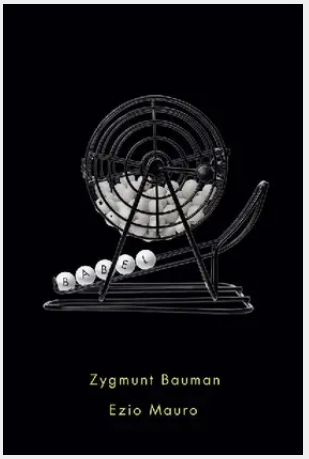
Bauman / Mauro

Babel



We are living in an open sea, caught up in a continuous wave, with no fixed point and no instrument to measure distance and the direction of travel. Nothing appears to be in its place any more, and a great deal appears to have no place at all. The principles that have given substance to the democratic ethos, the system of rules that has guided the relationships of authority and the ways in which they are legitimized, the shared values and their hierarchy, our behaviour and our life styles, must be radically revised because they no longer seem suited to our experience and understanding of a world in flux, a world that has become both increasingly interconnected and prone to severe and persistent crises. We are living in the interregnum between what is no longer and what is not yet. None of the political movements that helped undermine the old world are ready to inherit it, and there is no new ideology, no consistent vision, promising to give shape to new institutions for the new world. It is like the Babylon referred to by Borges, the country of randomness and uncertainty in which ‘no decision is final; all branch into others’. Out of the world that had promised us modernity, what Jean Paul Sartre had summarized with sublime formula ‘le choix que je suis’ (‘the choice that I am’), we inhabit that flattened, mobile and dematerialized space, where as never before the principle of the heterogenesis of purposes is sovereign. This is Babel.

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