap food” “cheap clothing” and basically any kind “cheap” commodities was sought for the Victorian consumer, invasion, colonization and industrialization of foreign land was in order.

“As one British economist boasted in 1875: ‘The plains of North America and Russia are our corn fields, Chicago and Odessa our granaries; Canada and the Baltic our timber forests; Australia contains our sheep farms, and in South America are our herds of oxen; the Chinese grow tea for us, and our coffee sugar, and spice plantations are all in the Indies’” (Belasco cited in Belasco 2008:83).

A more modern notion of these dreams of Eden, is embedded within technological utopianism. Material subsistence has, for centuries, been a subject of drudgery for human kind, particularly alimentation (Belasco 2006:4). Belasco (2008) notes, how in the nineteenth century reformers have tried to “disappear” food in a sense. Meals in a pill, foods synthesized from coal, centralized kitchens, and “self-service” electric appliances, appeared in the market as an attempt “[...] to make [food] less visible and less central as a burden of concern. Progressives applauded the modern economic shift from messy food production to automated manufacturing and white collar office jobs” (Belasco 2008:4). In regards to feminism, this shift was applauded, since it liberated “women” from the household. This is exemplified in Annie Denton Cridge’s (1870) novels where large mechanized establishments that could provide for one eighth of Philadelphia’s population in one sitting, at a cost lower than “[...] when every house has it’s little, selfish dirty kitchen” (Belasco 2006:110), are dreamt to free housewives, so they can endeavor in more intellectual activities, much like their male partners.

Many of these dreams have come to be. Technological farming no longer requires the hard backbreaking labor, and fully automated farms produce far much in comparison to when these labor was needed. McDonald's restaurants come very close to Cringe's (1870) vision, producing "[...] over 50 million meals a day [...]" But the result has been further distancing from the traditional rituals sensibilities, and practices of production – as well as some negative consequences for our health and environment" (Belasco 2008:4).

Added to this, are the attempts of the modern industry to distance the consumer from the mode and true costs of production, the mystification between the farms, the field, the factory or the ship from the commercial stands, and the dinner table. A practice that, as was noted before, when analyzing elements of meaning and symbolism awarded to economic life by institutions such a Disney or characters as Santa Claus, within consumer driven economies (see Chapter 4.2.3), have become a cultural practice. Concerning the efforts of industry in particular, Belasco (2008) notes how even though an increase of them can be observed in the nineteenth century, these were present since the times of the first world conglomerates such as the East India Company, which had as a primary purpose the supply of "exotic foods" and commodities to the English population (Belasco 2008:9). An annual report of the mentioned enterprise noted the following in 1701: "We taste the spices of Arabia yet never feel the scorching sun which brings them fourth" (Belasco 2008:4). The marketing of convenience is in fact completely and absolutely related to the meaningful and systemic attribution of symbolism to commodities, as entities separate from their production process. Belasco (2008) very firmly holds, that the whole "modern" industrial food chain has but one single product: convenience (Belasco 2008:56). And, convenience is in many ways the removal of notions that link consumption to production.

Basically for the price of the product, the food suppliers will liberate consumers from most of the costs that represented eating in former times, and that other "non-consumerist" societies still have to "pay". No more time wasted, no more "[...] labor, energy, bother, sweat, strain, skill [...]"(Belasco 2008:55), the dangers of acquiring a meal, preparing it and even sometimes digesting it, are efficiently assumed by the industry. However, there are costs are assumed either by other specific parties, or by humankind as a whole. The supply of convenient food is complicated; it represents the coordinated actions of millions of laborers around the globe,

"[...] who plant, tend, pick, move, store, chop, cook, wrap, sell, and dispose of our processed plants and livestock – not to mention many others who work for those who supply the suppliers: the manufactures of vital 'inputs' such as hoes, seeds, agrichemicals, tractors, trucks, refrigerators, paper bags, knives, hamburger/pancake grills, and so on" (Belasco 2008:56).

The meat packing industry comes to mind as a very vivid example. The main thrust of the industry for the last 150 years has been to "[...] insulate consumers from any contact with the disassembly of warm-blooded mammals into refrigerated, plastic wraps chops and patties [...]", Belasco (2008) quotes William Cronon, who in his environmental history of Chicago, *Nature's Metropolis (1991)* argued "[...] that the meat packing industry of the late nineteenth century actively encouraged such forgetfulness" (Cronon cited in Belasco 2008:4). The same could be said regarding the symbolism that is awarded to the commodities provided by virtually any industry, to the point where the consumers, have neither a clue, nor a mental relationship of the costs of the own consumption. (see Chapter 5.3.1) "Most [people] don't know where their food comes from" (Belasco 2006:55).

John C. Ryan and Alan Thein Durning (1997), two researchers of the Sightline Institute in Seattle, conducted a search of the "external" costs, related to the chain of production of various commodities. Their book contains a warning, in the preface chapter; they state that, "[...] reviewers of early drafts reported feeling overwhelmed or depressed after learning the true stories of how things are made" (Ryan and Thein Durning 1997:6). So they had to "lighten" their work a bit. Following is an account of their research results, involving two mass consumed commodities: Coffee and t-shirts. This is the information regarding costs used in the empirical research.

Coffee: In order for the cup of coffee to be neatly stacked in your pantry, trees in the Antioquia region of Columbia had to be cleared at the turn of the century. Even though Columbia shares less than 1% of the earth surface, it is home to 18% of the world's plant species, and has more bird species than any other nation. The land that is now occupied purely by Coffee Arabica trees, used to be filled with taller fruit and hardwood trees whose canopies provided refuge to the mentioned animals. These trees were cut down in the 1980's to plant high-yielding varieties of coffee, and increase their harvests. However, this also increased soil erosion. Apart from the birds, insects were also removed from the soil. Since pests,

proliferated, coffee owners resorted to pesticides that were sprayed by t-shirt wearing farm workers. The Germany synthesized pesticides, entered the farm workers lungs and the rest washed away and was absorbed by plant and animals. Workers than earn less than a dollar a day, picked your beans and fed them to a diesel-powered crusher, which removed the pulp that encased them. For each pound of beans, two pounds of pulp were dumped in the river. As the latter decomposed it absorbed oxygen, therefore killing various kinds of fish. A Japanese made freighter, fueled with Venezuelan oil, carried your coffee. The freighter was made from Korean steel, which was mined on aboriginal land in the Hamersley Range of Western Australia. Finally in New Orleans, your beans were roasted for 13 minutes. The roaster burned natural gas, which was pumped in Texas. The beans were packaged in four-layer-bags produced from polyethylene, nylon, aluminum foil, and polyester.

You then take your coffee beans out the bag, and place them in a Chinese made grinder, powered by electricity that is generated, in plant. You then pour eight ounces of tap water. In Seattle, this water came from a processing plant located in the Chester Morse Reservoir on the Cedar River. After, washing the cup, more water was used. The two teaspoons of sugar came from former sawgrass marches south of Lake Okeechobee in Florida. Water that used to flow in these marshes, is either drained into canals and sent to the ocean, or used to irrigate fields, where it picks up nutrients and pesticides. Populations of all animal species have fallen from 75 to 90% in the everglades in order to produce sugar. The cream you poured into your coffee came from a grain-fed dairy cow farm. The cow liked to wade into a stream and to graze on streamside grasses and willows. As a result the water warmed killing and complicating the life of salmon and steelhead trout that are natural to these streams (Ryan and Thein Durning 1997:7-11).

T-shirt: The polyester from the cotton-polyester t-shirt you are wearing, began as a few tablespoons of oil. The money used to buy said t-shirt is being used to send an oil derrick's spinning diamond drill bit into the ground of the Caribbean Sea. The derrick uses "drilling muds" containing diesel fuel, heavy metals, and water to flush away bits of rock and to lubricate the diamond bit. Drops of crude oil leaked as from the derricks as the oil was pumped to the surface. The cotton came from a 14 square mile of cropland

in Mississippi. The soil of the cropland was fumigated aldicarb, which was carried to nearby streams in the process. Cotton accounts for 10% of the world's pesticide consumption. A farm worker drove a tractor with a spraying rig that killed everything that might compete or eat the cotton plants. I can take five years of rest from pesticides for earthworms to repopulate the area. Cotton is also one of the world's most irrigated crops, in part because the pesticides have eliminated natural components that allow the water to run slower through the dirt.

Textile mills knitted the cotton-and-polyester yard into fabric; mineral oil was continuously fed into the machine. Then, workers washed out the oils; they bleached and dyed the material with chlorine, chromium, and formaldehyde. Only two thirds of the dyes were adhered by the cotton fabric. The rest of dye, which is considered a toxic substance by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, was carried off into the wastewater stream.

The fabric was shipped to a Taiwanese. Owned factory in Honduras, where women cut and sewed it into a t-shirt for less than 30 cents of a dollar an hour. They mounted the shirt on a cardboard made of pinewood pulp from Georgia, wrapped it into a polyethylene bag from Mexico, and stacked it in a corrugated box from Maine. The box went by freighter to a port, by train to an urban destination and by bus to the store where you found it (Ryan and Thein Durning 1997:21-25).

Belasco (2008) notes how, little knowledge consumers have of facts such as the mentioned. Australia, and Kuwait are almost hidden by immense piles of plastic wrapped "convenience foods", while people from Mali, Ecuador, and India seem much larger than the baskets of unprocessed grains and produce they consume. Somewhere in between, representing the world's "middle class", families from the Philippines, China, and Egypt stand around tables covered with raw fruits and grains as well as bottled soft drinks and bags of snacks" (Belasco 2008:9). It is clearly seen how through the time, the mentioned distancing of consumption from production, translated into convenience.

The analysis of how the premises of "Rational Choice" theory applies to mass-consumerist societies, considering everything that has been exposed in this chapter, especially the

empirical data that strongly suggests that economic agents do not have means of evaluation all the costs of their economic activity, will following take place.

5.3 A Lack of Interconnectedness and Rational Choice

A very interesting area of discussion within rational choice theory, concerning the present work, is the characteristics that economists are to award economic agents when applying said paradigm. "In many contexts, the rational choice paradigm is applied without condition on either information or skill of decision makers" (Hogarth and Reder 1987:6). Nevertheless, some consider that the paradigm should only be applied if the economic agents that are subject to study hold certain conditions regarding information, skill or other characteristics. Since, decisions however rational they may be, could very easily be argued to depend on the life's circumstances of the agents in question, their education, their conception of what well-being, or economic or social advantage is or represents, then it is not very hard to conclude that certain characteristics in consumers would affect their conception of the world, and therefore their decisions. In this sense Tversky and Kahneman (1987) in the mentioned essay (See Chapter 3.3), presented a case in favor of the issue at matter. Tversky and Kahneman (1987) use a psychological theory referred to as "Prospect Theory" to question some theoretical components of "Rational Choice." "Prospect Theory" also theorizes human behavior concerning choice, it evaluates how social agents evaluate potential losses and gains related to uncertain outcomes, by dividing the process of choice into two different phases: 1) a phase of *framing* (or editing), followed by 2) the phase of *evaluation* (Tversky and Kahneman 1987:68-70).

