

Critical Reflection

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To me, every day, humanity seems to edge towards a future that follows the progress and development of fireworks: bright, enrapturing, beautiful, spectacular -- And something that will flicker out into the darkness as though it never was.

There are developments being made in every conceivable sector in every nation with the resources to develop them. The possibilities of 3D printing, improvements in the growing of organs, computers grow more efficient and transmit more information than ever before, bitcoin, to say nothing of sectors that collide to create entirely new things. For example, Minsu Kim's "living food", a marvel of the culinary and the scientific, in which he hopes to entertain and amaze in new and inventive ways. My ninth grade science teacher told me that "If man can imagine it, man can create it." and every day, she only seems to be proven more and more correct.

But very few things in life are free.

These developments, outstanding as they are, do not happen in a vacuum. They are not without cost, and even those costs are not limited to themselves, they have ripple effects elsewhere, in other places, to other people, affecting other systems. We live in a digital age that shows absolutely no signs of slowing down, and to meet the demands of a lifestyle we are accustomed to, we must produce accordingly. More power plants must be erected in order to service the energy demands of our many machines and devices. Which means the possible endangering of habitats or impacting the lives of people who live nearby who may have no say in the matter. I mentioned bitcoin, and the mining of it--and cryptocurrencies like it--are projected to create energy crises of unprecedented levels. For all the buzz, potential, and excitability around it, it is also simply not sustainable in its current form.

We waste the very things we need--the average middle-income house and above throws out twenty-five percent of the food they purchase. That is

equivalent to buying eight bags of groceries and dropping two in the parking lot to waste away. Literal tons of perfectly good food goes to waste in landfills because they possess very slight imperfections that, nonetheless, are offensive enough to the consumer that they will not be purchased. Else they are left behind on the ground on farms because it would be costly and inefficient to do anything with them. The degradation of such food only continues to greenhouse gas emissions in turn, which exacerbates climate change.

And, once again, this is with something we as human beings need to live. To say nothing of the things we do not.

As temperatures increase year after year, we lose more of our polar ice caps, which in turn creates rising sea levels. People and animals are driven out of their homes and habitats respectively and need to move further inland, increasing competition for territory, resources, and safety. This will only result in skirmishes which may become full-blown wars without intervention in some areas, whether they are recognised as such or not. Many

people will be left behind, figuratively and literally, if they lack the means to escape their fates. I know many people who live in areas affected by extreme weather, and they are often met with callous criticism along the lines of "Well, why don't you move?" Not only should they not have to, but they may simply not have the finances to do so, and incidents like these will only increase. They already are. Extreme weather and environmental events like wildfires have been on the rise for the past decade and are not projected to diminish. These events cost countries resources and money to remedy, money that could be used elsewhere. These people who live below the poverty line are often the working poor as well, who do the jobs that earn them scorn but, nevertheless, keep societies running smoothly. They conduct our trains and drive our buses, they take our trash and teach. They pump gas, they work in retail, grocery, they serve and provide with us our basic necessities of life.

Nature lives in a sort of ordered chaos in that predators, prey, and the food they eat live in a mathematical harmony of sorts. In an ideal environment, they each manage one another's numbers and growth, but as our impact grows, we risk further disrupting and destabilising environments.

I love people, the things we are doing, the inventiveness that comes of necessity and adversity, but the cost of a lot of it is often unacceptable and unnecessary. Sometimes, we are being held back from ingenuity due to the greed of a few.

And that is the most frustrating thing. It is not as though any of this has been news to most reasonable people for quite some time now, and there is certainly pushback and strides being made, but not nearly enough has been done for what we know about the damage that has been done to the world and the further harm we can anticipate will be done if we continue down the path that we are. But there are climate change deniers out there, there is big money in oil, there are those who live for coal and nothing else, and whether or not they believe in their products sincerely, there are, needless to say, an elite group who are solely out for their own interests, people who pay lobbyists to harass and deny objective and supported data, who would stand in the way of the progress of any and all sustainability to line their own pockets with money they do not even need at the cost of the world and those

who live in it. Greed and ignorance should not be permitted to impede sustainability, progress, and a world that could be better.

This cannot continue. We cannot let this continue.