

# Performing moral identity: a hermeneutic study of sustainable consumers

**Carmen Valor**  
Universidad Pontificia Comillas

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## **Abstract**

Sustainable consumption is a form of ethical subjectification, but little is known about how this ethical subjectification is actually performed and what moral frameworks consumers draw from to construct their moral self. By applying the genealogical method devised by Foucault this paper examines how consumers are morally sourced and what the sources of their moral self are. Following a hermeneutic approach, 24 in-depth interviews were conducted with committed sustainable consumers. Sustainable consumers ontologically construct themselves as singular, relational and coherent, and perform four practices of care of self. The cultural roots of this subjectification are found in virtue ethics, more precisely in the reconceptualization of virtue ethics found in environmental ethics. This paper ultimately proposes to shift the debate from what incentives to give to “selfish consumers” to how constitute subjects that can lead the transition.

**Keywords:** *moral identity; subjectification; technologies of self*

**Track:** Social Responsibility & Ethics