

ETHICS OF SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES AND ETHICAL ISSUES OF CONSUMPTION¹

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Abstract: The main aim of the present paper is to analyze the issue of consumption from the position of the ethics of social consequences, and to consider some questions connected to the issue. In this paper consumption is viewed through the triumph of the market and the triumph of consumerism, as determining factors in today's society. The central part of the paper introduces the issue of justice, which is closely connected to many questions regarding consumerism, an excessive form of consumption. Later, three different categories of justice found in the theory of the ethics of social consequences are outlined. The last part of the paper then examines in more detail the forms of justice (distributive, reciprocal) closely connected to the issue of consumption. Two ways of achieving fair conditions (distributive justice) on global markets as a requirement for reciprocal justice are then discussed. The first approach relates to the macro level, and the second to ethical consumption at the micro level.

Key words: ethics of social consequences; consumption; justice; global.

The starting point of this paper is the claim that we live in a world which Michael Sandel (2012) has described as one in which the market has triumphed. The market has triumphed over regulations, over common sense and even over morality. One could most simply characterize this state as the permeation of market and market-oriented thinking into the aspects of life traditionally governed by non-market norms. Market norms and principles have become implicit in aspects of our daily life in which they were previously unknown and unwanted. Sandel uses the term market triumphalism.² He implies that this permeation has occurred in the last few decades; moreover without our fully realizing it. Nonetheless, it is important to distinguish between market and non-market values, since the ongoing aggressive promotion and assertion of these raise many ethical issues. The most endangered

¹ The paper is supported by VEGA project 1/0629/15 *Ethics of Social Consequences in the Context of Contemporary Ethical Theories*.

² This concept is used to describe the set of policies and way of thinking rooted in the assumption (belief) that markets (and their mechanisms) are the primary instrument by which public good can be achieved. It points to a drift from a market economy to a market society: a society in which the law of the market is a determining principle and everything is becoming commodified.

areas of our lives in this arrangement are—education, healthcare, environmental protection and citizenship.

Introduction

The triumph of the market does not only overlap with the triumph of consumerism, but it is also closely connected to it. The triumph of the market is accompanied by a process of change, more precisely one of exchange, in relation to values. Market values replace non-market ones and end values are substituted by instrumental values. The result of this process is the instrumentalization of goods and even subjects. Another implication of this trend is the increase in commercialization, materialism and commodification (Kalajtzidis, 2016, pp. 39-40). In this paper the triumph of consumerism is understood much as Umberto Eco saw it, not just as a yearning for things which can satisfy our desires, but as a yearning for things which will lose their meaning as soon as we acquire them. Consumerism is a phenomenon which is an inherent part of today's "liquid modernity", together with other aspects such as individualism, subjectivism, the crisis of the state and the loss of common values (Eco, 2016, pp. 9-10).

Consumerism (an excessive form of consumption) is an ideology which identifies the good life with people's ability to fulfill their desires by accumulating goods. It elevates individual choice to a supreme value. Consumerism can sometimes be perceived as the final stage of commodification—as the stage at which all relationships between people are finally reduced to exploitation. It is the result of a shift in the way consumption is understood. It is a shift away from seeing consumption as a means (towards an end-living) to understanding it as an end in itself.

Subsequently consumption began to be understood as the source of meaning, identity and pleasure. Consumption came to be understood as a celebration of and emphasis on each person's right to search for and find happiness in the use and display of commodities. It emerged as the essence of a good life, as a way of achieving freedom, power and happiness (Gabriel & Lang, 2015, pp. 2-8). However, consumerism has failed on many levels; above all it has failed to deliver its promise to increase happiness, creating instead unrealizable desires as well as unhappiness and envy.

Contemporary models of western-style consumption³ are increasingly subjected to criticism because of their many undesirable social and environmental consequences.⁴ Our (western-style) consumption model faces many major economic, political and environmental challenges. The environmental consequences include climate change, resource shortages, excess waste and many others. The most conspicuous social implications are financial and geo-political uncertainties. The response to modern consumerism has been the spontaneous rise of social movements (such as anti-consumer or ethical consumption movements) in

³It should be noted that contemporary consumerism is not only the product of the present, but also of a long-term historical transformation.

