Peter,

You’re not stupid, so how are you missing something this basic? You said it yourself: “No buy-in when people have nothing but debt and no probability of attaining capital.” That’s the whole fucking ballgame. Legitimacy isn’t abstract. It’s physiological. Rome didn’t stabilize an empire by arguing philosophy—it built it with Baths, Grain, and Forums. They didn’t just hand out food and build aqueducts for optics. They made sure that every person in the city had access to clean water, bread, a place to wash, and a place to speak. These weren’t luxuries—they were the foundation of civic life.

The genius wasn’t just in the engineering. It was in the recognition that you make a durable state by making the basic goods of life non-negotiable—by creating an environment where being Roman meant more than paying taxes or obeying the law. It meant having a direct stake in the system: access to the grain dole, the right to bathe and gather in public, a place in the Forum to hear and be heard. That’s what made even the poor and the outsiders see themselves as Roman citizens, not just subjects. It wasn’t charity. It was an operating system for greatness, for making sure everyone had at least a foothold on the ladder, and a path—however narrow—upward.

You have Palantir and AWS. Same job, better tools. So here’s the play, clean and bloodless: Universal Basic Calories. Universal baseline Healthcare—public clinics, not just last-resort triage. Performance-gated, free-tier Education. Not because it’s fair or just, but because it is the bare minimum for a civilization that intends to last. You don’t need to flatten the whole hierarchy. But you do have to ensure that the base is provisioned, that people have some stake, some path, and some reason not to burn the place down.

Calories keep the gut quiet. Healthcare keeps chaos at bay—prevents the downward spirals that make people ungovernable. The Baths weren’t just about hygiene. They were about social glue and public health, the everyday reminder that you belong, that you matter to the city, and the city matters to you. The Forums made sure even the voiceless had a place to watch, to learn, to plot a way forward. Education—real education, not a dead credential—buys you another generation of hope and patience. You don’t need to make everyone equal. You need to make everyone a stakeholder.

This isn’t redistribution. It’s how you build something that isn’t just stable, but great. You can keep the capital, the equity, the patents, the deep-end healthcare. But if you want another 20 years of control, or any hope of a legacy that isn’t just a cautionary tale, you need to provision the base. You need to give people a reason to buy in. That’s what Rome did at its height. That’s what every empire that wanted to be more than a blip in the sand figured out. It’s what you could do—if you actually wanted to make Rome better.

How are you missing this? You spend half your time quoting Roman history and the other half building platforms that could deliver all of this tomorrow. The point of power isn’t to hoard it. It’s to secure it, expand it, and make it mean something. You don’t need a moral awakening. You need a provisioning strategy that scales. Feed the system—give people something to believe in, something to stand for—or watch the whole project come apart.

—Shiloh Morse