"The first phase consists of a preliminary analysis of the decision of the problem, which frames the effective acts, contingencies and outcomes. Framing is controlled by the manner in which the choice problem is presented as well as by norms, habits, and expectancies of the decision maker. Additional operations that are performed prior to the evaluation include cancelation of common components and the elimination of options that are seen to be dominated by others (the highlight is mine)" (Tversky and Kahneman 1987:73).

Within the framing phase, the cultural, educational; psychological characteristics of the economic agent are of essential importance, since for the framing of outcomes knowledge may be needed. In case the agent is limited in some of these characteristics to properly

frame a choice, he may resort to attribute substitution, which “[...] occurs when an individual has to make a judgment (of a target attribute) that is computationally complex, and instead substitutes a more easily calculated heuristic attribute” (Newell, Lagnado and Shanks 2007:71). Evaluation of costs and benefits takes place afterwards. “Rational Choice” theory does not consider the stage of framing, a stage that is directly and completely influenced by meaning, and particular characteristics of the economic agent in question.

They argue that there are two forms under which problems of choice may be presented to a social agent, “transparent” and “opaque”. If problems of choice are formulated under a transparent form, then the theories of “Rational Choice” may very well be applied. However, if these problems are presented in a opaque manner

“[...] people may well violate basic principles such as dominance or transitivity because of the effects of what they refer to as ‘framing’ and so on. Whereas Tversky and Kahneman do not specify the conditions under which people perceive problems as opaque it is reasonable to assume that they are related to structural aspects of problems and differences in individual levels of expertise” (Tversky and Kahneman cited in Hogarth and Reder 1987:8).

In this sense Nobel Prize laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz, has done extensive work concerning the relationship between social information and externalities. In his bestselling book *Globalization And Its Discontents* (2002), he criticizes how “Rational Choice” theories are applied indistinctively and in a “fundamentalist” way by international economic organisms as the World Bank to “developing countries”, and most of the times these policies seem to worsen the economic conditions of such countries instead of being means of “economic development”:

“Behind free market ideology there is a model, often attributed to Adam Smith, which argues that market forces - the profit motive - drive the economy to efficient outcomes *as if by an invisible hand*. Indeed one of the great achievements of modern economics is to show the sense in which, and the conditions under which, Smith’s conclusion is correct. It turns out that these conditions are highly restrictive [...] Washington Consensus policies - have shown that whenever information is imperfect and markets

incomplete, which is to say always, *and especially in developing countries*, then the invisible hand works most imperfectly. [...] The Washington Consensus policies, however, were based on a simplistic model of the market economy, the competitive equilibrium model, in which Adam Smith's invisible hand works, and works perfectly. Because in this model there is no need for government - that is, free, un-fettered, 'liberal' markets work perfectly - the Washington consensus policies are sometimes referred to as 'neo-liberal', based on 'market fundamentalism', a resuscitation of the laissez-faire policies that were popular in some circles in the nineteenth century" (Stiglitz 2002:73-74).

Stiglitz (2002) considers that even if Smith's "invisible hand" were to apply, there are certain conditions that according to the same theoretical premises are essential for free-market to operate, "[...] the market system requires competition and perfect information. But competition is limited and information is far from perfect - and well- functioning competitive markets can't be established overnight" (The emphasis is mine) (Stiglitz 2002:74). According to him,

"[...] an efficient market economy requires *all* of the assumptions to be satisfied. In some cases, reforms in one area, without the accompanying reforms in others, may actually make matters worse. This is the issue of sequencing. Ideology ignores these matters; it says simply move as quickly to a market economy as you can" (Stiglitz 2002:74).

Completely related to the latter, Amos and Tversky (1987), criticize this precise assumption, of "neoliberal" "Rational Choice" theorists in relation to information:

"The assumption of the Rationality of decision making is often defended by the argument that people will learn to make correct decisions and sometimes by the evolutionary argument that irrational decision makers will be driven out by rational ones. There is no doubt that learning and selection do take place and tend to improve efficiency. As in case of incentives, however, no magic is involved. Effective and immediate learning takes place only under certain conditions: it requires accurate and immediate feedback about the relation between the situational conditions and the appropriate response. The necessary feedback is often lacking for the decisions made by managers, entrepreneurs, and politicians because (i)

outcomes are commonly delayed and not easily attributable to a particular action; (ii) variability in the environment degrades the reliability of the feedback, especially where outcomes of low probability are involved; (iii) there is often no information about what the outcome would have been if another decision had been taken; and (iv) most important decisions are unique and therefore provide little opportunity for learning” (Einhorn and Hogarth 1978 cited in Tversky And Kahneman 1987:90).

So, based in Stiglitz (2002) asseverations it can be concluded that in a system of competition and perfect information, “Rational Choice” could very well be applied. However, if everything that has been presented in this chapter is considered, especially the empirical data, analysis, it is extremely hard for me to consider that perfect information is present even in the most advanced industrial economy. Beyond the implications that the lack of “interconnectedness” has on an individual consumer, couldn’t there be as well, characteristics, of the culture at study, that opaque the way products are presented, and the way consumers see these products themselves? Framing in one society could be affected by a completely set of symbols and meanings than in another society, particularly it is assumed that these decisions will affect the way the economy in said society is to allocate resources into “efficient” means. I have already tried to prove that economic analysis do not even take into account externalities as detriments to the national economy on the long run (see Chapter 3.4). But one can hardly argue that the depletion of oil reserves does not constitute a significant impact in the economy of the United States, or the pollution of drinkable water for that matter. But even economic agents would be determined to account these costs as part of our economic culture, it would be a painstaking endeavor, an endeavor that governments could very well accomplish, but what about common consumers?

The researchers of the Sightline Institute explain that their research is far from specific. And that their stories are “composite pictures” not “photographs”, based in industry norms and an extensive research of production patterns, distribution networks both globally and in the American Northwest. However, according to them, high standard evidence was unattainable, “[...] we chose this composite approach in part because tracking a particular firm’s product and its components is extremely difficult: companies tend not to welcome intimate examination of all their processes. This reticence is especially true for suppliers

that operate far from the limelight of brand names and public relations officials” (Ryan and Thein Durning 1997:7-11).

In reality, from this perspective, the analysis regarding the application of “Rational Choice” theories to mass consumer societies is rather simple: “Rational Choice” theory considers that economic agents act rationally when considering the costs and the benefits of their actions (See Chapter 3.3.1). But then, it has been observed in the context of the present work, that consumerist societies have socio-culturally constructed notions of individual behavior that consider consumption to be “interconnected” to very few costs, other than the price (See Chapters 5.1 and 5.2). And, even if individuals do make this connection, it is systematically impossible for them to know the true costs of their economic behavior. The option for rational individuals to consider all the costs of their consumption is simply not there. How then, can rational choice work? If it’s basic assumption is the balance of costs and benefits by economic agents, and they don’t even have the information tools that allow us to value the true costs of our consumption, how can it work? I don’t believe it does, not fully, not under these circumstances. In our society the hegemonic economic manner in which all costs are conceived, is opaque.

5.4 The Economic Left: Resistance to Capitalism within the same Hegemonic Constructs

A question has been left unanswered: What about the left? What about resistance? Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton, in their book *Nations Unbound* (1994) have come to conclusions about particular characteristics of resistance towards hegemonic cultural constructs that are of particular importance for the next analysis. From studying transnational resistance to hegemonic cultural nationalistic constructs, within the society in which they reside, they have noted how the resistance these communities pose towards hegemonic constructs often takes the form of the very same hegemonic notions they are trying to resist. “In our reading, hegemonic processes include all the dynamics of consent, both the ‘taken for granted’ practices, the commonsensical and customary representations, as well as the formal ideologies that both engender consent and undermine it” (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton 1994:13). They state that they agree with Stuart Hall, who in his work *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (1988) concluded that “ [...] hegemony never has only one character [...] or predominant tendency [...] it is always ‘deconstruction and reconstruction’” (Hall cited in

Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton 1994:13). Based in the previous they consider that resistance hardly escapes its hegemonic cultural premises. “Whether people plead for remediation, organize for reform, or rise up in revolution, the thoughts they think, the words they speak are never free of hegemonic construction (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton 1994:13).

With exception of environmentalism and various forms of Anarchism, it will be attempted to demonstrate, that concerning the problems of a lack of “interconnectedness”, that derive from individualism, most of the economic left, has had trouble to escaping from these very same cultural constructions of meaning regarding economic activity, and connectivity. The subject of the next analysis will be the most successful alternative to capitalism in the 19th and 20th centuries: Marxism.

5.4.1 *Marxism and Interconnectedness*

Marxism is the most important theory that could be said poses an argument against the idea that production, not consumption holds the most important place within the economic system, and therefore holds a case against consumer agency and liberal economics. This is mainly because commodity value, as conceptualized by Marx (1984) and Marxists doesn't derive from the subjective value that the final consumer may award said commodities, but from the “average socially necessary labor time required for its production” (Marx 1984:14), or in other words, from the work needed for the production of goods.

In order to fully explain Marxist theory of value the Marxist conception of a commodity must be initially analyzed. According to Marx (1984) a commodity is a “[...] product that had not been manufactured for direct use and consumption, but for sale in the market” (Bocock 1993:36). It is important to mention that from a Marxist point of view these commodities also have to be the product of a social relation. In feudal times, products meant to be exchanged in the market were produced; nevertheless, these products were the outcome of a different social relationship, one in which “[...] the producer laborer owned the means of production that he employed [...] And “while the ‘master’ would employ individuals as apprentices, it would be for a relatively short period of time until they mastered the trade and went on to become independent producers” (Bober 2008:16). No,

from a Marxist perspective these commodities, in order to acquire the meaning proposed, have to emanate from a context of social relations that reflect class division.

