

Session 1: The Modern Crisis of Meaning

It often feels as if something vital is missing from modern life — an invisible thread that once wove meaning through everyday existence has thinned or snapped. We live in what many call a disenchanted age, where the old stories, symbols, and shared horizons of value that used to ground us have largely fallen away. In their place we have unprecedented convenience, speed, and endless options. Yet beneath this abundance lies a quiet sense of drift. Life today can feel unmoored, as if the ground under our feet has given way to subtle weightlessness.

Despite material comfort and freedoms undreamt of by our ancestors, many experience a peculiar emptiness. Not despair exactly, but a hovering — a life lived half-outside itself, always able to withdraw, always one step removed from consequence. Identity becomes increasingly tied to doing: to work, productivity, public image. When worth is measured in output, inner life is easily neglected.

This hollowing out of meaning is not simply a private failing. It is cultural. Traditional frameworks that once provided orientation have weakened. The universe no longer seems to speak. Meaning must be manufactured rather than received, and whatever must be constantly constructed remains fragile.

Technology intensifies this condition. As automation and artificial intelligence take over tasks once central to identity, the old equations of value begin to wobble. When usefulness erodes, so too does the sense of purpose built upon it. Freedom expands, yet significance contracts.

Modern life celebrates choice, flexibility, reversibility. But freedom without friction produces drift. When no decision truly binds, action loses weight. Meaning emerges not from infinite possibility, but from commitment — from consenting to limits and staying with them long enough for something to matter.

Our predicament is this: everything feels possible, yet nothing feels sufficient. Diagnosing this crisis does not resolve it. But naming it clearly allows us to see the terrain we are standing on — and prepares us to ask what might come next.

Reflection

Where does life feel weightless right now?

When has commitment given something depth?

What do you love when nothing is required of you?