What is Cyberpunk ?

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Cyberpunk is where science and technology meets philosophy

What exactly is cyberpunk ? The question seems to have been continuously resurrected in online discussion forums without having ever come to any conclusion as to a definition. What is the point of this article then ? While it is true that cyberpunk may mean different things to different people, there is certainly a common thread. That then is what this article is after.

Cyberpunk is "low life, high tech"

The very word cyberpunk is itself a fusion between cybernetics, the science and technology of the system, and punk, the philosophy of rebellion against the system. As a movement, it seeks to break down the black and white and paint the world in shades of grey, blurring the lines between natural and artificial, organic and mechanical, real and virtual.

Cyberpunk is an attitude

There seems to be a common attitude or philosophy among those attracted to cyberpunk. They often find themselves caught in the romantic struggle between themselves and the system. For some this manifests in an interest - sometimes even an obsession - with privacy and security, both online and offline. The cyberpunk also notices that the world might be heading in the wrong direction : the wealthy are becoming more powerful while the poor are becoming helpless, working more and earning less. As disparities grow wider, their tactics become more desperate : using the tools of the system against the system. When pushed they feel free to use anything and everything at their disposal : including hacking, deception, and intrusion. Do not fuck with us.

Cyberpunk is an awareness

In a world saturated with violently accelerating change, the cyberpunk finds herself especially well aware of what is going on around her. Most people are apathetic about the philosophical implications of the uncanny technologies of the near future as the issues invoked by artificial intelligence, transhumanism, and the technological singularity seem to evade our collective consciousness. Advances in biological and information technologies are already radically changing our lives, but will likely only become more coercive and invasive in the future, especially with the birth of the cybernetic organism and brain computer interface. While these technologies are not inherently malign, we would rather not see what happens when they are exclusively in the hands of the corporate elite.

Cyberpunk is a subculture

The most clandestine aspect of cyberpunk is the subculture of hackers, phreaks, netrunners, ravers, and razor girls. It is androgynous, sophisticated, and futuristic. It is impossible to find as it has slipped through the cracks

and are lost in the delicate balance between the analogue and digital worlds, avoiding the attention and oppression of the system. With the rise of the internet, cyberculture has begun to permeate through society, but the cyberpunk subculture remains underground, though where one ends and the other begins is difficult to discern.

Cyberpunk is a subgenre

The most visible aspect of cyberpunk is the literary subgenre of science fiction that features a dark and gritty, yet painfully realistic vision of the near future. It essentially takes active social trends and pushes them to the extremes. The megacorporation now dominates as the primary influence of society, which brings about an aggregation of wealth, acceleration of environmental decay, and expansion of Japanese popular culture. Urbanization spreads as people flock to the cities, drugs and crime offer one's only chance at happiness, and the line between human and machine begins to fade. This culminates in the "city lights at night" aesthetic. While some may enjoy - perhaps even fetish - the dystopian world presented in cyberpunk literature, most are anticipating the resistance against it. For some this fight has already begun.