HUMANITY SUFFERS FROM AN EXCESS OF THE MASCULINE

On the African Predicament and the Condition of Human Completeness

Written by

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Patterns are nature's alphabet and numbers, the elements through which it crafts, constructs, and intertwines the words and stories of existence between the seen and the unseen.

From the mechanics of our world to the grand scale of the universe, these mosaics recur, from the macro to the micro. The fundamental mechanics reveal familiar relationships regardless of their incalculable outcomes, expressions, and translations. What appears different in form may nevertheless reveal a recognizable pattern in its underlying relationships.

Nature does not produce sameness to achieve coherence. Difference is fundamental to its expressions. Distinct qualities coexist, interact, complement, oppose, and sustain one another. Their relationships are not necessarily equal in measure, but neither does difference establish a hierarchy of worth.

I use the language of the feminine and the masculine to name two orientations of civilization.

This is a translation. Like every translation, it carries something across and loses something on the way.

The distinction is not biological.
It is not a partition of human capacities between peoples.
It is not a verdict on any person.

It concerns what a civilization cultivates, and what it crowns.

The African inheritance placed the feminine near the centre: nurture, kinship, emotional openness, communal responsibility, relational intelligence, the understanding of human life within the larger living world.

The dominant modern order crowned the masculine: conquest, possession, competition, territorial control, extraction, power over nature.

Other peoples carry relational orientations of their own. They are not the subject here. They are kin to the question.

Even Igbo thought does not hold the two apart. *Egbe bere, ugo bere.*

Africans are no less masculine. We have been warriors, explorers, builders, rulers, and formidable defenders of our societies. We have exercised authority, expanded territories, and demonstrated extraordinary courage.

Yet masculinity need not require the abandonment of tenderness. Strength need not exclude compassion. Authority need not extinguish responsibility.

The feminine and masculine are not opposing measures of human worth. They are complementary dimensions of human capacity.

The predicament arises when one orientation assumes the authority to define civilization itself.

And when the other is compelled to surrender its distinctive qualities in pursuit of recognition.

Western civilization has long been described through sweeping generalizations about its Greek and Roman inheritances, philosophical traditions, political institutions, and defining characteristics. Such generalizations are routinely employed to interpret entire civilizations despite the considerable differences among the societies they encompass.

We reserve the same intellectual authority to examine African humanity through a framework of our own choosing.

Our understanding of ourselves cannot remain confined to categories sanctioned by those who have historically presumed the authority to define us.

There are perspectives on human existence that do not originate within Western canons of civilization. They are no less legitimate for that reason.

And it is from such a perspective that I make the following assertion.

Humanity today suffers from an excess of the masculine.

Not the masculine as such. Its elevation beyond complementarity into domination. Its transformation from one expression of human capacity into the prevailing measure of civilization.

Conquest, possession, territorial expansion, competition, extraction, and the assertion of power over nature have increasingly become celebrated expressions of human advancement.

To dominate is to succeed. To possess is to prosper. To conquer is to progress. To accumulate is to achieve. To control nature is to demonstrate intelligence.

These are not the only capacities available to humanity. Yet they have become disproportionately influential in determining how humanity organizes its institutions, economies, relationships, and aspirations.

The consequences are everywhere.

We have created systems whose continued existence depends upon perpetual expansion, perpetual consumption, perpetual competition, and the perpetual conversion of the living world into material for human use.

We have mistaken the capacity to intervene for the wisdom to intervene.

We have confused the accumulation of power with the attainment of human completeness.

And we have come to regard the resulting condition as civilization.

I. THE FEMININE HUMANITY

The African orientation toward life, as I read it, places the feminine near the centre.

By femininity, I refer to a constellation of qualities: nurture, compassion, tenderness, emotional openness, relational awareness, communal responsibility, kinship, agreeableness, and the capacity to recognize oneself as part of a larger living existence.

The question concerns what a society cultivates, what it prioritizes, and what it comes to regard as the highest expression of human accomplishment.