He then goes on to theorize the value of these commodities. Since commodities, according to Marx (1984) are to be exchanged, and from this exchange producers establish a quantitative relationship normally expressed in money, he then theorizes that this quantitative amount represents the value of the commodity, its exchange-value (Marx 1984:14). Marx (1984) then asks himself, what does this exchange value represent? What is the true nature of the value that is being exchanged? Well, initially there's the use-value of the commodity. Use-value, represents the value a commodity has according to its usefulness. The use-value of a hair dryer would be its ability to dry hair and a pencil's use-value would reside in its ability to write. The other characteristic that is present in all commodities is that they emanate from labor; all commodities are produced by the transformation of natural material into use-value, by human labor. Since the use-values of commodities are not comparable to each other, and the natural material from where the commodity was produced, does not represent a commodity in itself, without the use of labor, therefore none of this is represented in the exchange-value. "As use-values, commodities are, above all of different qualities, but as exchange values they are merely different quantities, and consequently do not contain an atom of use-value" (Marx 1984:14). By leaving out of consideration "[...] the use value of commodities, they only have one common property left, that being products of labor" (Ibid).

He then comes to the conclusion that serves as the basis of his entire theoretical framework: "The value of a commodity is equal to the average socially necessary labor time required for its production" (Ibid). By "average socially necessary labor time required" he solves the problem of a commodity being of greater value if produced by an unskilled laborer that had to employ more time, and therefore more labor, than average in its production. As well as the question of what happens if technological advances significantly reduce the time and labor needed to produce a commodity. Marx (1984) explains that there may be commodities that do not require a transformation of natural material by human labor and have exchange and use-value. An example would be soil, air, or water that streams freely into a community. Also there are certain goods that are given use-value through labor but do not have exchange value, these are not commodities, they represent a produced good made to satisfy the need of the producer who employed his own labor.

These are the basic premises that Marx (1984) uses to theorize alienation and exploitation of workers. Since, the value of commodities is equal to the socially necessary labor to produce them, and capitalists who are legally the owners of the means of production and of the products themselves, workers are alienated from the products of their own work, and from their work as well. Workers are then forced to sell the value of their labor, the fountain of wealth of every capitalistic economy. The capitalist pays a certain amount of money to the laborer therefore reducing this labor to a commodity in itself. The surplus of value that emanates from this transaction is the source of the capitalist's wealth, and the natural conclusion that stems from this paradigm is the exploitation of labor by the capitalists. Work is therefore alienated from the workers themselves (Marx 1984:14-16)

Nevertheless, even though Marx (1984) does not take into account a very important variable in his model, the role of the consumer in terms of commodity value, he does implicitly take into account the consumer in his conception of a commodity. Since for Marx (1984) a commodity comprehends a product of labor that is not produced for immediate consumption, or production for use, but rather production for exchange, his economic analysis of the situation does not end with action on part of the capitalist. The source of value may, very well be, the labor employed to produce it, but the final purpose of the commodity is not fulfilled until this commodity is exchanged, and the surplus value cannot be capitalized until it is paid for, or in Sahlins words "without consumption, the object does not complete itself as a product: a house unoccupied is no house" (Sahlins 1976:169). And who is at the end of this process implicit in the Marxist commodity description? Who pays the capitalist for his "exploitation"? Who is the final purchaser of this exploited labor? The consumer. As the consumer is the final link, even in a Marxist conception of economy, he has the privileged position, to decide if, or not to buy said commodity. And the producer, the capitalist, depends on this decision. So, of course, the consumer does influence the value of the commodity, for in the end it is he the one how has to value it in order to desire its consumption.

I believe that Marx's (1984) most serious mistake in this regard is the attempt to objectify value. Marshal Sahlins (1976) is very critical of said economic perspective, "[...] assuming that use-values transparently serve human needs, that is, by virtue of their evident properties, he gave away the meaningful relations between men and objects essential to the comprehension of production in ant historical form" (Sahlins 1976:169). One of the most important contributions from anthropology to the social sciences is precisely the

impact of culture within the conception of one's life world, including, of course, one's values (See Chapter 3.1.2). Accepting the "Labor Theory of Value" as scientific would imply considering materialism as universal. Sahlins (1976) concretely points out this lack of cultural analysis in Marxist conception of commodity value:

"In treating production as a natural-pragmatic process of need satisfaction, it risks an alliance with bourgeois economics in the work of raising the alienation of persons and things to a higher cognitive power. The two would join in concealing the meaningful system in the praxis by the practical explanation of the system. If that concealment is allowed, or smuggled as a premise, everything would happen in a Marxist anthropology as it does in the orthodox economics as if the analyst were duped by the same commodity creation and movement of goods solely from their pecuniary quantities (exchange-value), one ignores the cultural code of concrete properties governing utility and so remains unable to account for what is in fact produced" (Sahlins 1976:166).

Since production, be it of commodities in a Marxist sense, or immediate-use, is always destined to fulfill the needs of society, or in other words is destined for consumption, and anthropology has proven values to be relative (see Chapter 3.1.2), dependent on one's vision of the world, then I can't see why subjective value given to commodities by consumers, who are in every case the users of these commodities, is such an avoided conception. I do not wish to subtract importance to Marx's (1984) statement when he says that

"[...] as labor is a creator of use value, is useful labor, it is a necessary condition, independent of all form of society, for the existence of the human race; it is an eternal nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchanges between man and nature, and therefore no life" (Marx 1984:14).

and therefore, the assumption that for every commodity that is produced, labor is needed. Marxist analysis on the value of commodities is too simple and generalizing. There are other elements involved in the production of commodities, like for example creativity in its design, which also share part of the value (in a strictly Marxist sense), and without which, the commodity could not be produced. In Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood's (1996)

words: “Nothing has value by itself: what is the good of one shoe without the other? a comb for a bald head? Since value is conferred by human judgments, each thing’s value depends on its place in a series of complementary other objects” (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:xxii).

I believe Marx’s (1984) theory of labor is too strict. If the point is to legitimize socialism, or resistance against an “unfair” relationship concerning the means of production, other alternatives exist. An example may be the way the “the principle of equal liberty”, “the axiom of sociality” and the “all-affected principle”, are used by Robin Archer (2002) to justify his proposals of economic democracy:

“The first proposition is ‘the principle of equal liberty’: the principle that every human individual should have the maximum liberty that is compatible with an equal liberty for all other individuals. In a separate argument I show that this principle forms the basis for a ‘constitutive morality’ of socialism. The second proposition is a weak version of the ‘axiom of sociality’: the axiom that human individuals are inherently social in nature. By looking at the relationship between these two propositions I derive the ‘all-affected principle’ and the ‘All-subjected principle’ which I take to be the fundamental principles of democracy. According to the all subjected principle, all those, and only those, who are subject to the authority of an association should exercise direct decision-making control over that association. Other affected individuals should exercise indirect control, such as that which consumers exercise through the market” (Archer 2002:8-9).

Even though such propositions may be considered of a philosophical nature as opposed to “scientific”, “scientific” attempts to legitimize socialism have not held their own against empirical and historical accounts. The model is so strongly at odds with the market, that it doesn’t even permit analysis of methods of income diversification through avoidance of communitarian control.

Although the fact that his theory of value does not hold his own, may not alter the Marxist conception of exploitation of labor (which is completely valid from my point of view), it does alter dramatically his conceptions of social agency, especially in today’s context of capitalist economies and mass consumption, where the consumers are the masses, the

majorities, the workers themselves. If this is analyzed through the perspective of another historical injustice, slavery, exploited labor would be the slaves, and capitalists are the slave traders, since this is what they trade, exploited labor. However, the owners the final purchasers of this labor, which in a Marxist perspective is deposited within the commodities, are not the capitalists, or but rather the consumerist masses, a category of which the workers are also part of.

Nevertheless, Marx (2002) does award workers agency. However, it is not economic agency, but rather political. This is established in the Communist Manifesto and even designs of form in which this agency is take place, is described:

“The Communist Revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas.

But let us have done with the Bourgeoisie objections to Communism.

We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling as to win the battle for democracy.

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.

Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionizing the mode of production” (Marx 2002:88-89).

So, if he awards this kind of agency to workers, wouldn't be easier to award them economic agency as the consumers of the products they produce, and therefore as

significant source of the same capital that is exploiting them? If the proletariat becomes class-conscientious then why don't they just stop consuming products from those capitalists that do not share their interests and begin consuming from those that do? The answer to these questions is "interconnectedness". Wouldn't that create a system in which, through consumption, they would have the means of changing their reality (given that the market works without interference of unfair trade as monopolies, dumping, or subsidies).

It would seem from a reading of the *Communist Manifesto* than when Marx (2002) speaks of the proletariat in counter position of the capitalists, that he is talking about two categories, in which circumstances of existence have created such a difference, that their nature is different in itself. He does not award capitalists the capacity to govern fairly, but he does award the workers the capacity to do so, even though after revolution these circumstances have changed. This implies a contradiction between nature and circumstance. It would seem they belong to a different species, something that was even captured by George Orwell in his famous novel *Animal Farm* (1979). Nevertheless, this is far from reality, since workers and capitalists are both part of the same species and arguably of the same culture. What about the possibility of a worker who by any means becomes the owner of means of production, or, for example, a storeowner, or a craftsman who succeeds economically and hires other workers? What I'm trying to get at is not that capitalism is a fair system, but rather that it is composed of the same category of agents: humans. In the end resistance to "Rational Choice" through Marxist theoretical propositions, considering that today's consumer driven economy, is driven by mass consumption (see Chapter 4.1), is the following: Is the famous phrase *Homo homini lupus* true? Is man the wolf of man, as so euphorically Hobbes (Hobbes 1651) argued? Do we become the enemies of our own kind whenever we have a chance to get an advantage? Is the only way to solve this, the prohibition of advantage? Is the State the only way to protect us from ourselves? It's a difficult question since the State is also composed of wolves. And those in charge will have this advantage as well. I mean Fidel Castro has been in power longer than any Habsburg monarch.

Even though the Marxist theory of value hardly holds it own against various empirical affirmations, there is, I believe, much truth in many of his premises regarding exploitation and the consequences of underpaid labor. By not including the category of consumer in his theory of value, not realizing that producers do have someone to respond to, and therefore realizing that capitalism would develop as it has into a consumer driven

economy, it also cancels any possibility of change through the means of consumption. Corrigan (1997) illustrates this fact in his introduction:

“Production generally implies more than subsistence, and the question of a surplus to be distributed has been rather a contentious one in class societies. Production here becomes subsistence for some but the source of consumptionist pleasures for others, and the reader may recall Marx’s outrage at this fact on his writings on alienation. But now the majority of the populace have access to the ever growing consumerist fruits of the productivist tree, and so perhaps it is time to stand Marx on his head and claim that consumption, not production, is the central motor of contemporary society. Competition among status groups, which according to Weber, are organized around modes of consumption, now seems of more import than struggle among classes, which, according to Marx, are organized around modes of production” (Corrigan 1997:1).

