

Gaming has always been a medium that provides fun and excitement. We seek challenges in the immersive virtual atmosphere and become addicted to it. However, can gaming be used as a medium to convey desperation? Can it be a medium that reflects the cruelty of reality? Instead of promoting utopia, can gaming create dystopia?

Beautiful Life is an experimental ideological game. The game starts with a delightful beginning and ends tragically. Players are taught that life is full of possibilities in the beginning while they are left with no options but to commit suicide in the very end. Beautiful Life demonstrates how extreme social control can be like and shows a dystopian situation of future Hong Kong. The game is not only questioning the nature of modern society but also how powerful social control can be.

The game not only involves a standard “hope destroying mechanism” but also has numerous ironic messages. For instance, the plot of the game is set in future, while it is obviously Hong Kong with communist “decoration”. Real-estate can be found but players can never save up enough money to purchase it. Players can easily understand the message behind this if they are local.

The game involves several controversial and sensitive topics. One may ask if the game is promoting any political ideas or if it is a game that encourages players to commit suicide as life itself is hopeless. Please note that it is not my intention to promote suicidal thoughts or actions. Indeed, Beautiful Life adapts a Kafkaesque style in which players are immersed in an imagined dark atmosphere. For instance, players are required to type numerous apologetic letters for a tech company without prior knowledge of the purpose behind it. Players are guided to achieve goals, yet, these achievements are simply pointless. Nonetheless, Beautiful Life is an exaggerated interpretation of future reality. Similar to Franz Kafka’s novel, the purpose behind the creation of Beautiful Life is to produce a white horror. The audience should not only feel depressed and desperate after playing but should also be able to reflect on reality and struggle for a better future.

As the game states in the very end, “There is no need to fear or hope, only to look for new weapons...” Some may understand Beautiful Life as an activist game. This is not entirely false. The future, however, is unknown. In the end, it is not my intention to give the audience any suggestions on what they should do but rather to encourage the audience to reflect on what they can do.