Consider the African man who is physically formidable yet unashamed to express affection. He can be fierce in the defense of his family and gentle in the presence of his children. He can exercise authority without regarding emotional restraint as a condition of his manhood. He can belong to a community without interpreting interdependence as a limitation upon his independence.

These are not contradictions.

They are expressions of human capacities that need not be separated.

The feminine, as employed here, is not the opposite of strength. It is an orientation in which strength remains capable of tenderness, and power remains conscious of relationship.

In many African societies, the individual historically existed within extensive networks of kinship, ancestry, obligation, and communal belonging.

One's existence was not understood exclusively as an individual possession. It carried relationships and responsibilities that preceded the individual and extended beyond the individual's lifetime.

The living were not the only constituents of existence. Ancestors, descendants, the land, and the unseen dimensions of life occupied meaningful places within the understanding of the world.

This did not produce societies without conflict, injustice, hierarchy, or coercion. No human civilization can be honestly described in such terms.

But it reveals orientations toward existence that cannot be adequately understood through the institutions and priorities of another civilization.

To understand these societies, we must begin with their own understandings of what it means to exist.

Not with what they lacked in comparison to others.

II. THE OCCUPATION OF AFRICA

Throughout the modern era, powers organized around the masculine orientation described here have exercised extraordinary dominion over African societies.

The occupation of Africa and her peoples was not simply an encounter between different societies.

It was the violent interruption of existing worlds.

Lands were seized. Political authority was displaced. Institutions were dismantled or subordinated. Knowledge was dismissed, appropriated, or rendered invisible. Human beings were converted into commodities, labor, subjects, and instruments of another people's ambitions.

The authority to define what constituted civilization passed increasingly into the hands of those exercising occupation.

And with that authority came the power to describe the occupied as deficient.

I insist upon the word *occupation*.

The linguistic attempt to sanitize this experience by calling it *colonization* is itself part of the problem.

Colonization has become a familiar historical term, frequently employed with such detachment that the violence and illegitimacy of the underlying experience can disappear beneath its apparent neutrality.

Occupation restores the question of authority.

Who invited you?
By what right did you assume possession?
Who granted you the authority to reorganize another people's existence?

And why should the descendants of the occupied continue to describe that experience primarily through the vocabulary of those who occupied them?

They have their words. We have ours.

The wounds remain raw because the occupation did not end simply when the visible structures of foreign administration were withdrawn.

Its categories remain. Its institutions remain. Its economic arrangements remain. Its understanding of progress remains. Its measures of achievement remain.

And in many instances, the occupied have become the most enthusiastic custodians of the assumptions through which their occupation was justified.

The occupation was physical, psychological, material, and epistemic.

Its consequences cannot be understood by examining political independence alone.

The occupiers were not only European.
Trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean trades carried Africans into bondage for centuries before the Atlantic ones.

And the orientation does not stay with its first owners.
Today it is practised by many hands. Some of them are African.

III. THE SEDUCTION OF THE OCCUPIED

The occupation of Africa extended beyond the seizure of land, labor, resources, and political authority.

Its more enduring consequence was the displacement of the authority through which Africans understood themselves.

We were persuaded that there was only one legitimate direction for human development. One civilization to emulate. One institutional destination. One understanding of progress.

Our communal relationships became signs of insufficient individualism. Our indigenous knowledge became superstition. Our political arrangements became evidence of underdevelopment. Our relationships with nature became indications of technological inadequacy.

The qualities and institutions through which we had sustained our existence were increasingly presented as deficiencies requiring correction.

And we participated in the correction.

We adopted institutions without sufficiently examining their relationship to our own conditions of existence. We embraced aspirations without interrogating their origins. We accepted measures of achievement formulated elsewhere and judged ourselves by our inability to satisfy them.

We began to aspire toward the condition of those who had occupied us.

This is among the most debilitating consequences of occupation.