But, most importantly to the present case, instead of acting as a means to decrease the distance between consumption and costs, it further accentuates the lack of “interconnectedness”. Marxism could not escape from the materialistic premises previously inherited from “external individualism”.

In his un-yet published work *Production, Consumption and Prosumption*, (2010) George Ritzer explains how economic resistance has been not able to break through these culturally constructed notions related to “interconnectedness” of consumption with production. “[...] Even though, Marx (1984) well-recognized, producers consumed all sorts of things, as well as the fact that all industries depended on the consumers of what they produced. This privileging of the producer has continued to this day, long after the preeminence of industry, at least in the West, has receded. Also lingering, is the tendency to distinguish between producers and consumers. In general, the tendency to tear production and consumption apart was an unfortunate byproduct of the Industrial Revolution” (Ritzer 2010 online). Marxism has contributed to blind economic resistance for the pursuit of “interconnectedness”, as well as eliminating new ideas, because of productivity biased dogma.

Nestor Garcia Canclini (2001) argues,

“The problem is that this new mode of social choice is dominated by for-profit corporations and no new models of consumer involvement have emerged that would provide a satisfactory replacement for citizen participation. ‘If consumption has become a site from which is difficult to think, this is the result of its capitulation to a supposedly free, or better yet ferocious, game of market laws’” (2001: 45).

But new forms of resistance are hardly within the radar of conscious individuals, because economic resistance has historically sprung from premises “embedded” with hegemonic notions. Marxism attempts to achieve “interconnectedness”, by further disconnection. As was tried to prove with the exposed empirical study (see Chapter 5.1.3), it is not that people don’t care about the implications of their consumption. Almost everybody was concerned by the working conditions of the most disadvantaged; however nobody made the connection between the price of their shirt and the wage of the worker (see Chapter 5.3.1). Marxism is a stab to responsibility, by shifting the guilt of the market’s decisions, from the masses, which effectively hold the last word on these, to other abstract entities. I don’t believe the main problem to be a human lack communitarian spirit, but rather the lack of connection between our decisions and the community; Marx (1984) further emphasizes this distancing.

5.4.2 Market and Non-Western Resistance

5.4.2.1 Social Business

This being said, there are examples of boundaries being broken and alternatives sought. One of the most interesting one is Muhammad Yunus’s idea of a *Social Business* (2010), which it is nothing more than responsibility responding to the unjust circumstances brought upon by a lack of connection within the market. Yunus (2010) considers that “the biggest flaw in our existing theory of capitalism lies in its misrepresentation of human nature [...] economists have built their whole theory of business on the assumption that human beings do nothing in their economic lives beside pursue selfish interests (Yunus 2010:xv).”

Yunus’s (2010) Social Business has the following characteristics:

1. The business objective is to overcome poverty, or one or more problems (such as education, health, technology access, and environment) that threaten people and society – not to maximize profit.
2. The company will attain financial and economic sustainability.
3. Investors get back only their investment amount. No dividend is given beyond the return of the original investment.
4. When the investment amount is paid back, profit stays with the company for expansion and improvement.
5. The company will be environmentally conscious.
6. The workforce gets paid market wage with better-than-standard working conditions.
7. Do it with joy!!! (Yunus 2010:3)

As it is clearly observed from the above, the idea of a Social Business does not fit the model of “Western” traditional economic left in any way (see Chapter 5.4.1). The category in the mentioned models labeled as capitalists do not make any profits in these kind of businesses, therefore, the labor-value is effectively reintroduced completely into the market. Their private nature, profit seeking, and economically viably is of interest. They must have these qualities to respond to a market pressing need.

Initially, Yunus’s (2010) proposal may sound “dream-like” and utopian, but the strongest argument against these affirmations is the fact the “Social Businesses”, even though they are a most recent notion, are already a reality. They began with the Grammen bank, an economically and financially viable institution that lends money to the poor and to “Social Business” proposals. Within the last four years the bank has participated in the creation of business alternatives, of which Grameen Danone in Malaysia is the most well-known example so far. The mentioned company produces yogurt with a strong amount of nutrients, which, because of the characteristic of no dividend amongst shareholders, can afford to place the product within the market at prices that profit-capitalistic traditional alternatives cannot. Grameen Danone

“[...] is working to solve the problem of malnutrition by selling affordable yogurt fortified with micronutrients. Grameen Veolia Water addresses the problem of arsenic-contaminated drinking water by selling water at a price the poor can afford. BASF Grameen will reduce mosquito borne diseases by producing and marketing treated

mosquito nets. There are many other examples – some already in operation, others in the making” (Yunus 2010:1).

5.4.2.2 Gandhi and the Swadeshi Movement

Nevertheless, the most interesting and successful revolutionary, social movement, completely based in the idea of circumstance “interconnection”, where through civil disobedience, and consumption as a form of “civil disobedience”, great changes have been accomplished, is Mahatma Gandhi’s unprecedented Swadeshi movement.

According to the historians in the Museum of Bombay (2010),

“[...] the concept of Swadeshi as explained by Gandhi, the author of this entire non-violent struggle, is ‘employment of unemployed or semi-employed people by encouraging village industries.’ The use of machinery is, of course, welcome with caution and proper planning so that it can be useful to the masses rather than helping a few who can monopolize the industry. One is made aware of the violence involved in supporting unnecessary industries, which deprive millions of people of their livelihood and face disease and death” (Museum of Bombay 2010 online).

Many factors contributed to what was to be termed “a new spirit in India”. But in relation to economy and consumption three books paved the way Dadabhao Naoroji’s *Poverty and un-British rule in India* (1988), R. C. Dutt’s *Economic History of India* (1902), and William Digby’s *Prosperous British India* (1901). All three books contained a profound analysis of how British economic policy towards India was the cause of various social problems. The strategy of the Swadeshi movement was intimately related to consumption, British goods were avoided and indigenous goods were “[...] preferred by consumers even if they are more expensive and inferior in quality” (ANI 2010 online). By linking the relationship between consumption, production, exploitation and Imperial power, the Indian population realized the power of the choices within the system, and was able to resist and subdue the mighty British Empire without firing a single bullet. True democracy, does is not in need of violence.

In his essay *Gandhi, Deep Ecology, Peace Research and Buddhist Economics* (1999),

Thomas Weber, argues that Gandhi's philosophy is also the base of modern environmentalism. In his description of said philosophy, the presence of the notion of "interconnectedness" can be noted. "Gandhi made manifest the internal relation between self-realization, non-violence and what sometimes has been called biospherical egalitarianism"(Weber 1999:351). He explains how Hinduism was an important element of this thought, "as a Hindu, Gandhi had a strong sense of the unity of all life. For him, nonviolence meant not only the non-injury of human life, but as noted above, of all living things (Weber 1999:352)." And then he quotes Gandhi "[...]'we should feel a more living bond between ourselves and the rest of the animate world (Ibid)"

In concrete regards to environmentalism Weber (1999), affirms that many environmentalists, who claim that their guiding philosophy is "deep ecology", have never even heard the name of Arne Naess, who is responsible for coining the after-mentioned term. Weber (1999) then, relates how Naess readily admits his debt to Gandhi, and that his ideas about "[...] human connectedness with nature, therefore, rather than being explicit, must be inferred from an overall reading of the Mahatma's writings (Weber 1999:349)." It can be easily concluded that these philosophies do not have a Western origin based in "rationality" or materialism, as Marx's, but rather a base in Hinduism.

Man is not the wolf of man. I don't agree with Hobbes (1996), or with Marx (1984), but neither do I agree with the way that "Rational Choice" is employed to justify certain policy. I believe it is not our nature, but rather our culture. Contemporary economics, also labeled "neoclassic economics" hold a different theory of value that is more general. They have been avoided by stances resistant to capitalism, because up until now they have been used to justify it. But, if a correct approach is made, I believe that not only should these be not be avoided, but than from an anthropological perspective they can be used to criticize capitalist forms of production with even more strength than Marxist economic theories, that not always hold their ground empirically. They can be used to adequately describe the amount of agency that consumers, the final providers of capital within an economic system, have in production. Very simply put, if there is a demand for responsibility and connection an offer of responsibility and connection will follow.

5.5 Why Does the Program Work: Steps 4 to 12

Following, an analysis of how the remaining Steps affect consumerist notions of costs and “interconnectedness” will be addressed.

In order to do so, re-naming the Steps in question may facilitate the task. Steps four to nine are stated in the “Big Book” in the following way:

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

In the introduction to the Fourth Step the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (2007) the second most important piece of literature within the recovery community, states the following:

“Creation gave us instincts for a purpose. Without them we would not be complete as human beings [...] Desires – for the sex relation, and for companionship – are necessary and right, and surely God-given.

Yet these instincts, so necessary for our existence, often far exceed their proper functions. Powerfully, blindly, many times subtly, they drive us; dominate us, and insist upon ruling our lives. Our desires for sex, for material and emotional security, and for an important place in society often tyrannize us [...] when that happens our great natural assets, the instincts,

have turned into physical and mental liabilities. Step Four is our vigorous and painstaking effort to discover what these liabilities in each of us have been, and are" (Alcoholics Anonymous 2007:42).

The Big Book initially approaches the Fourth Step by comparing it to a business inventory, where damaged or unsalable goods need to be sorted out. Three specific categories of internal emotions are to be written in a piece of paper. There are:

1. Resentments and Anger,
2. Fear
3. Guilt Remorse and shame.

Of special interest is the way that resentments are to be handled. Resentments on the list include every single feeling of anger towards any person, institution or abstract figure; such as, principles, notions, or their own idea of God or the Absolute.

After all resentments that can be identified by the "twelve-stepper" are written, then the causes of these resentments, as identified by the "twelve-stepper", are to be written as well. In a book titled *A Program for You: A guide to the Big Book's Design for Living* (1991), which is set of recommendations on how to follow the program and what are the meanings of the Steps, written by two recovering Alcoholics of a Florida based group, some revelatory insight from the experience of the authors can be obtained.

Regarding the causes of their resentments the author's comment that they had never looked at them "[...] what caused them, nor what have tried to figure out how to get rid of them. Most of us never even thought of trying to get rid them; instead, we tend to cling to them. Most of us cherish our resentments and even feed them like they are some sort of special pet" (Hazelden 1997: 91).

And then, they state the reason why these resentments must be dealt with.

