

Your Holiday Shopping: Every year, retailers sink or swim depending on their abilities to draw customers and rack up huge sales during the holidays. During the Depression, FDR decreed that Thanksgiving should be moved up from the fourth Thursday in November to the third in order to extend the shopping season. And indeed, this is a critical period for the overall profits of many businesses. How are you a participant in that shopping frenzy? Why and how do you partake? What are the meanings of your actions? Since the beginning of mass distribution and mass advertising, critics have debated how much “agency” each consumer has. In other words, are they thoughtful and capable of making their own decisions and getting value for their money? Or are they mindless sheep drawn to the malls in herds with little free will? Here are some questions to help you figure out where you fit in:

1. Are you going to buy presents for anyone?
2. Who and why?
3. What is the meaning of giving a gift?
4. What will you purchase and why?
5. Where will you go to get it?
6. Will you go to a local community store or a big chain?
7. Why?
8. What are the consequences of your decision over where to shop?
9. How will you give the present?
10. What would you like to receive?
11. Why?
12. What wouldn't you like to receive?
13. How will you measure the value of such a gift?
14. Does it matter if it came from Costco/Walmart/etc or Sharper Image?
15. What do you want that you could do without?
16. Under what circumstances would you make a sacrifice?
17. Are any of you opposed to the material abundance and excess of the holiday season?