

Thus Spoke the Earth

Earthquakes are the vocal chords of the planet. Their vibrations release a primordial energy in an idiom all can apprehend. There is no need to embark on futile searches for ultimate causes, for to ask why they occur is akin to inquiring why the earth occurs? Or for that matter, why do we? The implacable need for explanations and predictions is rather peculiar to our species—always in need of an anodyne for the uncertainty that is our condition. Rather, it is the effect of such recurring phenomena that is paramount and undeniable. And it is in that dire direction toward which I now turn.

There is no denying that when the earth shakes, it reminds us that this ever vibrant and volatile sphere is our home. One that not only orbits at hard-to-fathom speeds around the sun as it turns on its axis, but also maintains a molten fire at its core—one boiling the rocks onto which we so fleetingly cling. This is the nest we inhabit that rest cannot be had unless we first learn how to spin and tap along in its rhythmic embrace. Such a dance perforce assumes dexterity of mind and intelligence of body. To be settled on a singular course is to sleepwalk through existence; indeed, what is needed is the facility to make all manner of moves just as the tempo demands. Once exhausted, we can breathe a sigh of relief along with a modicum of respect for the effort it entails.

And yet we appear determined to persist on this path called progress: a straight line seemingly destined to veer off the planetary curve. As a matter of course, we foul our nest, somehow believing that new ones can be had in the distance. Incessant movement, though, is at odds with linear forms. It bends and breaks them, begging them to cease. The shaking is meant to awaken us, and when precipitated in the sea acts, moreover, as a cold slap on an arrogant cheek. At once we ought to arise, then, for we inhabit an evolving orb that is at ease only when humble toes tap naked chords of melancholy on its skin. Call to mind the cry of a baby sparrow at dusk or an early-morning ripple shedding tears on stone. Not in sorrow but in beauty do they express the wondrousness of this inter-play within which we coexist. Pathos, for some, perhaps, but the purpose is not to reach any mental or physical state but only to participate, and do so in reverence. There is little room for hubris in such spontaneous acts.

Thus, the earth has spoken in emphatic terms: abide not beyond but within its limits while honoring our own. Therein the potential for improvisation is limitless, that is, if only we learn to follow the fissures at our feet.

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