"When you are willing to let go of resentment, you can begin to see the world a little differently. When you're all wrapped up in resentment, you become completely dominated by the world and by other people. As a result, what other people, institutions, and principles do, determines who you are, what you think, and how you act. As long as you

cling to your anger, other people will control your actions and your life” (Hazelden 1997:91).

The reasons for this alleged control are clarified when the next recommendation of what is to be done with the list is analyzed. After the causes of the resentments are written, one must then identify what part of our “self”, or “ego” was affected by these feelings. The authors mention that resentments affect the following: self-esteem, pride, personal relationships, material security, emotional security, hidden and acceptable personal relationships and ambition. Most of the times these also are intrinsically related to the cause.

But then, comes the most interesting part of this process, once all these lists are completed, one must then analyze if one has participated in the creation of these resentments, or better said if one has acted in a way against those resented. In order to for this analysis to be specific, the “Big Book” suggests four things to have in mind: if one has been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking or frightened. “Take each situation that caused you resentment, look at what you did to cause the situation or to make it worse. What did you do that contributes to the problem?” (Hazelden 1997:107). The Big Book clearly states that in order to be free, one must free oneself from resentments; one must be rid of anger. “Once this is done, as we look back at the list of resentments we realize the power that our external circumstances held on us. [...] We turned back to the list, for it held the key to the future. We were prepared to look at it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us” (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001:66).

The same process is to be done with fear, and then with guilt. All fears and all those things that cause guilt, as identified by the “twelve-stepper”, are to be written down. Then the causes of these are to be written, the area in which they affect their “ego”, and how have they participated in the creation of these feelings, or caused harm to those individuals or institutions related to them.

In the Fifth Step, the “twelve-stepper” is to share everything he has written with another human being. It may be whomever he considers appropriate, and not necessarily a member of his group.

Once, he has identified, those elements within himself that have caused him resentments, guilt and fear, in the sixth and seventh Steps, the “twelve-stepper” analyses these elements and asks his “Higher Power” to help him overcome them.

Then, the “twelve-stepper” approaches Steps eight and nine. Here, the “twelve-stepper” goes through a brave endeavor, he is to write down all the people or institutions, he considers to have harmed, and then go out to them, apologize and make amends. The list bit, is interesting, since almost all members have already written those they have harmed. They are included within those they resent, feared, and of course, felt guilt towards. The “Big Book” acknowledges this,

“We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory. We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves” (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001:76).

According to the authors, the purposes of these amends are to further rid the guilt, the fear and the remorse that haunts the “step-taker”. Amends are to be made in person, face to face. Debts are to be paid, crimes confessed to the victims, and forgiveness is to be asked from those harmed physically, with it’s corresponding offer of amend in the manner the victim sees fit. Lies are to be confessed as well, and harm done in relationships is also to be explained. There are no excuses, except the case in which the amend will harm a third party. If the person has harmed the “twelve stepper”, amends still are to be done,

“It may be that he has done more harm to us than we have done to him, and though we may have acquired a better attitude towards him, we are still not too keen on admitting our faults. Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much beneficial to us. We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret” (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001:66).

This is it the Steps are simple. However, their relationship with consumerist notions of costs is a little more complicated. Was done before, in the benefit analysis order to

perform the mentioned task a recapitulation of conclusions related to costs, is to be performed.

It was established that the phenomena termed in the “West” as “addiction”, is not a universal phenomena, and it is also related to social dissatisfaction (see Chapter 3.2.2). Addicts have a need to hide from one’s circumstances of existence or make unsustainable activities that they associate with reward, in order to make sense of the paradox in consumer driven societies that the benefits do not equal the costs. “Addicts”, chemical dependants try to control dissatisfaction by consuming (see Chapter 4.3).

It was also explained how the first Steps eliminate this need to control by changing the way “chemical dependants” envision benefits, and taking away the dream of future benefits in which all the system of present individual costs is sustained (See Chapters 4.4). However, once the dream is subtracted, and the satisfaction is not pursued in the future, an answer of how “the program” translates this into satisfaction in the present is yet to be produced. Well, since the reason for pursuing rewards in their future and in their dreams is absolutely related to the dissatisfaction produced by their individual internal pain, the answer to satisfaction is absolutely related to the way they perceive the creation of emotional pain, or in my words “internal costs”. These are notions inherited from mass-consumption cultural baggage.

What has been analyzed regarding this “cultural baggage”, will following be enumerated:

It was argued clearly and concisely that economic costs in mass consumer culture are mostly seen as related to production and not to human activity as a whole (see Chapters 5). Those costs that are considered and acknowledged but are not included as production costs, are labeled as “external” (see Chapter 3.3.1). This has derived from an historical separation between consumption and production, which in turn led to the separation of social and individual costs (see Chapters 5.1.2, 5.2 and 5.2.2).

This, in turn has led to a political and economic persistence, from those posing resistance to the established economic system, to solve these problems by means of regulation the circumstances of production and therefore distancing policy from the circumstances of consumption. This furthers the lack of “interconnectedness” between individual well-being, and the costs of human activity (see Chapter 5.4.1)

These two previous characteristics have led to a systematic impossibility for social and economic agents to have accurate knowledge of the true costs of their actions, therefore invalidating the possibility of cultural “Rational Choice” (see Chapter 5.3), even though my empirical study related to the value of external costs amongst economic agents within a mass consumption society, suggested that these do value these costs, and a majority of agents would be willing to consider their inclusion in the price (see Chapter 5.2.3).

In the beginning of Chapter 5 the manner in which different societies envision costs in an “interconnected manner”, was exposed. One of the main differences that were observed between these societies, and the one in question, was the lack of the notions referred to as individualism (see Chapter 5.1.1) And when Dumont (1992) and his conclusions regarding the rise of external individualism was studied, it was concluded following his analysis, that individualism as we know it, stemmed from other notions observed in various societies that suggested an “internal individualism” where also costs were perceived in a different manner (see Chapter 5.2.1).

So there not much to say about how Steps eight and nine function in terms of “interconnectedness”. Actions are evaluated and their corresponding external costs are linked directly to these actions. As “twelve-steppers” go about making amends, they experience first hand the costs that their actions have produced in others, therefore linking the lost relationship between the world and their actions, which is part of mass-consumer culture cultural baggage.

However “interconnectedness” does not end here. These external costs derived from another list, a list of feelings that translated into dissatisfaction and a loss of inner peace: guilt, fear and resentment. This initial list also connected these costs with actions, concretely: self-seeking, dishonesty, selfishness and fear. It was considered before that “external individualism” was directly involved in the lack of “interconnectedness”, and that “external individualism” was a result of transferring the notion of “internal individualism” to the material world through the “Western” notion of person (see Chapter 5.2.1.2). What was discussed before regarding “internal individualism” will be most revelatory at this point. It was stated:

"[...] internal responsibility and search for individual internal well-being, as well as the respect for external circumstances beyond the individuals control, will translate into well-being of others. Since, all these 'worldviews' consider a strong interconnection of everything in existence, as exemplified by the Buddhist view that 'of all individuals acting face to face, each action of one individual affecting the welfare of another individual as well as his own', and the Stoic Law of Nature, it is through the internal world of individuals that they are connected with their external reality. The most important value is internal well-being, so the most important costs are also those that affect this internal well being. The responsibility with the other is of an internal nature, and this translates into an external one" (see Chapter 5.3.1.2).

The Twelve Steps translate the notions of "external individualism" back to the notions of "internal individualism", where the costs are seen primordially as internal, and the paramount benefit is internal well-being, or inner peace. It is as simple as that.

Steps fourth through nine, work by "interconnecting" the internal costs of their existence with the external one's. First internal costs are enumerated, and then they are related to internal notions of existence. In Step five an acknowledgement of these costs with an external entity is made, with whomever person the "twelve-stepper" chooses. And what does this represent? Well, in Steps one to three they had to realize that they could not control, and only influence the external circumstances of their life; these were controlled by "Powers Higher than themselves". So, as they acknowledge these internal costs with another entity, their own previous notions of internal cost valuation lose power as they are now exposed to an external entity. They may not be rationalized or negated any more. "Twelve-steppers" realize that inner-costs are also beyond their control; they realize that hurting, hurts.

And finally, all these individual internal costs are connected with external costs. As "twelve-steppers" make amends, they experience first hand this relationship. They experience first hand real "interconnectedness", prompting them to consider internal costs and responsibility within themselves in their actions, above external one's since they have now empirically tasted their connection. They finally come to a conclusion whether conscious of unconscious: the benefits of their consumption and the life they lead do not match the

costs, basic “Rational Choice” theory. Their life is not sustainable, so they dramatically change their life’s habits.

And then, this is how the conclusion of what the solution to dissatisfaction is, is reached. It was noted, that in “internal individualistic” worldviews, the problems of human kind find a solution within the human interior, and, human beings are believed to be emotionally and spiritually independent of the world that surrounds them (see Chapter 5.3.1.2). This can be also clearly noted in their approach towards resentments, and what they consider to be the basis of the domination that the “world and its people” had on them.

With a holistic approach to the program and everything that has been exposed so far, things are more clearly seen. For example, The “Big Book Promises” have already been mentioned. If the program was followed, the “Big Book” promised absolution of past regrets, serenity and peace in the present, the disappearance of self-pity and feeling of uselessness, and a loss of interest in selfish things supplanted by an interest in their fellow man. Fear of people and of economic security is also promised to subside (see Chapter 4.4.2).

Basically, the Steps change the idea that satisfaction is to be achieved in the future and by material means, to the idea that it can be achieved in the present and through internal means, through peace of mind. “External individualism” and materialism is fought with “internal individualism”, if it is considered that the Twelve-Steps correspond to a “secularization” of a life program developed by the Oxford Groups with philosophy based in pre-Constantine Christianity (see Chapter 3.1.1), and also that Dumont (1992) traces the beginnings of the externalization of his so-called “out-worldliness”, to Constantine’s conversion to Christianity (see Chapter 5.2.1.2), the conclusion is not a hard one to make.

The similarities with Gandhi’s philosophies of political resistance are remarkable. (see Chapter 5.4.2.2) As Weber (1999) said, “Gandhi made manifest the internal relation between self-realization, non-violence and what sometimes has been called biospherical egalitarianism” (Weber 1999:351) If his philosophy was so effective in bringing an empire, embedded with the cultural notions that led to consumerism to its knees without the firing of a single bullet, it is not so hard to conclude, that if a philosophical “program” based on reevaluation of notions is also effective in “curing” or “recovering” a disease, this disease is

also cultural. Its elements are the same notions that Gandhi, in his time, brought to their knees.