⁴The risks confronting contemporary consumer society in connection to scientific progress are equally important. In this context Bilasová warns us of the importance of identifying both what is technically possible and, above all, what is morally acceptable and permitted (2013, p.111).

the last decades. Most of the time these focus on reducing spending and advance lifestyles that promote simplicity and downshifting and are anti-consumerist. In all these shifts towards consumption, the collapse of consumer confidence after the financial crisis and the subsequent economic recession (around 2007-2013) have been an important economic factor (Gabriel & Lang, 2015, pp. 16-23).

Not so long ago the promotion of materialism and consumerism was often justified on the basis of the economic argument that increasing demand would lead to growth which would be beneficial to all participants.⁵ The question before us is whether this positive expectation of the link between consumption and growth is still valid in today's globalized society. The greatest argument against this claim is the trend towards the dislocation of production from consumers due to market globalization. It is commonly accepted that the massive increase in living standards and material wealth in the western world which occurred during the 20th century is closely connected to consumption.⁶ However, nowadays the link between production and consumption has been broken through the outsourcing of production from the western world to other less developed countries.⁷ As a result big companies whose customers are found in developed countries in the west have lost the intrinsic link between the wages paid to workers and the demand for their products. There are many other issues related to the dislocation of production, such as the inability of workers in less developed countries to buy the goods they produce. This and other similar concerns have led to concerns about justice in the global marketplace (Crane & Matten, 2004, pp. 284-285).

Wealth, poverty and inequality have always been the subject of ethical reflection. Nevertheless, it is the 21st century and the triumph of the market (and all the processes that accompany it) that make this ever more urgent. There are many ethical issues closely connected to the triumph of the market and to the triumph of consumerism. From the ethical point of view these processes are problematic because they occur in societies characterized by social inequality. Social inequality brings economic inequality and accentuates (in)justices. Moreover, these processes (the triumph of the market) have a negative impact on

⁵Furthermore, this idea was accompanied by many other morally significant changes. One of them was that many initially unfavorable human traits, such as greed, have ceased to have negative connotations. Due to market triumphalism and the triumph of consumerism, greed is no longer primarily viewed as being undesirable; on the contrary, it is largely accepted as a positive character trait. Another example of negative change is consumption as a means of defining ourselves. We define ourselves by what and how we consume. Consumption has become eminently influential at the cultural, political and social level.

⁶This idea is known in the literature as the "Fordist deal". This unwritten deal can be simply described as the pursuance of ever-increasing living standards in exchange for a quiescent labor force. Material enjoyment is offered as an incentive to workers as compensation for the de-skilling, control and alienation that is imposed in the workplace. Workers are understood as potential customers, and wage cuts mean reducing the number of customers (Barnet & Cavanagh, 1994, p. 261). The basic assumption is that if workers were paid decent wages they would fuel realistic demand for more products and services.

⁷The best example would be the clothing and footwear industry which moved out of Europe (e.g. Slovakia), a process that largely occurred at the end of the nineties.

goods as they tend to corrupt them—they have a corrosive tendency towards these goods.⁸ Also as noted more than half a century ago by Erich Fromm, consumerism is a big threat to our individuality and freedom (Fromm, 1992; 1993). And last but not least, the triumph of the market and the triumph of consumerism endanger our understanding of responsibility, which is slowly dissolving as our decisions and acts are determined by our consumption. The ethical issue of justice is closely connected to (or even covers) all these and many other questions. In ethics justice is indisputably linked to inequality and is integrally associated with responsibility. It is closely connected to freedom as well. That is why I believe that if it is necessary to narrow our ethical exploration of consumption for the purposes of this paper, it would be most useful to concentrate on this topic.⁹

Justice in the ethics of social consequences

Both justice and responsibility have been viewed as secondary values¹⁰ in the ethics of social consequences (the methodological basis of this paper) from the outset and consequently not enough attention has been given to them. The original notions of justice were reduced to claims such as justice is a defining moment of good; and justice is a particular evaluation of humanity and the legality of decision making and the action of a moral agent. Justice was understood to be actions undertaken by a moral agent that corresponded to the moral values valid in society (Gluchman, 1996, p. 41; 1999, p. 19). The concept of justice was developed in the ethics of social consequences partly on the basis of a critique of John Rawls's theory of justice. The ethics of social consequences directed its critique toward the fact that Rawl's theory does not sufficiently consider the issue of moral agent and is oriented purely on macro-social level of justice (Gluchman, 2010, p. 153). The ethics of social consequences emphasizes that an effort should be made to study justice at the macro- and micro-social levels. These levels are equally important in ethical considerations of consumption. Justice must be studied at the macro-social level if a better understanding of its principles and of how the institutions in society should be organized is to be gained. At the micro-social level, it is important that justice should be studied in connection to the moral agent as the object and subject of justice.

