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The Implicit Need for Food

The end of food like the end of many things contains a daunting nuance. At the dawn of human civilization, the only reason to wake up every day was to hunt and forage for the food that was needed just to survive another day. Over time, we have progressed, and food is now a break from our day or an indulgence for ourselves. Food envelops us, we use food as an excuse to catch up with friends and take us to another culture and experience. In the western world, people center their day around meals and snack breaks, dinner dates, cafe hang outs, or family pot luck. Food has transformed into a key source of our happiness. Tech entrepreneur, Rob Rhinehart has developed a technology to wipe out any need for these pleasures that encompass our life. Soylent is a meal replacement liquid containing all the amino acids, lipids, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals that are known to be needed to sustain us but in today's world, it is evident that sustainability is not all that matters. Food has diverged from a task, a means of getting nutrients to survive, to a socialization that we cannot lose touch with despite technological advancements and a growing population.

The 21st century has seen an exponential boom in the tech industry, with advancements like cell phones, biotechnology, and social networking, changing the way we go about our day to day lives in an instant. There is a constant push in our modern society to go faster and live easier, but every aspect of our day is just a passive means of getting to the next check point as efficiently as possible and there is nothing waiting for us at the end of this rush. There has to be

some aspects of **humanity** that we hold onto in this increasingly automated world. Instead of progressing, these contributions are degrading human nature and resurfacing survival as the sole purpose to live. Without taking advantage of the simple things like enjoying a warm doughnut fresh from the bakery down the street, or meeting an old friend during your lunch break, or discussing how your day was and what you learned at school over family dinner, we are losing touch of what it is to be human.

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In the article, “The End of Food” by Lizzie Widdicombe, Rhinehart suggests that food is simply an engineering problem. Widdicombe states, “He (Rhinehart) began to think that food was an inefficient way of getting what he needed to survive” (Widdicombe 1), but food isn’t just for survival anymore. Rhinehart is right, food is an inefficient way of fueling ourselves, but in modern day, that’s not the reason why we eat at all. Food is no longer just carbohydrates and lipids, food is as important to who we are as people, as what we do as people. My favorite meal essay, about weekly Sunday dinner and my Memere’s lasagna, states, “This dish means nothing to me. It’s not a special dish, it’s not a family recipe. This lasagna is just a way for me to get everyone here.” **This dialogue exemplifies the deeper meaning of a meal.** Everyone needs dinner and a meal provides a purpose for people to gather. Dinner is that outlet for conversation and human engagement, meals are our breaks from our revolving lives. My favorite meal essay defines these moments around food, stating, “The bread is warm, butter soft and after the conversation lulls for those first few minutes, it lightens the house again from childhood reminiscing to the best story from the week ricocheting around the room creating abundant chatter and laughter.” Passing Soylent around the dinner table does not provide that same comfort, there is no exchange; no time to waste around a good meal and better conversation. If

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Soylent developed into a widely used meal replacement, there would be no need to eat, eliminating the factor of dinner from our lives and thus reducing pure human interaction.

Soylent is not a new concept. In hospitals, patients are hooked up to IVs that put liquid food right into their bloodstream. Protein shakes and liquid meal replacements have existed for gym-goers and dieters for years. There are aisles of the grocery store dedicated to marketing this one idea and there has still been no wide scale life change that focuses solely on only consuming exactly what you need. People don't want to consume food this way. Rhinehart's Soylent is removed from actual people, this is not the way people want to live. Food, no matter the cost, the effort, or the time, is the culture that people want to hold onto. People are different around the world. They hold different values, practice different religion, speak different languages, and have different food culture, and these are all things we celebrate and work to not forget. Soylent will take away cooking, eating, and all the tradition that encompasses food. When we start to lose some of these things that make us unique people, there is no stop to what technology can do to further dehumanize us.

Although Soylent would have devastating effects on human nature, the potential upsides of eliminating food from our culture must be recognized. The global population is growing exponentially as the environmental crisis worsens. Over the coming decades, it is estimated that many currently populated places will become inhospitable because of global warming, emerging diseases, and invasive species. With a growing population, more and more food is going to be needed to feed people and we face a crisis in food sustainability. Agricultural space is going to be limited and the exhaust emitted from these practices are going to worsen conditions. Resources are quickly depleting as we have a growing need to supply them. The world needs a resolution and Soylent could be that fix. Soylent is a cost-effective means of getting all

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sustainable nutrients needed to survive to the global population and it takes up little to no space to manufacture. With Soylent, many environmental concerns could diminish, and larger populations could be supported. However, with the absence of food from our lives, there is also significant unintended consequences that cannot be ignored and which make Soylent the wrong alternative.

Food surrounds so much of our day that food production takes up a huge amount of our economy. With the absence of food from our lives, billions of people around the world would lose their livelihoods; farmers, fisherman, chefs, grocery store clerks, factory workers, etc. So much tradition envelops food and carries on different cultures that make the human race so unique. With the loss of food, come the loss of the memories that get brought up over a family recipe or the discussion that fills the air over dinner. The flavors of different cultures are ways we define different parts of the world and reasons we seek to explore places outside of ourselves. On this discussion of what food really brings to the table Widdicombe states after trialing Soylent, “You begin to realize how much of your day revolves around food. Meals provide punctuation to our lives: we’re constantly recovering from them, anticipating them, riding the emotional ups and downs of a good or a bad sandwich. With a bottle of Soylent on your desk, time stretches before you, featureless and a little sad” (Widdicombe 14). Soylent takes so much of these aspects of who we are away. Soylent speeds up our lives and can contribute to environmental issues but in doing so, would take too much of who we are, that surviving would merely be all we are doing and like Widdicombe states, we would soon find our lives to be quite empty, sad, and meaningless.

The human race is defined in our accomplishments, our differences, and our ability to comprehend, empathize and seek understanding. Technology is growing with us and in some

aspects improving our lives and helping us connect, travel, have more time for the people we love, but Soylent is the brink of where technology starts to degrade human worth. What makes us as humans different from other animals and life on earth, is that we are not just on this planet to survive. People have bigger goals, we seek to understand the world, better our lives, achieve things, be successful, enjoy, adventure, and love. Soylent is an idea that could solve some problems we face, but it is not a way to progress the human race. We need food and the conversation, the culture and the reflection of our lives that it brings to the table. There are places to make shortcuts and things to make more efficient but the way we eat and the way we connect with each other is not the place to take the hit. Soylent wouldn't just control the way we get our meals, it would begin to control the ways we live, and thousands of years of human progress have shown us, that being human means a lot more than just surviving.

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Your essay is well written. There are a few sentence level errors that you can easily fix by proofreading or spell checking and such. There are a couple gaps where you could add more explanation or more support like quotes from the Widdicombe article. Overall flow is decent with few places that seemed choppy.
Organization of the paper seemed good with thesis and support for thesis being clear and easily spotted. Biggest thing to work on is just fully explaining the point that you are trying to make, or any backstory such as when you mention your Memere so people know what her relationship is to you.

Work Cited

Widdicombe, Lizzie. "The End of Food." *The New Yorker*, The New Yorker, 12 May 2014, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/05/12/the-end-of-food.