And we finally reach the final three Steps. Within the community some members refer to these as the “maintenance Steps”, since there are thought to be designed to “maintain sobriety” (personal experience). These are the following:

“10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.” (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001:59)

Step ten basically recommends to follow what has been learned through the completion for Steps four to nine, in every single decision. Step eleven, is a continuation of the internal path through prayer and meditation. And finally, Step twelve is the reason why no organized form of Step institutionalization is needed: it responsabilizes the “step-taker” towards any other person in need. The similarities with Polanyi’s (2001) reciprocity are also notable (see Chapter 5.1.1). The sponsee pays the service that was provided by his sponsor, performing the same task with someone else in need, and not directly to the sponsor himself.

6 Concluding Considerations

Answers were promised.

In the Introduction of the present work, the intellectual road that led to the formulation of my research question was explained. The idea that “Twelve-Step recovery” was used to overcome compulsive behavior related to commodity consumption, made me challenge my own definitions of the nature of addiction. As it was exposed (see chapter 3.1.2), the same problem, the same challenge, is present within the efforts to provide an academic definition.

Stepping away, from the “normalness” of consumerism, I questioned my previous notions, and reached my research question:

Do the “recovering community” and their philosophy act as cultural resistance to practices, beliefs and perceptions concerning mass-consumerist culture? Is the recovering community recovering from behavior induced in “mass-consumerism”?

Dr. Watson’s (1991) ethnographic study on the Biwat, provided the first clue; addiction is not universal (see Chapter 3.2.1). The findings of anthropologists of addiction Luigi Zoja (2000) and Camporesi (1993) and their conclusions regarding the relationship between addiction and cultural constructs, provided the second. And, finally the previous knowledge I had of Belasco’s (2008) considerations regarding food consumption and responsibility within the context of mass-consumerism, provided the final clue.

As, contemporary economics were studied; Belasco’s (2008) findings led me to realize that a possible contradiction within “Rational Choice” existed: consumer agents valued a variety of costs, which they did not include in their balance of costs and benefits. They couldn’t, because they belonged to a society, which did not relate these costs to individual consumption (see Chapter 5). My hypothesis was confirmed after the second empirical study of the present work was elaborated. Since, addiction studies scholar Craig Nakken (1996) (see Chapter 3.1.2) and the above-mentioned anthropologists (Camporesi 1993

and Zoja 2000) (see Chapter 3.2.2), concluded addiction to be related to in-satisfaction, and there was a strong contradiction within the economic culture of the context in which the Twelve-Steps are observed, following Sahlins's (1976) conclusion's that commodities and capitalist culture in general is symbolically constructed, I correctly assumed that in-satisfaction could be found within the meanings and symbolism awarded to commodities within consumerism. Following consumerism most valued economic model, I attempted to solve my research question. My final conclusion is the following:

The Twelve Steps do represent resistance to mass-consumerist notions. The first three Steps, challenge and reevaluate the manner in which "twelve-steppers" meaningfully conceive reward. In economic terms: benefits. Steps four to nine challenge and reevaluate the manner in which "twelve-steppers" meaningfully conceive emotional pain, or in my terms "internal-costs". The whole program challenges the notion of "external-individualism".

The arguments, based in both empirical and theoretical findings to sustain these conclusions, are the following:

- 1) Benefits: Within the exposition on consumerist culture, the following was observed;
 - Profits and Consumption are seen as means to themselves (see Chapter 4.2.2). Weber (2002) provided a plausible explanation for profits, and Campbell (1987) provided a plausible explanation for benefits.
 - Campbell's (1987) explanation was related to Romanticism. He described how consumption patterns were elevated because romantic novel readers felt "discontented with their life" and sought "more" to fulfill themselves (see Chapter 4.2.2). Veblen (1953) spoke about how department stores "were devoted to the arousal of free floating desire" (see Chapter 4.1). Robbins (2008) described how children are told stories about consumption in the manner that commodities are presented; as well as in theme parks, and fiction.
 - In the Chapter on emulation and identity driven consumption, it was analyzed how commodities do not fill a use-value any more. And how consumption has become a manner of social differentiation (see Chapter 4.1). McCracken (1988), described the nature of the symbolism embedded within fashion driven consumption as opposed to patina, where the temporal value of goods shifts to the future (see Chapter 4.2.2).

-It is important to clarify, that this was the only piece of the present work that is not sustained on empirical evidence. So, based on these theoretical proposals, a pattern was found: consumption within consumer driven societies has shifted from their use-value to a promise for something yet to come, or even not existent: a dream of eternal satisfaction, based in illusion and stories that have little to do with the actual context of the consumers. Stories read, experienced in the movies, or through advertisement. "Have me and you'll be who you want to be", seems to be the description behind the above-mentioned authors' proposals regarding the meaning of commodities. And, so following the previous, a conclusion on consumption was achieved. Consumption entails an attempt to control culturally constructed desires, compulsive consumption is nothing more than this brought to the extreme (see Chapter 4.3).

-In order for this theoretical proposal to hold its ground within the present work, it had to be related to the Twelve Steps. So these were analyzed. The first Steps involved turning "your will to a Higher Power". Within, the interviewed members of the "Twelve-Step community", it was found that this notion of "Higher Power" is of a general nature, not described. The only common denominator that can be found is that it represents all things "Higher" than the stepper, all things beyond his will, everything he cannot control. Both the organic and the dogmatic elements of the program avoid control. If it was concluded that benefits are seen as "dreamlike" and consumption represents an attempt to achieve unachievable satisfaction, the first three Steps, represent the opposite; an avoidance of control, and an acceptance of one's life's circumstances. "Touch the ground, the unachievable, is unachievable." Or in their own words, "accept life, on life's terms" (Hazelden 2010 online) (See Chapters 4.4 and 4.6)

2) Costs: The conclusions on the meanings of costs within mass-consumerism, and their relationship with the Steps were easier to achieve, because empirical data regarding their meaning within the context was produced.

-The survey based empirical study showed that within mass-consumerism economic agents engage in activities that negatively affect different things that are of their concern. In this case Belasco's (2008) theory on a lack of "interconnectedness" between consumption, and negative costs was followed, and proven to be directed correctly (see Chapter 5.1).

-Some theoretical approaches to costs were then presented. Polanyi's (2001) was of particular interest. He argued that individualistic economic thought, and therefore an individualistic conception of costs, derived from individualism (5.1.1).

-When individualism was analyzed, it was noted how Dumont (1992) theorized that these notions derived from those of the "outworldly" individual. He theorized the mentioned notions were "externalized" after Christianity was officialized, and the Catholic Church became involved in political affairs. "External individualism" was argued to be an important ideological element behind the lack of "interconnection" (see Chapter 5.2.1).

-Steps four to nine, where related to their relationship with "interconnectedness". Based in personal empirical experience based in participant observation, and the instructions provided by the Big Book the process for their completion was described. It was shown how "twelve-steppers" are confronted with their "emotional baggage", particularly their resentments, fears and guilt. It was then shown, how the "steppers" "connect" this emotional pain to their own actions; they connected their emotional pain to the external circumstances of their life (see Chapter 5.5).

-Strong similarities were found between Dumont's (1992) "outworldliness" and "Twelve-Step philosophy". The Steps internalized costs, and connected them to the exterior, changing the notion that satisfaction resides in the external context of one's circumstances; to the notion the most important element of one's existence is inner peace. Considering that "Twelve-Step" philosophy derived from pre-Constantine Christianity, and that Dumont placed the origins of "external individualism", after Constantine's conversion to Christianity, it was not hard to conclude the precise form of resistance that the Twelve Steps pose towards consumerist culture: they fought "external individualism" with its original "internal" variant (see Chapter 5.5).

Finally, this conclusion was augmented by describing the precise manner in which the Twelve-Steps challenge and reevaluate the meaning of reward and pain, or in economical terms, benefits and costs, basically they challenge the way satisfaction is perceived: *The Steps change the idea that satisfaction is to be achieved in the future and by material means, to the idea that it can be achieved in the present and through internal means, through peace of mind.*

This is where the academic conclusions of the present work finalize. However, in the introductory Chapter, it was explained that the present work had another purpose as well: it was initially conceived to approach an economic proposal within the field of anthropology. This was promised.

Much has been learned, not only about the nature of addiction, compulsive behavior and the Twelve Steps, but also much has been learned about “Rational Choice”, consumerism and resistance to this context. The study of compulsive consumption from an anthropological perspective, leads directly to a path, which those afraid to categorize compulsive-behavior in general terms, are probably afraid to take. It leads to questioning.

It takes effort to look within us, “it is more easily said than done.” It’s difficult to question our parent’s notions, our teachers, our friends, ours. What we “know” what we’ve learned. During the present work, this has been attempted. Marxism and Disney, organized religion and materialism, economics and psychology, have all been questioned. One of three words could be always heard inside all these explored paradigms, ideologies, institutions or “worldviews”: me, more and things. Corrigan (1997) considers that it’s been now a while since production implies “more than subsistence” (see Chapter 5.4.1). The struggle between hegemonic views and traditional “Western” resistance regarding our economic culture within mass-consumption societies, does not reside within the question of subsistence, but rather contention of how the surplus is to be distributed (Corrigan 1997:1). They all either seek or translate into more material or more power. They all follow the “external individualistic” premise that, either I should have more than the other, or the other should not have more than me. Rarely do we ask, is me worth it? Is more worth it? Are things? It has been attempted to follow the questioning path: I considered addiction to exist, and to consist of *any* compulsive behavior that even though, results in harm to the entity, is followed with persistence. Addiction is an aberration of rationality according to “Rational Choice”. Addiction entails a complete disregard of costs, and an overvaluation of short-term benefits. Does this ring a bell?

However, I do agree with some of the premises of “Rational Choice”. It seems logical that people act according to a balance between costs and benefits, between what is harmful for them and what is beneficial. If this would not be so, I can hardly imagine how humans have succeeded to survive as a species. It’s not hard to argue that people seek to protect themselves from the harmful circumstances of their existence, if they did not have the

need to do this, there be no reason for a man to desire survival. Nevertheless, it seems that not all economic agents are “rational”. It seems that rationality needs of certain characteristics (See Chapter 5.3). It seems not all economic agents have capacity for a “rational” balance.

In the Chapter addressing costs, it was clearly demonstrated how in mass-consumption societies, consumers act in ways that cause harm to different entities that, they themselves, hold in value. It was demonstrated that consumers had neither a notion of “connectedness” between their actions and these valuable costs (see Chapter 5.1.3), nor the systemic opportunity to have accurate knowledge of these (see Chapter 5.3).

