Affluenza: the dangerous worldwide pandemic

Contributed by Culture Change
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Brand names, corporate logos, behavioral patterns, entrainment of the masses by corporate media - these are the components of a virus that is now driving cultural behavior worldwide, but precious remaining resources necessary for survival are being decimated.

The consumerism meme is now infecting the lifestyles of young people in China, where 400 million are now on the path to unsustainable consumerism.
To put this in perspective, there are only 307 million in the United States, which is already the most egregious consumer of the world's resources.

Proliferation of Objects of Consumerism

What started in the technology-savvy areas of the world, product fetishism has become a pandemic, from cell phones as fashion accessories, to video games, DVDs, music, computers, Internet personalities, web sites, office supplies, automobiles, motorcycles, entertainment blips, object accumulation syndrome, stimulation desire, robotic incessant gratuitous activity.

Speaking of the DIY (Do It Yourself) culture of China in the 1960's, Liu Xiaohui, an associate university professor who was born in 1964, said that:

...given that material was not adequate at that time, I didn't have any concept of consuming at all when I was young, and it was impossible to buy any toy even though we had enough cash. So Do-It-Yourself was the only way of getting toys.

Girls preferred flying kites and skipping, while slingshots are boys' favorite. I enjoyed flying kites in spring very much. Some bamboo sticks with several used pieces of paper stuck on, and a kite was made; some wire with the rubber ropes wound on, a slingshot was made.

As globalization of trade and the viral marketing of consumerism has been perpetrated by corporations has progressed through the decades, we see the costs of day to day activities of young people take a great toll on the world's people and environment.

From People's Daily Online:

Zhou Yongkai, former director of PR department of Yangshengtang Company, noted that "children’s nature makes it easy for them to fall into addiction, become a target influenced by commercial chains. The traditional distribution channels have restricted consumption by children, and are not easy to lead to crazy consumption by children. However, many products are using the latest marketing approaches to break through this restriction at home or abroad. There is no doubt that, this will actually result in crazy consumption by children."

The consumer goods industries are dependent on destructive resource extraction. For instance, the Congo is the source

of 80% of the world's supply of coltan, a mineral essential for the manufacture of capacitors used in most consumer electronics.

This article is an introduction to the terrible human tragedy going on in the Congo, where the military is a pawn of the mining industry, destroying the lives of the indigenous people:
"The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo" Illuminates and Devastates

See also The Greatest Silence: www.thegreatestsilence.org:

Since 1998 a brutal war has been raging in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Over 4 million people have died. And there are the uncountable casualties: the many tens of thousands of women and girls who have been systematically kidnapped, raped, mutilated and tortured by soldiers from both foreign militias and the Congolese army.

Pathological Obsession With House and Development Expansion

Another human obsession has been expansion of living and activity constructions, buildings, roads, parking lots, earthworks, mining, logging, commerce, with the associated problems of unsustainable resource requirements, disparity in inter species habitat usage, pollution, and much more. In particular is the disproportionately high usage and damage caused by humans in relation to other species. (See www.EndOfSuburbia.com)

Disproportion of Usage by Some of Human Species

This construction obsession doesn't make sense, intuitively, if one considers the biological context of humans as part of the tree of life of all individuals of all species. 'Homo Consumers' are like a mass of monsters, overtaken by complete self-centeredness, driving machines of all sorts of physical and mental gratification, and driving culture further into robotic disregard for the tree of life and the implications that brings to bear on the entire tree. It is as if a single line from the roots to one single twig, the Homo Consumers species, has grown to gigantic proportions and will now cause the trunk to split and collapse from the imbalance of weight, only to die.

This break will kill or greatly damage the Homo Consumer species: the shopper, the driver, the worker, the builder, the businessperson, the slave, the chatterer, the follower, the politician, the marketer, the industrial farmer and fisher. Perhaps in its place, Homo Sapiens, the sustainable precursor, the forest dweller, the fruit eater, the Earthling, make regain its place as a collaborator in the great family of all life.

Unnecessary Activity

While there are many urgent activities that are necessary to protect the greater family of the tree of life, there are many activities that could easily be curtailed if one could see that the pain is too great, considering the connectedness we have to past and future generations. If we can see that the past generations or other groups have put us in a predicament, then we must consider how we can prevent that from happening in the future.

Tragic that Homo Consumers so occupy themselves with ANYTHING BUT the basics of picking fruit, vegetables, nuts and berries from trees and bushes and maintaining a healthy coexistent ecological relationship with all individuals of all species.

Homo Consumers are part of nature's ecosystems, despite the levels of technology and decorative packaging wrapped around the consumers' daily 'fruits,' the walls and roads that hide the orchards and gardens, the myriad distractions of entertainment and object obsessions we have. Resource depletion and disruption of the ecosystems are at dangerous levels and threaten the life and health of many other beings. We must grow quickly to see the implications of our desires and behaviors, to avoid the disease.

Necessary Activity

There is much to clean up, tear down, detoxify, reduce harm, reprogram, rebuild, replant, rediversify, cure, heal, rehabilitate, learn, care for. Together we have to learn the complexity of the situation and work together to catalog and activate new projects and behaviors. The proliferation of technology has created all sorts of long-term problems that don't disappear simply because we as individuals might live an idyllic, self-sustainable life. There has to be a serious commitment to detoxify and dismantle the mega-debris of industrialization, as necessary to prevent hazards from inadvertently hurting current and future innocent generations.

Axes of Priority

There are many axes of priority about which we must weigh the values of various items of reality, for the common good, learning from the past, cultivating the best future, working to protect and allow all individuals of all species to flourish, in balance as it has been for over 100,000 years, despite various geological and astronomical interruptions.

What kinds of human activities let us all live best for the long term and the present? This is a complex problem that we must work on together. Nature provides the most amazing role models, proven over long periods of time.

Ambitions and Ancestors Calling

There are voices from the past that give us all the clues we need to make the right decisions. Are we listening hard enough? Have we found a quiet place and have we primed ourselves with the necessary reading and research, questions and priorities to determine what matters? Do we have the perspective of all perspectives, non-onesidedness (in Jainism, Anekantavada), the panoramic awareness, necessary to move forward with the best possible guidance from all beings, past, present and future? Let's work for the best possible outcome for all beings. There are many highly evolved traditions and ecologies to use as role models.

Resources:

HOME, the film, is a visual narrative taking us through deep time, ecology and rebalancing, the evolution of Earth, civilization and agriculture. HOME is an urgent call to change our ways to prevent catastrophic resource consumption and destruction and disruption of ecosystems that is dangerously escalating.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqxENMKaeCU

http://www.home-2009.com/

The Story of Stuff: examining consumerism, manufacturing, resources, the environment, people and health: www.storyofstuff.com

China’s College Entry Test, Gao Kao, Is National Obsession - NYTimes.com

Special report: 400 million Chinese children face serious "affluenza" - People's Daily Online