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Throughout the Fragment of Infinity That We Have Come to Know
An incomplete and biased display of currencies, past, present, and future; demonstrating the entanglement of money, belief, and power; and drawing upon numerous, overlapping areas of concern, including; climate change, economics, colonialism, classical mythology, and science fiction.
1. Cowrie Shells
Shells have been used as a medium of exchange in many parts of the world. 'Shell money' typically consisted of whole or partial sea shells, which were often worked into beads or otherwise shaped. Shell money has appeared in the Americas, Asia, Africa and Australia.

2. Bēl (Britannia), Shang Dynasty, c.1766-1154 BC (Replicas)
Cowry shells were used as small monetary denominations during the Shang dynasty (c.1600-1046 BC) of Ancient China. They were collected from the seas far south of China, so only the most wealthy and powerful could afford to import - and therefore control - them. In addition, natural shells were impossible to counterfeit.

3. George III Cartwheel Twopence, 1797
The George III Cartwheel Twopence was the first copper penny to be circulated in Britain and the first official coin to be produced using the new cartwheel method. It was designed to combat counterfeiting and weighs its exact value in copper: one ounce.

All Bank of England notes bear the phrase: "I Promise to Pay the Bearer on Demand the Sum of..." followed by an amount, in this instance: "One Pound". This phrase originates from the 1797-1821 gold shortage, which was caused by the French Revolutionary Wars. Notes bearing this phrase were issued in the place of gold, so people could claim what they were owed at a later date. During this period the value of British money was directly linked to the value of gold (a system known as the gold standard).

Due to The Great Depression (1929-39) and the European Banking Crisis of 1931, Britain was forced to withdraw from the gold standard in September 1931. Britain switched to Pound Sterling, a fiat currency: a currency without intrinsic value that has been established as money, often by government regulation. The term fiat is derived from the Latin flat, meaning ‘let it be done’ and used in the sense of an order, decree or resolution.

6. Local Currency: Brixton Pound, 2009-

The Brixton Pound launched in September 2009 with 80 local businesses accepting the currency. Like the Leveses Pound, the Brixton Pound fixed the value of the Brixton Pound is fixed at £1 Sterling.

7. Local Currency: Ottring Pound, 2008-13

The Ottring Pound was launched in October 2008, with a fixed value of £1 Sterling. It differs radically from other local currencies, because it was designed to biodegrade over time. As the Ottring Pound exchanged hands (or simply sat in a wallet!) it would steadily decay. Each note had a lifespan of around 30 years, and residents reportedly disposed of notes that were no longer usable in their compost bins.

This experiment was designed to encourage continual exchange and prevent the hoarding of wealth. The scheme drew on the ideas of Silvio Gesell, a German merchant, theoretical economist, and anarchist. Having witnessed the effects of the 1890 financial crisis, Gesell became convinced that money was behind the world's economic problems; poverty, inequality, unemployment, and stagnation.

Gesell advocated for a money that would "not like potatoes" and "not like iron". Whilst Transition Town Ottring interpreted him literally, producing a currency that employed a potato starch-based paper, Gesell implemented his ideas in a different fashion. He created a currency called 'Freigeld', or 'free money', which had several key properties. These included; being spending-power stable (there was no inflation or deflation); being a local currency; and requiring stamps to be purchased and periodically attached to the money to keep it valid, if it did not return to the cash flow. The Ottring Pound is no longer in circulation, as all copies have biodegraded.

8. Venezuelan Bolivar Soberano, 2018-19

The Bolivar is named after the Latin American hero, Simón Bolívar, who led what are currently the states of Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Panama to independence from the Spanish Empire.

Unlike Gesell's Freigeld, which was designed to be resistant to inflation or deflation, the Venezuelan Bolivar became subject to extreme hyperinflation in November 2016. The inflation rate reached 800% in 2016, 4000% in 2017, and 1,700,000% in 2018. The Bolivar Soberano was introduced to combat the hyperinflation in August 2018, but was unsuccessful. The inflation rate hit 10,000,000% in 2019 (as estimated by the IMF).

Hyperinflation destroys purchasing power and encourages the hoarding of goods as people and businesses anticipate further price increases. Therefore, periods of hyperinflation tend to be self perpetuating, as shortages further drive up prices. The crisis triggered protests where people burnt their worthless notes. Others used the notes to create complex folded objects, like purses, butterflies, and birds, and sold them at street markets.

When hyperinflation reduces a currency's value so drastically, citizens typically begin using a foreign currency, such as the US$. In this instance, many Venezuelan citizens have started using Bitcoin as their primary currency.

10. CaCO$_3$, 2030- (Digital Representation)
CaCO$_3$ (pronounced ‘Ka-Coin’) was introduced in 2030. The currency creates a feedback loop, by which the health of the living planet is explicitly linked to economic value. The currency's value is based on the 'overall health of the Earth's oceans'. This is derived from various factors, including; biodiversity (concerning species and habitats), sea levels, temperature, acidity, cleanliness, and carbon storage, amongst others.

During the initial development of the currency, it became apparent to researchers that, when calculating the overall health of the Earth's oceans, the result was invariably within 0.05% of the level of marine calcification; the conversion of CO$_2$ into seashells*. In essence, the health of seashells was a reliable indicator for the health of the world's oceans. So, whilst the currency's value remains firmly connected to the fate of the seashells above, it is named in reference to Calcium Carbonate (CaCO$_3$), the molecular compound that all shells are made from.

CaCO$_3$ has been adopted by numerous island nations, including The Maldives, Fiji, The Marshall Islands, and They Seychelles, in the hope that it will encourage economic activity that safeguards — and restores — the health of the living planet. Initially, the value of CaCO$_3$ was updated every 48 hours. It is now updated every 72 hours.

* Seashells are a valuable 'carbon sink', meaning they store CO$_2$, which would otherwise enter the Earth's atmosphere.