So, based in the definitions of what addiction is, what is there to be said about this? What is there to be said about a whole society that goes about blindly causing damage that is not their intention to cause, a whole society of economic agents who consume in manner that affects, not only their environmental circumstances and the well-being of other human beings, but also the possibility for their descendants to continue the same patterns of consumption? Patterns that these same children are taught to follow (see Chapter 4.2.3). I agree with the US department of Labor (2010): physical, physiological and social harm. Hazelden (2010) states that addiction also causes “all forms of denial, blame of others, excuses, rationalizations and minimization” (see Chapter 3.1). All of these can also be observed. There’s no victims, nor guilty parties, we are the victims of ourselves; we are all responsible.

And what about the causes of addiction? After studying various arguments posed by anthropologists who address this specific subject, it was argued that dissatisfaction is found very much related to the phenomena (see Chapter 3.2.2). Craig Nakken (1996), seems to agree with these anthropological perspectives, when he says that addiction is viewed as an attempt to control the lost of “wholeness of peace and beauty” (see Chapter 3.1.2).

The analysis of mass-consumer culture regarding the way benefits and costs are perceived regarding economic activity, could be summarized in the following way:

Baudrillard reminds us how the anticipation to consume, is frequently experienced to be “more enjoyable than the act of consumption itself” (see Chapter 3.3.2.2). It is hard to find an individual within the context described that does not seek satisfaction in the future, satisfaction within his next purchase, within his next job or promotion, within his next girl or

next degree. But the future, is always the future, it is never here. Here we only find the present.

Various authors, in different disciplines and unrelated work have concluded that, in within consumerism society economic decisions, imply the continuous search of a dream, a future benefit (see Chapters 4.1 and 4.2), in exchange for spending a tremendous amount of hours, engaged in an activity whose monetary remuneration is the most visible source of gratification, an activity that they would probably spend less time engaging in. As a character of the film "Office Space" so masterfully states: "Human beings are not designed to sit in front of green screens all day long." The other element that the economic agent has to exchange for the pursuit of this "dream", the "external" cost, is represented by "grand larceny" upon his own children, depletion of resources that, as of yet, an alternative has not been found to replace them, and the production of huge amounts of waste. Debtors Anonymous is a group whose main focus is to resist and overcome compulsiveness of the very same activity that American Congressmen urged their population to do after the events of 9/11 (see Chapter 3.4). The main economic activity of a whole culture (in differential terms) is now being considered a form of addiction by some. It is not sustainable considering individual costs, it is not sustainable considering external costs, it is definitely not sustainable considering internal costs, and it is not sustainable considering benefits. A better example of culture that produces social in-satisfaction would be hard to find. We work compulsively, we study compulsively, we consume compulsively, we question compulsively, we criticize, we resent, we shun, we envy, we desire, we desire, we desire [...]

If a similarity is to be found between addiction and mass-consumerist culture, the present work may attempt to find it academically, but in reality the answer only needs to be pointed to. The most evident place to find it, yet it seems, the least obvious, is in the very same name we have awarded this social phenomenon: mass-consumption.

The Twelve-Step program is nothing more than old premises, brought forward to aid in cultural deconstruction. It represents a reevaluation of life. And, it is also a heavy blow to our "rational society", which has neither proposed a better rational solution for these problems, nor figured out why this solution works. The word God shuns academics to consider that any philosophy that contains it is not "rational" but rather religious. However, this differentiation between religion and science responds to resistance against organized religion, and forced worldviews (see Chapter 4.5). It responds to authoritarian traditions

were the Dumont's (1992) "outworldliness" has been externalized and imposed on the population as the only truth.

Let's not throw away the baby with the bathwater. Without this differentiation, Buddhism could not be considered so much a religion as a philosophical tradition, sharing more similarities to Stoicism than to the Roman Catholic Church. It is observed that within many of these wisdom traditions, there are similar notions as than those of the Twelve-Steps (see Chapters 5.1.1 and 5.2.1). Many of these notions can also be found within traditional or so-called "primitive" societies (see Chapters 5.2.1 and 5.3.1).

Are we that proud as to believe that all past and present non-western pre-modern societies have inferior forms of acquiring knowledge? Sahlins (1976) does seem to believe so.

It is difficult for academics to question the validity of "Western" knowledge, since this validity awards meaning to their life. But, I believe there is much to learn from those who have been around long before we decided that justifiable knowledge was exclusively ours. A little man followed some principles based as the mentioned and turned compassion into resistance. We should listen attentively at what he has to say. Gandhi's "internal" path expresses the same core message than the Twelve-Steps: regard inner peace as higher than life, and you'll find the result to be life itself.

And this in itself fulfills the promise of a theoretical economic proposal; it's simple, but it has worked in the past: responsibility. It has been proven empirically that consumers do care about the well being of our mates. But they also shun from the information that tells that their convenience and their incessant pursuit of the "dream", is destroying the external circumstances of their existence. We shun from our interior, we shun from the things we value. The fact that someone else is guilty, or someone else is responsible, gives us peace of mind.

True democracy does not need violence it needs awareness, interconnectedness. It needs responsibility.

Our culture is addicted to our own consumption.

In order to consume as it is been done today, the current system is of need. Addiction, exploitation, and the destruction of our environment, is the price paid for convenience. I personally don't believe the benefits to be in accordance with the costs. Change depends on the willingness to pay for these costs, to pay the true price of this economic culture. There are no free lunches.

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7.3 Informants

NIEMANN Markus: Vienna, (Austria) 23/03/2010 [Collaborator of Adamah]

BARTEL, Ruth: Vienna, (Austria) 23/03/2010 [Collaborator of Adamah]

MATT: Vienna (Austria), 20/05/2010 [Member of Debtors Anonymous]

OLIVER: Vienna (Austria), 11/05/2010 [Member of Alcoholics Anonymous]

BRENT: Vienna (Austria), 06/05/2010 [Member of Narcotics Anonymous]

EMMANUELLE: Vienna (Austria) 02/06/2010 [Member of Debtors Anonymous]

7.4 Illustrations

Illustration n. 1: Offer and Demand / Enciclopedia.com:

<http://images.encyclopedia.com/utility/image.aspx?id=2798586&imagetype=Hero> [30/06/2010]

8 Appendixes

8.1 Survey Instrument

UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY
ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH SURVEY

1) Age: _____ 2) Occupation: _____ 3) Gender: _____

4) Which of the following categories do consider that better describes your political views? (you may mark two)

- a) Left
- e) Center left
- f) Center
- g) Center Right
- h) Right
- i) Green

5) Do you believe that social inequality and lack of environmental sustainability is one of the main political and economic problems of our time?

- a) Yes. They are the most important global issues of our time.
- b) They are important; nevertheless some other stuff is of more concern.
- c) They are irrelevant.

6) Do you know where the fabric of your shirt/t-shirt/blouse, or the soles of your shoes where, made and under what conditions?

- a) I know precisely where and what are the circumstances behind their production.
- b) I am at this moment aware of the country where it was produced.
- c) I don't know.

7) Do you value the lack ocean oil pollution and the lack of pesticide pollution in drinkable water?

- e) It concerns me deeply
- f) It concerns me
- g) It doesn't concerns me much
- h) I could not care less

8) Do you value working conditions and worker well-being of under develop countries?

- a) It concerns me deeply
- b) It concerns me
- c) It doesn't concerns me much
- d) I could not care less

9) Do you value the environmental conditions of the rain forest?

- a) It concerns me deeply
- b) It concerns me
- c) It doesn't concerns me much
- d) I could not care less

10) Are you wearing or do you own a colored t-shirt? Yes _____ No _____

11) Do you drink coffee regularly, or have you had a cup of coffee in the last three days? Yes _____ No _____

12) Cost none included of in the purchasing price of products are refereed by economist as externalities, researches of the Sightline Institute have studied this costs of the two mentioned products and have come to the following data:

Amongst many other costs involved in the production of coffee, we would like to mention the following:

COFFEE

- If you drink two cups of coffee a day 12 trees are needed to sustain your consumption. In the case of Colombia this leads to the swelling of rivers with 43 pounds of coffee pulp strips for your beans annually. As the pulp decomposes it consumes oxygen in the rivers needed for fish to survive.
- Farm workers in Colombia's coffee industry earn less than a dollar a day and even less in other production locations.
- Chemicals like pesticides enter into the workers lungs during production are also absorbed by plants and animals and also end up in the stream of water.

T-SHIRT

- To prevent the leaves for staining the white cotton balls from your cotton t-shirt is made of a crop-dusted sprayed the field with a substance called paraquat. About the half the paraquat misses it target and drifts on to nearby field and streams.
- Since cotton resist coloring, one third of the dyes does not adhere and is carried of in the wastewater stream. Dyes are regulated as hazardous substances.
- The grand majority of t-shirts are cut and sewed in foreign owned apparel factories in Latin America and Asia that pay mostly female workers 30 cents of a dollar per hour.