It is widely accepted that the search for justice and feelings of injustice feature among the very first experiences human beings have in life. From early childhood to death we all look for justice in one way or another. To distinguish between the different types and categories

⁸This is because markets do not only allocate goods, but they also promote a certain attitude toward goods. For a better understanding of the issue of inequality and corruption see Sandel's (2012) *What Money Can't Buy*.

⁹One important topic of study which had to be omitted is the promotion of a new ethos in contemporary consumer society. It is connected to the crucial changes that have occurred in consumer society in relation to the society of production in which goods were produced to fulfill already existing needs, whereby in consumer society needs are generated to promote the consumption (Byrska, 2015).

¹⁰ In this context, the ethics of social consequences sets out the requirement that justice cannot contradict any of its fundamental moral values (humanity, moral right and dignity) and that the principle of justice must serve the moral agent and not the other way around: that the moral agent should serve justice (Gluchman, 1996, p. 41; 2005, p. 91).

of justice and to understand them is therefore very important. One of the first attempts to distinguish between different types of justice can be found in the work of Aristotle—more precisely in his *Nicomachean ethics*. In book V – *Justice*, Aristotle wrote that unjust meant either lawless or unfair and just meant either lawful or fair (equitable) (Aristotle, 2004, p. 113). Therefore, the first distinction to be made is presumably to distinguish between the notion of justice (and just) as a legal concept and the ethical-philosophical meaning of justice (and just). In the ethics of social consequences the legal concept of just is understood solely to mean lawful; if a thing is just it is in accordance with the law; it is legitimate.

The purpose of this paper is to consider the ethical-philosophical meaning of justice. In this view, justice is understood much more widely. In the ethics of social consequences justice is an attribute of specific processes (distribution or transaction), an attribute of specific conditions (rules, norms, rights) and an attribute of specific entities (human beings, moral agents, society). As understood in the ethics of social consequences the concept of justice is not derived solely from a critique of Rawls but is also greatly inspired by the work of Aristotle. When reflecting upon what he calls *particular justice*, Aristotle distinguished three distinct types: *distributive*, *rectificatory* and *reciprocal* justice.

Distributive justice “is that which is shown in the distribution of honour or money or such other assets as are divisible among the members of the community”. Distributive justice is a type of justice which is exercised before the injustice occurs, and it is always geometrically proportional.¹¹ Any necessary adjustments are, in Aristotle’s understanding, based on the merit of the parties involved. Rectificatory justice “remedies an inequitable division between two parties by means of a sort of arithmetical progression”. Rectificatory justice rectifies the conditions of a transaction (remedies the unequal distribution of gain and loss which can be identified as damage or unfair gain). It is exercised after the injustice has been done and is arithmetically proportional.¹² The injured party receives a portion from the inflicting party that will equalize the difference produced by the unjust act. Aristotle divides rectificatory justice into two parts: voluntary and involuntary. The former involves activities which have a voluntary initial stage, such as selling, buying, lending at interest etc. The latter involves activities which are either secret (theft, adultery etc.) or violent (assault, murder etc.). The third type of justice, according to Aristotle, is reciprocal justice. Reciprocal justice should not be confused with distributive justice; it is exercised both before and after the injustice is done. Distributive justice is only exercised before. Neither should it be mistaken for rectificatory justice (even if exercised after the injustice); in contrast to rectificatory justice, reciprocal justice takes account of any difference in the merit of the parties involved (it uses geometrical, not arithmetical, proportions). This type of justice (reciprocal) is more complex than either of the previous ones. To simplify its characteristics one could say that it is a type of justice which is exercised on two different occasions. On one hand, reciprocal justice is used in transactions (the exchange of goods or services) before the injustice happens. On other hand, it is used after the harm is inflicted and when retribution is needed (Aristotle, 2004, pp. 116-124).

¹¹Equally to equal and unequally to unequal.

¹²All the parties are seen as having an equal merit; therefore, retribution is not done on the merit of the party.

