



Philosophical Ponderings of a Farmer

The Western Mindset

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The other day, my partner Will and I were remembering how oil companies bought up all the electric vehicle battery technology about 15 years ago and essentially mothballed it, because they saw it as a threat to profits. While that seems to have changed now, as a society we have a system where a small group of people make decisions that affect the advancement of the human race. And those people are often not who I, personally, would consider the "most qualified" to do so.

This modern Capitalist world view influences every part of our lives, as so much is based on cost. Even 75 to 100 years ago, things were built with quality, aesthetic value and longevity in mind. My pickup truck, vacuum cleaner, and cook stove are all from the 1950s, and they are made with basic parts that can be rebuilt when they wear out. It's hard to find such products today.

To digress just a bit and as an example: Several years ago, I made the mistake of using a gift certificate to buy a new, mostly plastic vacuum that lasted for less than 1 week before it died (seriously). And when I returned it, I saw the large pile of other plastic items that had been returned, likely to be scrapped. After that experience, we went to a hole-in-the-wall vacuum repair shop and asked for the oldest vacuum they had... We ended up with an old Electrolux, and it has worked great for the past 10 years (plus the 40 years before that).

It seems a common western condition: prioritizing individual desires over the greater good. In many First Nations cultures, people had a different value system. Leaders weighed many factors in big decisions, such as personal benefit, group benefit, and both short and long term effects. So often in our own society we fail to demonstrate this maturity, and solely consider short term gains.

I still marvel at the utopian planet we could create if we are willing to actually put our greed aside and work together for the advancement of our species as a whole.