The occupied no longer require the constant presence of the occupier to continue the work of their own displacement.

They have inherited the instructions.

IV. THE QUESTION OF WAR AND POWER

Consider the organization of political power.

The historical record of Africa includes warfare, territorial conflict, military organization, and violence. Africa was never a continent without conflict.

But neither was African political life universally organized around permanent armies, centralized territorial expansion, or the perpetual acquisition of land.

Across the continent existed numerous smaller indigenous political communities, decentralized societies, kinship-based institutions, councils, and systems of authority whose organization cannot be adequately measured by the size of their armies or the extent of their territorial possessions.

The absence of a standing army did not necessarily indicate the absence of political sophistication.

Nor did the absence of territorial conquest indicate the absence of civilization.

The occupation of Africa, the expansion of imperial interests, the trade in enslaved human beings, and the mobilization of religious authority introduced or intensified particular systems and scales of organized violence.

Organized religion, too, became entangled with political conquest, the justification of domination, and the restructuring of African societies.

We must distinguish the conflicts that existed within African societies from the transformations imposed upon those societies through external systems of occupation and expansion.

The distinction is not intended to romanticize African history.

It is intended to prevent the history of Africa from being reduced to the categories through which others have understood power.

A society that does not organize itself around conquest may possess a different conception of political accomplishment.

A people who do not maintain permanent armies may have other institutions through which security, responsibility, and social order are sustained.

These possibilities deserve examination on their own terms.

Within Igbo civilization, the relationship between warfare, human life, and Ala offers another understanding of power.

War could become necessary. Communities could defend themselves, and warriors could be called upon to exercise force.

But necessity did not necessarily absolve the act of killing of its spiritual and moral consequences.

Bloodshed was understood within the sacred order governed by Ala, whose authority extended beyond the immediate circumstances of conflict.

In traditions where warriors underwent purification following battle, their return to communal life required more than the declaration of victory. The consequences of taking human life had to be acknowledged and ritually addressed.

Victory did not automatically erase the offense.

Here lies a profound distinction between the capacity to exercise violence and the assumption that violence confers honor upon itself.

A warrior could fulfill an obligation to defend his community and nevertheless remain accountable to an order greater than his immediate achievement.

The battlefield did not suspend the moral universe.

Nor did military success establish the warrior as the final authority over the meaning of his actions.

This is a civilizational understanding in which power remains subject to relationships and obligations that extend beyond the individual who exercises it.

African women also occupied positions of extraordinary military and political authority.

Queen Amina of Zazzau is remembered in Hausa tradition as a formidable military leader. Her historical record rests largely on later tradition, and her dates are contested.

The women warriors of Dahomey, known as the Agojie, constituted an organized military force whose members fought in conflicts with neighboring kingdoms and later against French occupation.

These histories resist the assumption that the feminine is inherently passive or that military authority belongs exclusively to men.

They also resist any romantic account of African history that denies the presence of conquest, coercion, and violence within African societies.

Dahomey was also a conquering kingdom. It raided its neighbours and sold captives.
I cite the Agojie for what they show about women, arms, and authority. I do not cite them as proof of innocence.

The orientation described here concerns what is cultivated and crowned. It is not a record of clean hands.

A civilization cannot be understood solely through the battles it fought.

It must also be understood through the meanings it attached to fighting, the institutions that regulated it, and the obligations that survived victory.

Why must the capacity to conquer become a measure of civilization?

Why must the accumulation of territory become evidence of political achievement?

And why should a society that organizes its existence around other priorities be considered less developed?

These questions are not merely historical.

They concern the very meaning of human progress.

V. THE POWER OF RESTRAINT

In 2003, Liberia had endured years of civil war.

Women of every faith organized, dressed in white, and sat where the warlords' convoys had to pass.
They followed the delegates to the peace talks in Accra.
When the talks stalled, they blocked the doors of the hall and would not move until the delegates returned to the table.

They had no army.
They did not lack anger.