The theory of distributive justice goes back at least two millennia; however, the allocation of scarce resources or products among individuals with competing needs or claims in a society or group is still problematic (Roemer, 1996, p. 1). The term distributive justice is frequently used in the contemporary literature as a synonym for social justice, today best known through the writings of the political philosopher John Rawls (1999; 2002). It is remarkable that, as Jackson noted, the concept of “social” was only introduced into distributive justice in the late 19th century. In contemporary conceptions different preconditions have been set by different theorists. What might be unifying is the premise that social justice depends upon the existence of an agency that can be charged with responsibility (Jackson, 2005, pp. 356-359). In the ethics of social consequences distributive justice is understood to be the allocation of scarce resources or products among individuals with competing needs or claims in society. In the ethics of social consequences this strict classical focus on just institutions is rejected in distributive justice. Institutions are seen as being important but not sufficient. In the ethics of social consequences establishing distributive justice on the basis of a social contract is rejected as being unsatisfactory, and the micro-social level and the notion of a moral agent are considered important. In this conception justice lies in achieving positive social consequences as outcomes of the deliberations and acts of a moral agent. Justice is not achieved by setting up just institutions, nor by determining liberties and rights; it is achieved by a moral agent. A moral agent is understood to be an autonomous being who has the right to choose her/his objectives freely.

The ethics of social consequences also includes the development of two additional types of justice associated with Aristotle. On the one hand, there is justice which is about justifying punishment, and in the ethics of social consequences this is viewed reformatively¹³ (unlike retributive justice). On the other hand, there is a third type of justice which is reciprocal justice related to the fair exchange of goods and the fair participation of sellers and buyers in exchange systems.¹⁴

As mentioned above, this reciprocal justice is used before an injustice has occurred to determine the fair exchange of goods and the fair participation of sellers and buyers in an exchange system. In the context of consumption, we need to focus on a system that ensures buyers and sellers have fair conditions under which to participate in the exchange of goods for payment and in the process of the exchange itself. Reciprocal justice, as understood in the ethics of social consequences, is defined as justice based on the acceptance of free will and the equal rights of moral agents (the participants of exchange). Free will and the realization of reciprocal rights and duties should be guaranteed as a precondition to identifying the transaction as being in accordance with reciprocal justice in its true meaning. Fulfilling one's duties primarily means not impeding on the rights of the moral agent in acknowledging

¹³Rectificatory justice is mostly used in legal contexts; nevertheless, it also has applications in ethics. It is mainly concerned with negative sanctioning. This type of justice is not essential to the topic of the paper and as such will be not developed further.

¹⁴In addition to these three, there is also a notion of procedural justice in the ethics of social consequences, which sees procedural justice as a procedure not a form of justice. It may be of interest in relation to the theory of right at the metaethical level of ethical theory, but it is not vital for this paper.

her/his human dignity. The outcome of the transaction should then be the prevalence of positive social consequences¹⁵ over negative ones for all the moral agents participating in the transaction.

To sum up, in the ethics of social consequences there are three different types of justice. The first is distributive justice, which is about the fairness of the distribution of rights or resources. Then there is rectificatory justice, which is concerned with remedying the unequal distribution of gain and loss, and can be identified as damage caused by unfair gain; here the focus is on achieving fairness in punishing wrongdoing. The last notion of justice is reciprocal. It concerns fairness in the exchange of goods and during participation in the exchange system.

Justice on the global market and consumption

The contemporary literature also considers the notion of international justice in relation to the ethical aspects of consumption. International justice is concerned with two main problems: fairness in trade and fairness in distribution on the global level.¹⁶ The distributive and reciprocal notions of justice are therefore key in relation to consumption. Both these notions are interconnected and interdependent. If the global market fails to adequately supply its participants with the basic resources, such as adequate education, health care and safety (distributive justice), the exchange can hardly be considered to be just (reciprocity). Reciprocal justice presupposes that certain things will be achieved in relation to distributive justice. The ability of the participants (in exchange) to access specific rights and resources is a precondition for reciprocal justice. These rights and resources can affect the ability of the exchange participants as a buyers or sellers.

As noted above, in the ethics of social consequences reciprocal justice is based on the free will and equal rights of the moral agents. It is unlikely that there will be a fair exchange of goods (for payment) if fair conditions for participating in the exchange have not been secured. Here the free will of the agents involved is a precondition to fair participation in the exchange. To achieve and secure the free will of these agents, the ethics of social consequences imposes three conditions.

