



## **Voluntary Simplicity, by Duane Elgin**

There is no special virtue to the phrase "voluntary simplicity"--it is merely a label and a somewhat awkward label at that. Still, it does acknowledge explicitly that simpler living integrates both inner and outer aspects of life into an organic and purposeful whole. To live more voluntarily is to live more deliberately, intentionally and purposefully--in short, it is to live more consciously. We cannot be deliberate when we are distracted from life. We cannot be intentional when we are not paying attention. We cannot be purposeful when we are not being present. Therefore, to act in a voluntary manner is to be aware of ourselves as we move through life. This requires that we not only pay attention to the actions we take in the outer world, but also that we pay attention to ourselves acting--our inner world. To the extent that we do not notice both inner and outer aspects of our passage through life, then our capacity for voluntary, deliberate and purposeful action is commensurately diminished. To live more simply is to live more purposefully and with a minimum of needless distraction. The particular expression of simplicity is a personal matter. We each know where our lives are unnecessarily complicated. We are all painfully aware of the clutter and pretense that weigh upon our lives and make our passage through the world more cumbersome and awkward. To live more simply is to unburden our lives--to live more lightly, cleanly, aerodynamically. It is to establish a more direct, unpretentious and unencumbered relationship with all aspects of our lives: the things that we consume, the work that we do, our relationships with others, our connections with nature and the cosmos, and more. Simplicity of living means meeting life face to face. It means confronting life clearly, without unnecessary distractions. It means being direct and honest in relationships of all kinds. It means taking life as it is--straight and unadulterated. When we combine these two ideas for integrating the inner and outer aspects of our lives, we can describe "voluntary simplicity" as a manner of living that is outwardly more simple and inwardly more rich, a way of being in which our most authentic and alive self is brought into direct and conscious contact with living. This way of life is not a static condition to be achieved, but an ever changing balance that must be continuously and consciously made real. Simplicity in this sense is not simple. To maintain a skillful balance between the inner and outer aspects of our lives is an enormously challenging and continuously changing process. The objective is not to dogmatically live with less, but is a more demanding intention of living with balance in order to find a life of greater purpose, fulfillment and satisfaction. -- Duane Elgin [<http://www.awakeningearth.org/about.html>]