Their restraint was not an absence of power.
It was power of another kind, chosen with open eyes.

To possess the capacity for retaliation and nevertheless choose restraint requires a form of strength that is too often overlooked in conventional understandings of power.

This raises a question.

What does it reveal about a civilization when the assertion of power is so readily understood through force, while the deliberate restraint of power is too easily mistaken for weakness?

The latter capacity belongs to the feminine orientation described here.

Not because tenderness is exclusive to women or Africans, but because the ability to remain conscious of another's humanity, even in conflict, belongs to the qualities that humanity has increasingly subordinated.

VI. SELLING WATER TO FISH

The occupation of Africa did not end with the seizure of land and political authority.

It extended into the relationship between humanity and nature.

Here I turn and speak to the occupier directly.

You arrived with technologies, institutions, and material aspirations that you presented as instruments of civilization.

You convinced people that the lives they had sustained were inadequate.

You introduced tools that promised liberation while frequently creating new forms of dependence.

You broke relationships and then sold substitutes for what had been broken.

You have managed to sell water to fish.

Consider the human body.

For most of human existence, locomotion was an ordinary condition of life. Human beings walked, carried, cultivated, climbed, gathered, and engaged physically with the environments that sustained them.

Today, extraordinary quantities of material and energy are mobilized to transport a single human being across distances that human bodies are capable of traversing.

We celebrate machines with hundreds of horsepower as achievements of human mobility while increasingly confronting the physical consequences of lives organized around diminished movement.

We develop technologies to compensate for the consequences of other technologies.

And we describe this accumulating dependence as progress.

This is not an argument against tools.
Africans have always made them.

The mobile telephone crossed the continent faster than the landline ever did, and mobile money reached people the banks had never served.

Adoption is not the offence.
Adoption without authority is.

The question is not whether a tool is new.
It is who weighed it, by what measure, and who bears the cost when the weighing is wrong.

The same pattern extends into our relationship with the earth.

We extract enormous quantities of material to sustain systems whose demands continue to expand. We then mobilize further resources to manufacture technologies intended to mitigate the consequences of those systems.

We call the process sustainable.

But what is being sustained?

The earth, or the arrangements through which we have come to inhabit it?

It takes a great deal to arrest a great deal.

Enormous resources went into constructing the condition in which humanity now finds itself. Enormous resources, time,

patience, and intellectual effort will be required to reconsider it.

Yet we continue to approach the problem largely through the same orientation that produced it.

More extraction. More intervention. More technological complexity. More control.

We have elevated the conquest of nature into an aspiration of humanity.

And in doing so, we have increasingly separated ourselves from the very relationships through which human existence is sustained.

VII. THE FEMININE CONDITION OF COMPLETENESS

What if humanity's predicament is not simply a failure to develop sufficiently advanced technologies?

What if it is a failure to recognize the value of capacities that do not require technological amplification?

The ability to nurture, to belong, to recognize obligations beyond oneself, to sustain relationships that are not organized primarily around possession or exchange, and to recognize enough.

The ability to encounter nature without immediately seeking to dominate or transform it.

These are not signs of an undeveloped civilization.

They are human capacities requiring knowledge, discipline, intelligence, experience, and the cultivation of relationships.

They are no less sophisticated because they do not necessarily produce monuments, machines, territorial empires, or measurable economic expansion.

Nor do they cease to constitute knowledge because another civilization has failed to recognize them as such.

This is where the African predicament acquires significance beyond Africa.

The feminine orientation associated here with African humanity preserves important possibilities for understanding existence that have been diminished by the dominant direction of modern civilization.

Their recovery is not merely a matter of cultural preservation.

It is a matter of human completeness.

The feminine is not an ornament to be accommodated after the masculine has completed its work. Nor is it a sentimental quality to be celebrated privately while the organization of civilization remains governed by conquest.

It is an essential dimension of human existence.

To suppress it is to diminish humanity itself.

