

First and Last Name

Professor

Class

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Opting Out: Voluntary Simplicity and the Leaderless Revolt

Mass-consumption leads to financial, ecological, and most importantly, spiritual bankruptcy. As Derrek Jensen cites in their interview with Kalle Lasn, corporate advertising is “the largest single psychological experiment ever carried out on the human race” (para. 33). The reality of living in a world that is dominated by advertising is troubling in that its effects on humanity are still largely unknown according to Lasn. The ability for advertisers to sway the populous in their decision making is incredibly unnerving. Although anti-consumer advertising has proven to be successful in some cases, as Thomas Frank notes, it can just as easily become co-opted by larger more powerful entities within the advertising industry (56). Deb Morrison believes that the same mechanisms used to engage consumers purchases—no matter how large or small—can be used to affect lasting environmental changes. Yet, this seems like it may backfire. For example, the catchphrase “sustainable development” is often used by large corporations and governments alike; the fact that the words “sustain” and “develop” are not seen as oxymoronic is quite laughable.

Although environmental protection is necessary, it is clear that corporate interests are using this issue for their own ends. Duane Elgin understands the pressing need for consumers to bring this matter to the forefront of public discourse. However, it only seems to be a matter of time before that dialogue is co-opted as well. As such, it is important for a “leaderless revolution” to occur in which individuals take voluntary steps towards living a life based on

principles of simple living (Elgin 12). Although living a simpler life is often associated with poverty, rural or “ugly” living, and economic stagnation, the reality is that by making a few conscious decisions to limit consumption, an immense amount of good will help maintain a harmonious balance in the world (Elgin 12-16). That said, it is possible to reconcile consumption habits with a more ethical and mindful approach to individual behaviors by making decisions to simplify life for the betterment of society and the environment.

Works Cited

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