

# The house We Built

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In the labyrinthine expanse of the modern epoch, meaning has seemingly dissipated, potentially, eroded by our own abandonment of a coherent ontological framework. Or perhaps, by having glimpsed the subterranean abyss of our existential yearnings, we now cast a skeptical gaze upon the edifice above, confused and upset, to consign it to the flames. Might a sense of betrayal follows those who staked high hopes in strivings inward and outward to yield assurances our forbearers so sought in growing desperations. Such an impulse may be justified. And do we also not find ourselves outside a house engulfed in flames? Hope however is not lost, let us not forget that from the ashes, reconstruction must ensue. I posit that the genesis of nascent microcosms—communities steadfastly oriented toward particular aspirations and mutual solicitude—offers the inaugural step toward a reorientation most needed.

Several pivotal junctures in the annals of Western philosophical inquiry have precipitated a profound interrogation of its foundational tenets. One must delve into this torrent to apprehend that these foundations were manifold from the outset—erected upon the edifice of Greco-Roman intellect, Judeo-Christian ethos, and the subsumed wisdom of diverse cultures absorbed by the Roman imperium, enriched further by exchanges with the Middle East, Africa, and the Orient in measure. It appears incontrovertible that this amalgam of intellectual currents has sculpted the Western paradigm. Indeed, we have erected in the post world war era a vertible fortress of production and peace. Yet, in the modern era, a paramount question emerges: how may we attain genuine meaning as we decohere from what we have become? As we assail all metaphysical postulates, querying the existence of the Divine or any transcendent reality, consequently, we interrogate not merely our Judeo-Christian heritage but the entirety of religious discourse. This trajectory, concomitant with the ascendancy of Enlightenment ideals, ushering in a decline of religious hegemony, seems to correlate with ameliorated conditions. Paradoxically, this technological efflorescence, often extolled in our age, ushers forth a proliferation of uncertainties. As scientific and technological revelations deepen, we plunge further into existential ambiguity. The interrogative spotlight now pivots inward, probing our metaphysical axioms, our innermost selves, and, by extension, the societal constructs we

inhabit, with profound ramifications. We descend, as it were, to the very "basement" of our being, discovering a lamentable absence of a consensual, formalized epistemology to vindicate our actions and even knowledge itself. Merely acting without purpose proves dissatisfying to the collective psyche. Our narratives, once sustaining, now falter. Indeed, it seems we have relinquished any unifying teleological narrative within the Western sphere, a realization dawning gradually upon us, unawares. We have ventured into the domicile of our own construction, descended to its foundational crypt, and beheld a structure perceived as frail and inadequately wrought, we behold a tomb. We pronounce judgment upon this edifice with acidically-skeptical justification. A habitation bequeathed to us, it afforded material prosperity and refuge. Yet, what was its primal intent, and what grand purpose did it serve? Another pertinent question arises: what impact have recent cataclysms and developments, echoing the despondency of the World War II era and the Great Depression, wrought upon us? In those times of rapid advancement, the inexplicable advent of such travails confounded comprehension, as humanity envisioned an imminent golden age. Analogously, our present epoch mirrors this disillusionment, not solely with our institutions and selves but with the cosmos at large. Devoid of a grand, defining metanarrative, existence unfolds for many as an arbitrary sequence of events. We have not only forsaken faith in a metaphysical tableau but also in our own capacities. This engenders a cacophony of responses, disparate and mutually abrasive, manifesting in the burgeoning schism within our polity, exemplified by the ideological rift between Republicans and Democrats over the optimal trajectory forward. Beneath this discord lies an ardent and profound yearning for a vision of reality to which allegiance may be pledged. Remarkably, this need not command universal assent. Rather, the emergence of enclaves, clusters of individuals forging consensus to propel collective action, may suffice. Admittedly, such groupings may devolve into conflict, occasionally with ferocity. Nonetheless, in our contemporary epoch, this fragmentation might constitute the most viable commencement. Retrogression to a bygone era, even with a regression in technology or societal paradigms, cannot replicate the precise conditions we might idealize. Amidst our struggle to decipher the maelstrom of a rapidly expanding technological

and informational deluge, total isolation from the world is untenable. Even a life "off the grid" remains tethered to societal dependencies for survival. Absolute subsistence farming, a severance from the collective, proves illusory, for the tendrils of modernity may inexorably entwine us. Thus, no certitude prevails. A return to a specific historical "reset" is chimerical, and gazing toward the future for a salvific purpose proves equally futile. Both retrospection and anticipation are requisite, yet they must harmonize with a seldom-contemplated virtue: the eternal present. This moment, oft neglected, demands our reverence. Consider the notion of vacations, not as an amelioration of daily "musts", but now held as escape by most. While such respites hold allure, the question persists: why do we seek escape? Might our quotidian lives, if diligently enhanced to their fullest potential within our means, supplant this escapism so cherished? Occasional retreats are warranted, or perhaps wanderlust beckons. Yet, if the equilibrium and richness we seek were already immanent, how transformative might that be? This circles back to the primacy of the present. In our current predicament, reclaiming faith, firstly, in ourselves precedes acting upon any hope of restoring faith in the broader cosmos. Acting firmly upon our hope in the future while anchored in our lived experience.

Are we not situated at a momentous crossroads? Having condemned our dwelling, we witness its conflagration, albeit, slowly. Yet, a new edifice must arise lest we perish in the wilderness. In this allegory, the new abode may be of our deliberate design, not a haphazard accretion. We may select its constituents with intention. As we ponder this construction, I advocate deliberation while daylight persists, carefully laying the foundation. Perhaps micro-communities, addressing discrete quandaries or explorations, might aggregate their triumphs into responses to ever greater problems than achievable through stagnated and bloated institutions. Devising a singular, overarching narrative in an era where we have abandoned our ancestral domicile proves arduous. The epistemic constraints precluding absolute discernment of our beliefs veracity should not deter us from erecting a new edifice. Rather, they should inspire meticulous reflection on its composition. Within this analogy, a tension endures. We gaze upon the horizon with intermittent apprehension; whether a structure of worth and trust can emerge ere the

sun's descent leaves us vulnerable in the shadowed forest. Yet, the sun lingers; time remains ours.

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