VIII. THE RECOVERY OF SELFHOOD

Our first responsibility is to understand who we are.

Not who we have been instructed to become.
Not how successfully we have reproduced the institutions of others.
Not how closely our societies resemble the civilization that occupied us.

We must recover the authority to examine ourselves through our own knowledge, our own histories, our own philosophical traditions, and our own understanding of existence.

This does not require us to reject everything that originates elsewhere.

It requires us to abandon the assumption that our existence must be validated through another people's measures of civilization.

Our knowledge is not merely a collection of cultural practices.

It includes ways of understanding relationships, responsibilities, personhood, the living world, and the unseen dimensions of existence.

Within the Igbo understanding of Mmàdu, humanity is not something conferred upon a person through the acquisition of external attributes.

Mmàdu is inherent.

Its capacities are cultivated and expressed through life, relationships, responsibility, and the continuing work of alignment.

A person does not become more human by becoming more like someone else.

Nor does a civilization become more complete simply by acquiring the institutions and technologies of another.

The question is whether the conditions of existence allow the capacities of humanity to flourish.

And whether the relationships through which those capacities are expressed remain coherent.

This is the work of recovering selfhood.

Not the reproduction of an imagined past, but the restoration of our authority to determine the conditions of our own future.

IX. TO LOVE HER IS TO SET HER FREE

I address you again.

Africa did not invite you to occupy her.
She did not surrender her humanity for you to reorganize.
She did not require you to confer civilization upon her.

She welcomed encounters, relationships, exchanges, and possibilities, as human societies have done throughout history.

You took advantage of her openness.

You coveted her lands, her treasures, her labor, and her knowledge.

You assumed possession of what was never yours to possess.

And today, as she continues to bleed from the consequences of occupation, much of the world's concern remains directed toward the distribution, extraction, and control of her material inheritance.

Even the language of assistance too often preserves the assumption that her future must be organized through priorities established elsewhere.

To love her is to set her free.

Physically.
Psychologically.
Materially.
Intellectually.
And respectfully.

Freedom is not simply the absence of a foreign administrator.

It is the recovery of the authority to exist according to one's own understanding of existence.

It is the freedom to determine what constitutes progress.
The freedom to organize institutions around one's own priorities.
The freedom to preserve relationships with nature that another civilization may not understand.
The freedom to decline technologies whose consequences are incompatible with the life one seeks to sustain.
The freedom to pursue knowledge without first obtaining recognition from those who have historically dismissed it.
And the freedom to contribute to humanity without being required to surrender one's own humanity in the process.

X. PUTTING OUR HOUSE IN ORDER

Before Africa can enter into a relationship of genuine complementarity with the rest of humanity, she must first recover the authority to govern her own existence.

Our house must be put in order.

This is not an invitation to further intervention, assistance, or supervision from those whose institutions and interests have contributed to our predicament.

It is a declaration of responsibility.

We must attend to our own house.

The accumulated consequences of occupation cannot be resolved merely by replacing the visible occupants while preserving the arrangements through which they exercised authority.

The house must be examined.

Its foundations, its rooms, its furnishings, its accumulated habits, and the assumptions through which its occupants have learned to understand themselves.

Some things must be restored. Others must be repaired. Still others must be removed entirely.

And some stains will remain.

Their persistence need not condemn us to perpetual preoccupation with the circumstances that produced them.

A stain can remain as evidence of an episode without continuing to govern the life of the household.

The purpose of cleansing is not to erase memory.

It is to restore the freedom to live without remaining psychologically captive to the original violation.

We must distinguish what belongs to us from what was imposed upon us, what we have freely adopted from what

we inherited without examination, and what continues to serve our existence from what perpetuates our displacement.

Consider the African Union.

A continent inhabited by thousands of distinct peoples, possessing their own histories, languages, political institutions, and understandings of existence, is represented through a structure organized primarily around states whose territorial arrangements were profoundly shaped by European occupation.

