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Summary:

In spite of investing a great amount of effort in the reduction of resource consumption, energy-demanding technologies and high consumption persist. They only change their form and geographic position. It is perhaps due to the fact that the mankind has still not succeeded in revealing the real cause embedded in human desire. It is greediness and the belief that more things and pleasure are needed for the complete happiness.

It is known that increased efficiency without reduction of consumption habits is not enough (*Rebound Effect*). Therefore, it is obvious that we need remove the primary causes of the consumption process.

Essay:

The abrupt population increase is often presented as one of the causes of resource scarcity. This issue is not subject of this essay for its limited scope. Let me though, point to another problem. It is the one that roots in our everyday life. It is the increase of the living standard or better said increasing demands which are equally important in terms of resource scarcity. In order to keep the right order it should be explained what is precisely meant by human well-being.

Pursuing the dictionary, in difference from the objectively measurable welfare generated only by the surplus of material sources, this is the matter of subjective feelings of both material and non-material nature. Talking about food and energy, you will be naturally interested in the material aspect of welfare. If you agree with the idea that “Not those that possess a lot are rich but those who need least”, let me specify. What is the necessary minimum of welfare? A scientific approach requires a hypothetic survey with the aim to define the necessary minimum. Let us compare the opinion of people living in different life conditions and to produce an answer.

What may suffice to the basic satisfaction of the starving part of Africa so that people can wake up every morning without fear of starvation? To live near a source of drinking water? Less “unpretending” are other third world populations who long for sufficient basic medicines or elemental education for their children. People living in war countries may be satisfied with peace or free movement in now undermined territory. What may suffice to us, inhabitants of the “first” world? The answers would be indeed variegated.

Starting with a dignified job, advantageous house mortgage or decent neighbours and ending by healthy environment or cheap organic foods. But which stuff of it do we really need?

How to set the limit of the necessary minimum over which the consumption degrades to common catering of senses which rather than developing benumbs the human character. Perhaps each of us should pose the question to her or himself. I believe in capacity of every person to set this limit. It may take time before we find out that the development of our inner potential does not depend so much on the material potential. This recognition though, is crucial for the solution of the issue of food and energy crisis. Changing our consuming habits will certainly project in reduced resource consumption. Some of us may oppose alleging that they are in full fight for more extreme and exotic experience. I agree but also add that this only is a magic circle because human desires have no end. More is always wanted than we really need. The proofs are all around us. They can be found in the statistics which monitor the frequency of obese people. Statistical data are also in the background of increasing total divorce rate or in number of accomplished flights. We can also find them in overcrowded automobiles used car sales or next to “festoon” rubbish bins with furniture and quite functional utensils or things that have been changed for better, newer and more fashionable ones recommended by advertisements. But the advertisements say nothing about the fact that the production of new and recycling of old things also consumes energy, of course.

Why new things? Why surplus?

Do they make us happier? Let us reflect on what makes us happier and what makes our life meaningful.

Where then do we have to look for happiness if not in the offer of advertisements and media presenting its idols? I do believe again that each of us can answer the question.

Just set aside the iPod-s, iPhon-s, or other time or energy devouring iGadgets. Switch off the TV or the computer and resist the bargains. Walk or use the public transport instead of driving, open your eyes or rather hearths wide. Have a look around and try to find beauty and happiness where it was overlooked until now.

You may find it perhaps in snow crunching below your feet or making a gift or speak to someone who you would not speak to otherwise. Recipes are many. Try to experience these tiny moments more deeply.

Try to resist the greediness. You will certainly find a bit of happiness in this abnegation too. Seems paradoxical ? Not at all. Our fixed ideas about happiness are indeed

paradoxical. We believe we are making ourselves happy but in fact we are only governed by temptations, desires and artificial needs which become ever stronger and more demanding every time we satisfy them. They become ever more energy demanding. Does the circle still seem happy?

What is the difference between happiness resulting from satisfaction of desires and happiness stemming in temperance and sound abnegation? The first mentioned pushes us from one extreme to another and brings boredom in to the weekday. Meanwhile, true happiness is manifestation of free and peaceful mind able to find pleasure and satisfaction even in everyday trip to work.

Let us enjoy small things, reveal the charm of reasonable modesty and perhaps once the nuclear power stations will disappear and the factories producing useless things will stop parasiting on fertile lands. And maybe more will happen. Difficult to foresee. Relationships are complicated.

I am not able answer to all question relative with change in our approaches to resources. It can be only answered by interdisciplinary research. The aim of this essay was only to contribute to the overall willingness to undergo change in consumer habits which provide us a false idea of happy and meaningful life. This willingness is only able to create a pressure to the rational political decision – revalue GDP as an index of welfare and development, ecological tax reform, engage in food security problem and others known programs and effective devices.

First, we should try to persuade ourself that real human happiness or well-being is sustainable. Rather than theories, experience sharing will probably bring the real progress in this issue.

Sources:

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