The first condition is that both parties in the transaction must be adequately informed about the relevant characteristics of the goods being traded. A problem can occur if they are unaware of hidden defects, or hidden features, which are important to their making a judgment. The second condition is connected to the ability not to conclude the transaction if either of the parties is dissatisfied with the price of the goods. The third condition is that both parties must be free from exceptional pressure, or constraints, with respect to the transaction. The second and third conditions are closely connected to the notion of distributive justice and the ability to secure fair conditions on global markets.

¹⁵ In the ethics of social consequences, positive social consequences are characterized as consequences which help to satisfy the needs of the moral agent, social community or society. They are an essential condition of the good (Gluchman, 1994, p. 16; 1999, p. 18).

¹⁶ International justice is studied in relation to global wealth, poverty, debt, inequality, famine, nationalism, underdevelopment, immigration and so on.

There are two possible ways (not mutually exclusive) in which distributive justice can achieve fair conditions on global markets. From the perspective of the ethics of social consequences, one can accept (at macro-social level) that Rawls's theory has its benefits and uses; however, it must be adapted to the current global challenges. The most important aspect of the debate on this is that there is insufficient acknowledgement of the interests and perspectives of those not party to the social contract of a polity as seen by Rawls, but who necessarily bear some of the consequences arising from the decisions taken in within it.¹⁷

Amartya Sen and Peter Singer consider this to be one of the biggest challenges for Rawls' conception of justice at the global level. Rawls realized the problem and tried to resolve it in his later work (Rawls, 2002) with the help of another "original position" which would exist between the representatives of different polities (or people).¹⁸ However, his solution is problematic. Sen argues that this type of procedure (applying two original positions) does not eliminate the asymmetry which exists between different groups of affected people, since the different polities are diversely endowed with assets and opportunities. He believes that the idea of having one global social contract for the entire world population appears to be deeply unrealistic not just now but also for the foreseeable future (Sen, 2009, pp. 140-141). Singer states that Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1999), considered to be the most influential 20th century work on justice, does not address the issue of justice at the global level (between societies). *The Law of Peoples* (2002) tries to overcome this obstacle. It uses an approach which is quite different from that of *A Theory of Justice* (1999). When writing about justice at the global (international) level Rawls's arguments are less consistent compared to those relating to the intranational level (Singer, 2002, pp. 176-178).¹⁹ Therefore if we want to use Rawls's conception, this obstacle will have to be overcome and a solution found.

As noted by Sen, there are two different lines of reasoning on distributive justice. The first concentrates on identifying just social arrangements, and focuses on the just institutions considered to be its principal goal. The most famous account of this in the social contract tradition is Rawls's theory. Another consists of a variety of different approaches that focus on how people actually behave (Sen, 2009, p. 11). In the ethics of social consequences, the best example of this second approach as another means of achieving distributive justice is ethical consumption.

¹⁷Rawls's theory of justice as fairness is a well-known theory; therefore, this paper does not describe it in full but makes critical comments instead.

¹⁸He suggested that one original position would be useful for intranational and second for international agreement.

¹⁹The critiques of Rawls's theory go much deeper and involve many aspects (e.g. liberalism as the only scope, its utopian character, the social contract), but the aim of this paper is not to deal with them in their entirety. The one that must at least be mentioned is that by Michael Sandel. He argues that Rawls's theory requires the moral agent (in the theory of the person) to be completely separated from her ends, attributes, community and history. Moral subjects have to be abstract agents by choice, otherwise the theory would not make sense. Sandel argues that this theory of moral agent is inconsistent with the important difference principle in Rawls theory. In general, this view has come to be known as the communitarian critique of liberalism. For a better understanding of the arguments, see *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, and *Justice: What's the Right Thing To Do* (Sandel, 1998; 2009).

The motives for and moral context of ethical consumption vary a lot, but the basic distinction lies in individual and social reasons. From the individual's perspective, many agents choose to be morally responsible consumers out of a desire to be a better person. On the other hand, many moral agents realize there is pressure for social change and wish to be part of this change. In this sense, ethical consumption is understood to be "[...] the conscious and deliberate decision to make certain consumption choices due to personal moral beliefs and values" (Crane & Matten, 2004, p. 290). The moral agent, seen in this context as an economics agent, is encouraged to articulate and actively follow his own moral values and ideals on defined objectives such as fair conditions in markets.²⁰ Ethical consumers are subjects who recognize the impact (social, environmental, ethical) of their consumption. This is then seen as the incentive behind their decision to consume more responsibly. Dombos even considers ethical consumption to be a tool for reaching beyond individuals and for transforming business practices (Dombos, 2015, pp. 125-126).