The continent's political representation remains mediated through boundaries that frequently divided existing peoples or assembled distinct communities into new administrative entities without their collective consent.

The African Union inherited this territorial arrangement rather than beginning with the indigenous civilizational composition of Africa.

The borders were not kept out of ignorance.
In 1964 African leaders resolved to hold the inherited boundaries, because they feared what redrawing would unleash.
The fear was not baseless.

But a border kept for fear of war is a different thing from a border held because it is right.

The first is a truce.

The second is a foundation.

We have mistaken the truce for the foundation.

Even its institutional languages reveal the depth of this inheritance.

English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish retain prominent positions alongside Arabic and Kiswahili, while the overwhelming majority of Africa's indigenous languages remain outside the ordinary operation of continental political authority.

The question is not whether Africans can communicate effectively through these languages.

It is why the institutions claiming to represent African humanity continue to operate so extensively through arrangements inherited from the historical displacement of that humanity.

The problem is not merely linguistic.

It concerns the foundations of representation.

Who constitutes Africa?

The states produced through occupation, or the peoples whose existence preceded those states?

What is the purpose of continental unity if its principal institutional framework reproduces the political categories through which African societies were reorganized?

And how can the recovery of African selfhood proceed without examining the very structures that claim to speak on its behalf?

What should be built in its place is another question.
It has its own inquiry.

An institution cannot be considered authentically African merely because Africans occupy its offices.

Its foundations, assumptions, purposes, and accountability must also be examined.

The task before us is not simply to administer inherited structures more efficiently.

It is to determine which structures correspond to our own understanding of existence and which continue to reproduce the conditions of our displacement.

This requires a period of deliberate internal attention.

We must recover the authority to establish our priorities without constantly accommodating the expectations of external powers.

We must be prepared to decline overtures that reproduce dependence, compromise our independence, or demand that our future remain organized around the interests of others.

Our first obligation is not to reassure the world of our willingness to cooperate.

It is to restore the conditions under which cooperation becomes a free and honorable choice.

In this work, our inherited institutions of communal responsibility offer important lessons.

Consider the Umuada within Igbo civilization.

Women belonging to a lineage possess a recognized collective identity and, in many communities, have exercised authority in matters concerning family relationships, disputes, moral conduct, and communal order.

Their intervention demonstrates that authority need not derive exclusively from physical force or permanent political office.

It can arise from belonging, responsibility, collective legitimacy, and the recognition of obligations that no individual may disregard.

The broader history of women's collective action in Igbo society offers another example.

To *sit on a man* was to confront the abuse of authority through organized public action, collective pressure, and the withdrawal of ordinary deference.

In 1929, at Oloko and Aba, thousands of Igbo women turned this practice against the warrant chiefs of the occupying administration.
Colonial troops killed dozens of them.

Women could assemble, challenge misconduct, demand accountability, and insist that an offending authority answer to the community.

The principle remains relevant.

Power must not be permitted to escape accountability merely because it has acquired institutional legitimacy.

When authority becomes abusive, the community must possess the means to confront it.

And when inherited institutions perpetuate the conditions of occupation, those institutions must be subjected to the same examination.

Africa must close ranks around the responsibility of restoring her own house.

By Africa I mean her peoples recognizing one another.
I do not mean the member states of the Union.

Not to establish another hierarchy of domination.
Not to reproduce the exclusionary logic through which her humanity was subordinated.
But to recover the authority to determine who exercises power, upon what terms, and in whose interests.

The house cannot be restored while its occupants remain strangers to their own inheritance.

Nor can it be restored by inviting others to determine what should remain and what must be removed.

This is our work.

The cleansing is ours.

The responsibility is ours.

And the authority to determine when our house is ready to welcome others must remain ours.

XI. HUMANITY'S UNFINISHED CONDITION

The masculine and feminine are not enemies.

Their existence is complementary.

The problem arises when one assumes the authority to define the whole, when difference is transformed into hierarchy, and when the qualities of one become the measure by which the other is judged.

