

Session 1: The Modern Crisis of Meaning

How to Use This Session

This session is not meant to be rushed. You may read it in one sitting, or return to it over several days. The reflections are invitations, not tasks. There is nothing here to complete — only something to notice.

I. Disenchantment and the Loss of Shared Meaning

It often feels as though something essential has slipped away from modern life. Not dramatically, but quietly. We live comfortably and efficiently, yet beneath the surface many experience a persistent sense of drift — a feeling that life is full, but not quite full of meaning.

For most of human history, meaning was inherited rather than invented. Stories, rituals, and shared cosmologies provided orientation before questions were consciously asked. Modernity dismantled much of this inheritance, leaving individuals freer, but also unmoored.

Pause.

Where do you notice this sense of drift in your own experience?

II. Technology and the Acceleration of Meaning Loss

Technological progress intensifies the meaning crisis. As machines become capable of performing tasks once central to identity, effort loses its traditional role as a source of purpose. When usefulness is no longer scarce, older equations of meaning begin to fail.

This does not imply despair, but it does require reorientation. Meaning may no longer arise primarily from productivity or efficiency, but from care, commitment, and inner orientation.

Pause.

If usefulness were removed from the equation, what might still matter to you?

III. Freedom, Constraint, and Commitment

Unlimited freedom appears attractive, yet meaning often emerges from limitation. When every choice can be undone, action loses weight. Commitment — staying within a choice long enough for it to shape perception and care — creates coherence.

Freedom matures not in the absence of limits, but in the willingness to enter constraints temporarily and take them seriously.

Pause.

Where might chosen limits deepen your life rather than restrict it?

IV. Taste, Care, and What Cannot Be Automated

As technology advances, one domain remains uniquely human: care. Machines can calculate and generate, but they cannot care, love, or prefer. Taste — the ability to say ‘this matters to me’ — becomes a primary source of meaning.

In a world of infinite capability, meaning may hinge less on what we produce and more on what we remain faithful to.

Reflection & Journaling

- Where do you notice drift or thinness in your life? What seems to contribute to it?
- Recall a time when commitment or limitation deepened your sense of purpose.
- What do you genuinely care about, even without external reward?

Looking Ahead

This session opens the terrain of the modern meaning crisis. In the next session, we turn toward myth and archetype — ancient symbolic structures that once oriented human life and may still offer resources for re-enchantment today.