

BREATHING SMOKE, BORROWING TIME: *THE PRICE OF OUR PROGRESS*

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Pangilinan, Ian Ezekiel S.
Espina, Archie
Tagdulang, Jari

We live in an age of invention and ambition. Machines hum, cities rise, and life grows faster by the second. Humanity has conquered mountains, split atoms, and reached the stars. But behind the pride of progress lies, there's a truth, which we often ignore, that the price of our progress is reflected in the planet's degradation.

According to IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), the reports confirm that industrial emissions, especially from large manufacturing countries such as China, the United States, and India, and they remain the leading contributors to rising global temperatures. Additionally, The World Bank also identifies Southeast Asia as one of the regions most vulnerable to the effects of greenhouse gases, like from stronger typhoons to severe droughts which is very critical. Even the DENR (Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources) warns that deforestation and urban pollution continues to worsen air quality and coastal damage. Climate change is not an isolated event, it is the product of our combined neglect, taking our need to push ahead. We are breathing smoke, and we are borrowing time.

This crisis is not only environmental, it is deeply ethical. The planet is not dying, it is being killed. And we are the hands holding the match. The question is not whether or not the world can survive climate change, it's whether **humanity** can survive itself.

Philosopher Hans Jonas, in his *Ethics of Responsibility*, reminds us that with great power comes a greater duty, not only to ourselves but to those who will inherit what we leave behind. He warns that modern **technology**, while powerful, can destroy the very foundation of life if used **without morality**. Humanity, he says, must think not only of the present but of the generations yet unborn.



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Yet we continue to act as if the future is disposable. Factories run without pause, plastic fills the seas, and the fires of greed keep burning. Progress has become our religion, and comfort our god. We forget that the Earth is not ours to exhaust, but ours to protect.

But **hope** still continues. Around the world, voices rise for change, young people are planting trees, communities are working together around renewable energy, and some countries are starting to pay attention. Our redemption will not come in the form of some great invention. It will come through conscience, the courage to embrace **sustainability** rather than selfishness and to be responsible instead of indifferent.

Our inventions define our power, our choices define our humanity. If progress costs us our planet, then it was never progress at all. The Earth has given us everything, air, land, water, life. The least we can give back is care. The time for awareness has passed, what remains is the duty to act. Because once the smoke clears and the clock runs out, there will be no more time left to borrow.



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