Humanity has come to regard the exercise of power over nature, the accumulation of material possessions, territorial control, and technological advancement as principal measures of civilization.

These pursuits have produced extraordinary capacities.

But capacity is not completeness.

The ability to transform the world does not necessarily imply an understanding of how to inhabit it.

Nor does the power to possess establish the wisdom to know what should remain beyond possession.

We have developed unprecedented means of communication while struggling to sustain meaningful relationships. We possess extraordinary powers of production while confronting the consequences of excess. We have acquired the capacity to intervene in nearly every dimension of the natural world while becoming increasingly estranged from the relationships that sustain our existence within it.

The problem is not that humanity has become too capable.

It is that we have confused the expansion of our capabilities with the enlargement of our understanding.

And in doing so, we have neglected qualities no less essential to human existence.

This is why the African predicament cannot be understood exclusively as an African problem.

The occupation of Africa was not simply the subjugation of a people or the appropriation of their material inheritance. It was also an interruption of ways of understanding existence whose significance extends beyond those who sustained them.

Their displacement diminished the possibilities available to humanity.

Their recovery may enlarge them.

But this recovery cannot be undertaken merely to correct the excesses of another civilization.

Africa does not exist to repair the world.

Our first responsibility is to ourselves.

To recover our knowledge. To understand our inheritance. To restore the authority to determine the conditions of our existence. To cultivate the qualities through which our humanity finds expression, without surrendering them to the expectations of others.

We must cease regarding ourselves as incomplete versions of another people.

We are not required to become masculine in the image of the dominant order to establish our strength, our intelligence, or our capacity for civilization.

Nor must we diminish our masculinity to recognize the feminine qualities that coexist within us.

Our completeness does not require the abandonment of either.

It requires the freedom to understand and cultivate both according to our own conception of existence.

The feminine and masculine are not fixed boundaries separating the capacities of human beings. They are complementary orientations whose unequal cultivation has consequences for the organization of human life.

The African feminine is not an expression of weakness awaiting masculine protection.

It possesses its own strength, intelligence, authority, courage, and capacity for action.

It can nurture and defend. It can welcome and refuse. It can extend compassion without surrendering judgment. It can exercise restraint without forfeiting the capacity to confront injustice.

It does not require domination to establish its worth.

Nor does it require the approval of the masculine to justify its existence.

The question before humanity is therefore not whether the masculine should surrender its existence to the feminine.

It is whether humanity can recover an understanding of itself in which neither is permitted to diminish the other.

Africa's recovery of selfhood is part of that unfinished human question.

But it begins with Africa.

Not with an appeal for recognition.
Not with the pursuit of acceptance into an inherited hierarchy of civilization.
And not with the ambition to reproduce the very systems through which our existence was interrupted.

It begins with the recognition that we are already human, already complete in our humanity, and entitled to determine how that humanity is lived and expressed.

The restoration of our house is not an act of hostility toward the world.

It is the recovery of the conditions under which we can encounter the world without surrendering ourselves.

We need not remain permanently occupied by the memory of occupation.

Nor must we permit its surviving arrangements to determine the boundaries of our imagination.

We can acknowledge what happened without allowing it to remain the organizing principle of everything that follows.

We can preserve what is ours, examine what we have inherited, and determine what we wish to carry forward.

And we can establish relationships with others without making those relationships the foundation of our existence.

Our knowledge is an inheritance.
Our existence is not a deficiency awaiting correction.
And our future need not be a continuation of someone else's past.

Humanity today suffers from an excess of the masculine.

The recovery of the feminine is not a declaration of war against the masculine.

It is a call for the recovery of human completeness.

But the feminine must first recover herself.

She must put her house in order.

And when she opens her doors again, it must be because she chooses to.

Not because she has been instructed to.
Not because she requires permission.
And not because her completeness depends upon the presence of another.

To love her is to set her free.

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A House for the Recovery of Selfhood