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ENG 110 – H5

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What is Food, Really?

How much easier would life be if you did not have to eat? It sounds crazy, but consider it, even for a moment. Imagine never having to make a last-minute run to the grocery store, not having to leave your desk when you are being productive and most importantly, cutting food costs for you or your family in half. This idea may sound like a strange mix between utopia and dystopia, but it could be our reality, if Rob Rhinehart has his way.

Back in 2012, Rob Rhinehart and his friends were fresh off a failed project and trying to save money. While working long hours, Rhinehart began to resent the fact that he ever needed to stop work to eat food or spend his hard-earned money on it. Soon, he began to research exactly what nutrients one needs to survive and decided he was going to order just the essentials in supplements purchased online and *make* his own food. Thus, after a few attempts, Soylent was born. Since then, it has taken off in the media, becoming popular among people who work so hard they don't have time for food, for example, a large group of Caltech engineering students that created their own recipes for Soylent. This may sound like the idea of the century, but there are some downsides to it. Although a world that subsists on Soylent may make day-to-day life a little easier, the Soylent future that Rob Rhinehart dreams of is unattainable and there are several reasons why.

On a light note, one of the problems that can be had on an all Soylent diet is realizing how much one anticipates food throughout the day. In 2014, Lizzie Widdicombe met and interviewed the creator of Soylent. Widdicombe even went as far as to try a Soylent diet herself. She writes, "You begin to realize how much of your day revolves around food. Meals provide punctuation to our lives..." (Widdicombe, 2014). If one really thinks about it, it is true. Food is one of the most important things in our lives and not only because we need nutrients from it to survive. People plan lunches to catch up with old friends, dinner parties to introduce friends to others and even going out and getting breakfast with a loved one to spend some time together. These are huge cultural aspects of life as a human. What Widdicombe is trying to say here is that when Soylent takes over the role of food in one's life, it takes away a large aspect of day-to-day life as a social human being. It then replaces it with nonstop work because nobody has to get up and get lunch when their lunch is just liquid in a bottle next to their computer. Although this is an important aspect of the Soylent world Rhinehart imagines, it is not the biggest problem concerning jobs.

A consequence of a Soylent fueled world that Widdecombe doesn't really touch on in her article is the jobs that it would terminate, if it were to go into full effect. Rob Rhinehart states in the article that "Agriculture's one of the most dangerous and dirty jobs out there, and it's traditionally done by the underclass." (Widdecombe, 2014). While Rhinehart is not incorrect in his statements, he is pointing out one of the massive downsides to Soylent becoming popular, and that is job loss. He stated himself that farming is traditionally a "underclass" career, and that is exactly who would be in danger if Soylent took off the way that it was expected to. By people not eating regular food anymore, hundreds of farmers all around the world would be out of business and most would be out of the income they support their family with. Rhinehart does not seem to have a positive view on farms, clear by when he called farms "very inefficient factories." It is easy to see why one could think that, but if you put it into a humanitarian perspective, it is clear that farms are important to keep many people in America in their houses and with the food they need to survive, whether that be traditional food or Soylent. Although, Rhinehart does not seem to want to get rid of all farms, because he went on to tell Widdecombe "Surely it should be automated." This shows that he does not expect Soylent to completely take over the world, rather than just supplement the regular food that we have begun growing low on. Keeping this in mind, there are still more downsides to the world going on an all Soylent diet, and that is that we do not know if that is truly what is best for us, our health and our bodies.

For this article, it is clear that Widdicombe did as much research as she possibly good, even going as far as to consult doctors about Soylent and whether or not a human really could live off that alone, if they wanted or *needed* to.