

Week 7 Reflection: “Picking Sweetgrass”

- A) In the chapter “Picking Sweetgrass”, Kimmer discusses the concept of reciprocity when conducting transactions with the earth. The concept of reciprocity contrasts with capitalism; as the latter seeks to exploit the earth for its resources to facilitate the social mobility of those who “control” such resources. Inherently, these viewpoints are at odds, as capitalism is only able to work if humans view themselves as the rightful determinants of the world. Concepts such as land ownership and personal property are unique to an anthropocentric viewpoint and, by their nature, place whatever is being owned under the owner. In contrast, reciprocity places all things on earth as equal in value, from the soil to the animals that walk upon it. It demands a trade, such as the tobacco offering Kimmer speaks of in the chapter.
- B) Under capitalism, we are forced to participate in the exploitation of the natural world as all our goods are taken from it. For example, we are connected to an electrical grid. To type the very page I’m typing right now, coal that was pulled from the earth with massive machines is being burned to produce electricity; a burning that is pumping massive amounts of pollution into the atmosphere. Even if my work will hopefully allow me to preserve the environment and better the living conditions of both humans and animals, I am still taking an enormous amount from the environment. This “Greater Good” is the way I rationalize my taking with the hope that I can give back to the world through my work.
- C) Humans are lazy, weak creatures that will take the easy path almost every time they are faced with a challenge unless they create a divine reason not to. Convenience is the natural evolution of the easy path. Just as our ancient ancestors hunted prey animals due to their inability to maul them to death, we choose to drink out of a plastic water bottle instead of filling up a thermos. Due to this, I disagree with Kimmer’s stance on convenience. You are not going to convince the masses to do something hard when the easier and equally rewarding option is in front of them. However, you can make them feel bad about it.
- D) Put simply, they wouldn’t. I cannot see a way where these rules could fit into our modern society. We are crabs in a bucket; crawling over each other to get more, more money, more recognition, more sex, more feeling etc. We, as in the working class, scrape and starve while the multi billionaires watch from their ivory towers. They laugh at our strife because that is the way capitalism says it should be. Therefore, until each of those billionaires have their heads liberated from their body and capitalism is burned to ash, we cannot have this mystical equity.

- E) See above statement.
- F) Nuclear. Our technological advancements have given us essentially an infinite energy source that causes relatively limited harm to the environment, yet our lovely coal lobbyists convinced our even lovelier congress that it's dangerous. Them be the breaks after all.
- G) Maybe you shouldn't buy 700 T-shirts of Temu for \$3.99.