

Please Stop Questioning The Morality Of Advertisements



By John Singleton

I grew up in a simpler time. My parents worked fulfilling, well-paying jobs at the local milk-bottling plant. We sat on benches advertising realtors and ate food advertising movies and read magazines advertising cigarettes. The world was sold on what it needed, and buying made us happy. To wear Levis was to be a hard worker, to smoke Marlboros was to be independent, and to drink Coca-Cola was to embrace the small joys of life.

With the dawn of the Internet, the world has been given a chance to return to this blissful place. Finally! Your choices on the web, through the magic of algorithms, weave together a perfect

digital persona. All of your interests , what you click on, who you like, everything is used by the computers to decide what you should buy. These machines give us the chance to live the way we want, to eat what we want and listen to what we want. We can live in the time and by the beliefs of our choosing.

I don't know about you, my readers, but I certainly don't be forced to live in the present. I'm a divorced man whose children don't talk to him, although that's because I told them not to. When I look around at my friends and family, I just see a series of things I shouldn't have said, small slights left unaccounted for, and the ultimate disappointment of knowing other people. But advertisements don't judge me. They don't expect phone calls on birthdays or my interest in boring stories. They just want to know what I want; what will make me truly happy; what will fill the holes in my life. And they want me to have it. Advertisements are the only things that want me to be happy.

I no longer hear news I don't want to know. I don't know who the president is, or what wars are being fought. Personally, I don't think it matters. My Amazon account recently recommended me a fascinating new TV series based on one of my favorite historical events, taking a favorable view of the characters who represent my interests. The world outside is not my concern. Each day a package of food arrives at my door, containing a perfect replica of my three favorite meals from childhood, adjusting for my current dietary needs. I have everything I could ask for, and if for whatever reason it turns out I don't, I can just buy whatever I'm missing.

So how dare these people question the intent of these advertisements? The computers which were once our tools now control our lives, and we can either struggle against that fact, or allow these computers to give us what we really want in this life. The protesters who call for the dismantling of the companies that give us this wonderful life are just negative bitter people. What's all this about exploitation, about minimum wage workers and productivity monitors? As far as I'm concerned, these people are all part of a smear campaign against the desires of the people at large. All these quote-unquote "Revolutionaries" with their manifestos whining about companies with unsavory interests. If you ask me, they ought to consider that the advertisements want to help them. Maybe they should let the advertisements give them what they want; help them know what to buy and what to eat and what to listen to that will confirm to them who they are. It's such a wonderful feeling, to be certain of who you are, and to be certain that the whole world loves you for it.

If there is any doubt that the algorithms and data harvesters and "cookies" of the world are meant for more good than ill, let me dispel it by saying this; look at the world around you. Think about the things you own and the people you know. How did you come to own these

things? How did you meet and communicate with these people? Why do you own these things, and socialize with these people? What led you to create this life for yourself? If you were to take the advice of the radical groups, if humanity were to pull together and swear off these algorithms, swear to stop feeding the advertisements, how would you dismantle the system? And how would you live afterwards?