There are many ways in which agents can actively articulate and follow their own moral values, ideals and objectives. The most common ways of achieving fair conditions on the market are positive buying, negative purchasing, company based purchasing and the so called fully screened approach. One of the most popular ethical consumption movements is fair-trade, which defines itself in the most basic sense through the slogan "trade not aid". The fair-trade movement is based on the assumption that many of the issues concerning global markets are connected to the exploitation of producers, their poor working and living circumstances, and poverty caused by the basic conditions of international markets. The prices on the commodity markets for example are so low that they do not allow producers to obtain the basic resources, (such as adequate education, health care and safety) regarded as necessary to achieving further goals, such as justice in exchange. The participants in the exchange do not therefore have access to basic resources and rights, and that affects their ability to be equal participants in the exchange. The existing conditions impede the prospect of achieving fairness in exchange since they do not secure fair conditions for all participants. According to this assumption, if the situation does not change it is absurd to hope that reciprocal justice will be achieved.

Free will²¹ and equal rights, essential requirements (in the ethics of social consequences) for reciprocal justice cannot be achieved. Here the fair-trade movement is an alternative way of encouraging and empowering these producers and their communities by at least guaranteeing minimum prices for their products, and establishing fair working and exchange conditions.

The main aim of fair-trade has always been to challenge the existing economic and business models and encourage greater concern and social awareness in society. Fair-trade organizations set out to stimulate redistribution and secure human rights, improve working conditions and sustain development through increased consumer awareness (Doherty, Davies, & Tranchell, 2013, p. 161). The currently accepted definition is:

²⁰There are many non-mutually exclusive objectives which could be the aim of ethical consumption. The three main categories they fall into are environmental, social and ethical.

²¹The second and third conditions for free will (as mentioned above), to be achieved in tandem with reciprocal justice cannot be satisfied under the current conditions of the global market.

Fair-trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency, and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers—especially in the South.

The aim of fair-trade is to support the producers and raise awareness about practices in conventional international trade (WFTO – FLO, 2009, p. 6).

Even if the fair-trade movement can be seen as a means of securing fairer conditions in the global market, there are still many problematic issues which must be resolved. These are of an economic, ethical and social nature and can also be found in combination. They include problems such as distortions in the price of goods, which make it hard to reliably predict demand; poorer quality products and services; low redistribution of money; problems concerning labeling, certification and so on. The most serious problem, closely linked to the triumph of the market and to the triumph of the consumerism, is the creation of a new trend—ethical consumerism. Ethical consumerism is an excessive form of ethical consumption and is a very new and important issue requiring greater examination. It raises the question of whether ethical consumerism can still be seen as a positive means of achieving fair conditions for participating in exchange, or on the contrary, does it contradict this effort? This question is closely connected to that mentioned at the beginning of the paper: can we still view the connection between consumption and growth in today's globalized society positively?

Conclusion

Whilst it is tempting to try and answer these questions, there is not the space to do so in such a short paper. The aim therefore is narrower: to explore the standpoint of the ethics of social consequences on issues relating to consumption. Consumption emerged with the triumph of the market and the triumph of consumerism, both of which determine society today. In other words, it is impossible to understand contemporary society without endeavoring to understand the problems connected to consumption.

Consumerism as an excessive form of consumption is a substantial part of other moral issues, such as individualism, freedom, subjectivity, commodification, hedonism and so on. These are associated with poverty, hunger, safety and inequality in the global world etc. It is claimed that the common ethical issue here is justice; hence the paper's narrower focus.

The second part of the paper explored the issue of justice in the ethics of social consequences. First it looked at Aristotle's understanding of justice, since his notion inspired the taxonomy and understanding of justice found in the ethics of social consequences. Subsequently, the paper outlined three different categories of justice found in the theory of the ethics of social consequences.

The last part of the paper was a closer examination of distributive and reciprocal justice (inherently connected to consumption) at the global level in relation to the issue of consumption. We looked at two (non-mutually exclusive) ways of achieving fair conditions (distributive justice) on the global markets as a requirement for reciprocal justice. The first approach was inspired by Rawls and concerned the macro-social level. The second relates

to the moral agent at the micro-social level and was inspired by the modern notion of ethical consumption (manifest in the fair-trade movement). Both these approaches have their pros and cons as indicated, and these need resolving if we want them to become more effective. Overall in this paper I have tried to point out how the ethics of social consequences can contribute to this crucial discussion.

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