Obsolescence

Nobody asked but …

One of the frictions that promotes change is obsolescence. I have looked, this morning, at a drone photo of Hong Kong. As a species blessed (cursed?) with rational problem solving skills, we seem at the same time to lack problem avoidance skills. In Hong Kong the traditional problem solving algorithm will eventually kill Hong Kong. There are too many people. The solution that becomes a new problem is effected by people doing what Ludwig von Mises says they will do — seek to avoid unease. Too many people in Hong Kong have an irrational need to remain in Hong Kong. The unease they seek to avoid is the fear of living apart from Hong Kong. The natural response, in any urbanization movement, is to act together in ways that will increase density. Taller buildings increase the density of people who can live in them, while smaller compartments on each level increase the density of people who can live on each level. Since the invention of multistory buildings, the answer to the problem of population has been to go up and to squeeze in.

Looking at Hong Kong, more than anyplace else, we can see a logical conclusion to the obsolecence algorithm. Every available segment of verticality will be absorbed. Horizontal shortcuts will enweb the complex, making it a hive. Skyscrapers will approach the limits of structural capacity. People will approach survival occupying only personal space-time. But that's enough speculation — we don't want to gaze upon the Medusa. The good news is as follows:

- Misean behavior takes on infinite forms, paths, and interlocking consequences.
- There are infinite mixtures of events and trends.
- The requirement that human action arises from unease is not a stricture but an enabling prerequisite. Anything, real or imaginary, that generates in any experience a feeling of unease will generate behavior hoped to reduce the unease.

Make no mistake. This is not a description of a Leibnizian best-of-all-possible-worlds. Hong Kong is a demonstration of the absurdity that will arise from a set of variables — the humanity in Hong Kong keeps fighting the battle of urbanization without asking do we need to change the pattern. The pattern is obsolete. A larger pattern applies — that which will end, will end.

— Kilgore Forelle