Where you aware of the mentioned facts? Yes _____ No _____

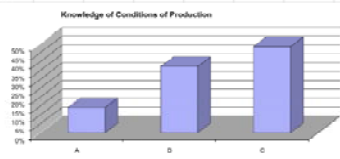
13) If you were aware of such facts related to your consumption, and you would also be aware that, hypothetically speaking, an increase of 20 to 50 percent of he final price of the product mentioned would prove to significantly aid in the solution of these issues, would you be realistically and honestly willing to pay for these costs? Yes _____ No _____ Maybe _____

8.2 Survey Results

METHACOLOGICAL SURVEY RESULTS												
1) Age	2) Occupation	3) Gender	4) Political Views	5) Observation of Issues	6) Knowledge of Conditions of Production	7) Nature of Water Pollution	8) Nature of Political Conditions	9) Values of Environmental Conditions	10) Income	11) Capital	12) Awareness of the Facts	13) Willingness of Cost Effort
1 20-25	student	male	left	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
2 20-25	student	male	left	a	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
3 20-25	student	female	center-left	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
4 20-25	student	female	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
5 20-25	student	male	left	a	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
6 20-25	student	male	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
7 20-25	student	male	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
8 20-25	student	male	center	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
9 20-25	student	male	center-right	c	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
10 20-25	student	female	left	a	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
11 20-25	student	female	left	a	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
12 20-25	student	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
13 20-25	student	male	center	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
14 20-25	student	male	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
15 20-25	self-employed	female	center-left	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
16 20-25	student	male	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
17 20-25	student	female	center	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
18 20-25	student	female	left	a	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
19 20-25	student	female	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
20 20-25	student	female	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
21 20-25	student	female	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
22 20-25	student	male	left	a	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
23 20-25	employee	male	center	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
24 20-25	self-employed	male	center	a	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
25 20-25	employee	female	center	a	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
26 20-25	student	male	center	a	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
27 20-25	student	male	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
28 20-25	employee	male	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
29 20-25	employee	male	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
30 20-25	employee	female	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
31 20-25	employee	female	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
32 20-25	employee	female	center-left	a	b	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
33 20-25	employee	male	center	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
34 20-25	employee	male	center	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
35 20-25	employee	male	center	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
36 20-25	employee	male	center	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
37 20-25	employee	female	center	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
38 20-25	employee	female	center	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
39 20-25	employee	male	center	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
40 20-25	employee	male	center	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
41 20-25	student	female	right	c	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
42 20-25	student	female	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
43 20-25	employee	female	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
44 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
45 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
46 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
47 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
48 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
49 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
50 20-25	employee	female	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
51 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
52 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
53 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
54 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
55 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
56 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
57 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
58 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
59 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
60 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
61 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
62 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
63 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
64 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
65 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
66 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
67 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
68 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
69 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
70 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
71 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
72 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
73 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
74 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
75 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
76 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
77 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
78 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
79 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
80 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
81 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
82 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
83 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
84 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
85 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
86 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
87 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
88 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
89 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
90 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
91 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
92 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
93 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
94 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
95 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
96 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
97 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
98 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
99 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j
100 20-25	employee	male	center-right	b	e	e	e	e	g	h	i	j

8.4 Survey Graphs

grafica 1



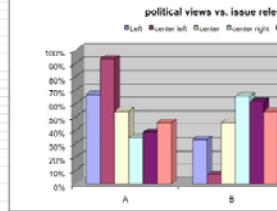
grafica 2



grafica 3

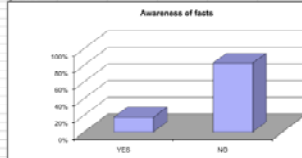
a) este important un chinos
 b) este important, mai o mica
 c) nu este important
 d) nu este vorba

grafica 4



a) Yes they are the most important social issues
 b) No they are not the most important social issues

grafica 5



8.5 Adamah Questionnaire

1) I see you use the word Arbeitsgemeinschaft to describe your Enterprise, I have searched for English definitions of such a concept and found the following possible translations: team, consortium, study group, working team, Joint venture, syndicate, working group, "a forum of participation and collaboration", study group. It seems like a very interesting concept. Why did you choose this word to describe said Enterprise and what does it mean or represent for you and your colleagues?

When we began this "enterprise we wanted to do it in a different way than before. Around here all the farms are family farms, but we wanted to have a direct contact between the producers the distributors and then the consumers, this is why we used this word from the beginning.

2) Where do the products that you distribute come from? Are there any special qualities or characteristics that you look for from the producers whose products you distribute?

Many we produce ourselves, and many come from producers that we know. In order for this products to be accepted they have to be "organic" products.

3) How does your relation to the producers or the producers themselves are related to your Arbeitsgemeinschaft philosophy?

As I said before it is basic in our philosophy, the relationship between producers and distributors, seen as one working group instead of different enterprises with business relationships.

4) How does your system of distribution work?

Through the Internet consumers order the kind of "basket" they would like to receive. All the products come to the central warehouse and they are distributed in the basket according to what the customers have ordered. Then every customer gets a day in the week, some get delivered on Tuesday others on Monday and so on. Also you can buy our products in the store right here.

5) A study from National Geographic showed that in the US 27% of food destined for consumption is discarded. Within your system how much of the goods destined for consumption are wasted, if any? And in case this happens what mechanisms do you employ to avoid it?

Since the products are ordered with anticipation, we know before hand how many products are ordered, because of the Internet system, then we ourselves only order or produce what is going to be necessary for our already known demand. Even though there is still waste, it does not exceed 10% of our production and our merchandise.

6) If its appropriate to ask, how many packages do you deliver per week, and how many people in Vienna consume the products you deliver?

We deliver to about 4,000 to 5,000 families at the moment.

7) What is the difference of price between your products and their equivalents offered by the retail industry?

Our prices are normally 30% more than those in the retail industry.

8) Are there any characteristics that would identify in your costumers regarding for example, food taste preferences, or political or environmental consciousness?

I think our costumers come from very different backgrounds.

9) Do you believe that an average Austrian family could sustain themselves in regards of fuel supply by consuming products "out of the system" like yours, without having to consume from the retail industry?

I wouldn't know. Maybe.

10) Apart from the price (if this is the case) what is the main opportunity cost that consumers would have to sustain in case they chose to consume you products instead of those offered by the retail industry?

Well maybe that if they want to get them they are going to have to come all the way here and not in a store that is close to their home, or wait to the day in the week that they are delivered to their houses. Also we at the moment don't have every single agricultural product offered in the market.

CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

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ACADEMIC FORMATION

1994-2000, High School School Colegio Peterson.

1996-1997, 9th Grade Cardigán Mountain School in New Hampshire, U.S.A.

Licenciado en Derecho, (Law Degree) Universidad Iberoamericana. 2001-2008

European MA in Social and Cultural Antropology. 2008-2010 (expected)

English 100%, TOELF Total Score: 653 (2008), 108 (2009)

PROFESIONAL ACTIVITY

Summer 1999, Administrative Assitant in Law Firm Von Wobeser y Sierra, S.C.

2002-2003, Auxiliary Secretary of the Secretary General of the Confederación de Organizaciones Populares (CNOP) del Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)

2003, Chief of Staff of the Lic. Manlio Fabio Beltrones Rivera, Secretario General de la CNOP del PRI.

2003 Federal Elections, Candidate to alternative Federal Congressman by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional.

2003-2005, Chief of Staff of Congressman Manlio Fabio Beltrones Rivera, Secretary General of the CNOP of PRI and Speaker of the House.

2006-2007, Constitutional Litigation in Law Firm Lastra Abogados, S.C.

2008, Voluntario de la Fundación Vida Plena, A.C. (Pro bono Law work)

OTHER RELEVANT ACTIVITIES

I lived six months in Paris the year 2000.

1999, Finalist of the 2000 edition of the Louisiana Boys State leadership program.

2007, Philadelphia Marathon, U.S.A.

I am currently writing a novel..

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MA Thesis title: *The Recovering Community and the Power of Choice: An Anthropological in Study in Consumption Addiction and Responsibility*

The Recovering Community (as the social group matter of our thesis refers to itself), is a fraternity of people who are "recovering" from a variety of compulsive behaviors, chemical dependencies, and other differently categorized issues, through the practice of a "spiritual program" and a philosophy called the twelve-steps. There are various empirical studies that suggest that, up to this moment, the twelve-steps are "the most effective treatment for the condition of 'chemical dependency'". However, within the academic realm of psychology and addiction studies, both the reasons why the steps "work" and the definition of addiction itself, are subject to debate.

Analyzing the recovering community from an anthropological perspective, we find some interesting elements that, if followed, I believe may shed some light on the subject. Twelve-step groups sprung from a "modern" context, and there is reasons to believe that twelve step philosophy is in opposition to various "modern" notions, in particular "rationality". In today's context the groups are observed in abundance within what can be considered, politically and economically, as the "West", and in other regions they mostly appear in urban areas. Finally, all groups always address an issue related to consumption.

Since the phenomena of recovery groups initially seems to be related to mass-consumption societies, I will use anthropology to step away from the boundaries of context that burdens other disciplines who study "addiction" and the recovering community, and will approach these studies from a different angle. We will study both the "recovering community" and "addiction" within the context of "modernity" and mass-consumption as opposed to from these contexts. By doing so we are able to analyze the relationship that our subjects of study and their "afflictions" hold with the mentioned concepts. As we will find out, a great deal of light is shed following this path regarding the recovering community, but more light is shed concerning the consumption patterns of what has been named by many as "consumerism".

Die "Recovering Community": Eine anthropologische Analyse im Kontext von Konsum, Abhängigkeit und Verantwortung

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit der sogenannten "Recovering Community". Diese soziale Gruppe ist als ein solidarischer Zusammenschluss von Menschen zu definieren, die versuchen, sich von verschiedenen Abhängigkeiten, zwanghaften Handlungsmustern und anderen kategorisierten Zwängen zu befreien (z.B.: Gruppe der Anonymen Alkoholiker). Dies versuchen sie mittels einer Philosophie bzw. eines „spirituellen Programms“ umzusetzen, das sich „The Twelve Steps“ nennt. Verschiedene Studien zu Abhängigkeiten und deren Überwindung empfehlen bis heute die Anwendung des „12-Stufen-Programms“ als eine der effektivsten Methoden, um „substantielle Abhängigkeiten“ zu bekämpfen. Es bleibt jedoch darüber hinaus zu diskutieren, warum dieses Programm der zwölf Schritte funktioniert. Damit verknüpft ist auch die Fragestellung nach den Definitionen von „Abhängigkeit“ und „Sucht“ selbst.

Vor allem konsumanthropologische Perspektiven helfen, die „Recovering Community“ und ihre gesellschaftlichen Funktionsweisen zu analysieren und zu diskutieren: Gruppen, die sich unter Bezugnahme auf das 12-Stufen-Modell formieren und deren Handlungsweisen sind Ausdruck eines „modernen“ Lebensstils und in Zusammenhang mit dem ökonomischen Begriff der „Rationalität“ zu diskutieren. Sie sind, sozial als auch ökonomisch, Teil der „westlich“-urbanen Welt. Besonderes Augenmerk wird dabei auf die Verschränkung der Analyse mit Thema „Konsumtion“ gelegt.

Die interkulturelle Perspektive auf die „Recovering Community“ und ihre Gruppenmitglieder ermöglicht es, Betrachtungsweisen von materiellen Abhängigkeiten zu erweitern und neue, zusätzliche Aspekte in die Diskussion einzubringen (Relativität von Bedürfnissen, Dekonstruktion westliche determinierter Werte, etc.). Die „Recovering Community“ wird als Teil von westlich-moderner Lebensweise analysiert und dem Phänomen des Massenkonsums gegenübergestellt. Dabei wird es möglich, die Beziehung der Betroffenen zu ihren Zwängen und Abhängigkeiten zu analysieren und besser zu verstehen. Die „Recovering Community“ wird somit als Teil gelebter, gesellschaftlich determinierter Konsumpraktiken begriffen.