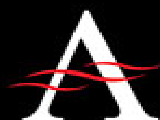
The Anthem Companion to

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN

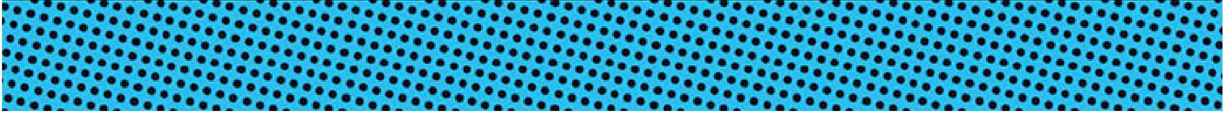
Edited by MICHAEL HVIID JACOBSEN



The Anthem Companion to

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN

Edited by MICHAEL HVIID JACOBSEN



The Anthem Companion to Zygmunt Bauman

ANTHEM COMPANIONS TO SOCIOLOGY

The Sociology program takes a fresh and challenging sociological look at the interactions between politics, society, history, and culture. Titles transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. This program includes a variety of book series.

Anthem Companions to Sociology offers authoritative and comprehensive assessments of major figures in the development of sociology over the last two centuries. Covering the major advancements in sociological thought, these companions offer critical evaluations of key figures in the American and European sociological tradition and will provide students and scholars with an in-depth assessment of the makers of sociology and chart their relevance to modern society.

Series Editor

Bryan S. Turner—City University of New York, USA / Australian Catholic University, Australia / University of Potsdam, Germany

Titles in the Series

The Anthem Companion to Alexis de Tocqueville
The Anthem Companion to Auguste Comte
The Anthem Companion to C. Wright Mills
The Anthem Companion to Ernst Troeltsch
The Anthem Companion to Erving Goffman
The Anthem Companion to Everett Hughes
The Anthem Companion to Ferdinand Tönnies
The Anthem Companion to Gabriel Tarde
The Anthem Companion to Georg Simmel
The Anthem Companion to Hannah Arendt

The Anthem Companion to Karl Mannheim
The Anthem Companion to Karl Marx
The Anthem Companion to Maurice Halbwachs
The Anthem Companion to Max Weber
The Anthem Companion to Philip Selznick
The Anthem Companion to Philip Rieff
The Anthem Companion to Pierre Bourdieu
The Anthem Companion to Raymond Aron
The Anthem Companion to Robert N. Bellah
The Anthem Companion to Robert K. Merton
The Anthem Companion to Robert Park
The Anthem Companion to Talcott Parsons
The Anthem Companion to Thorstein Veblen

The Anthem Companion to Zygmunt Bauman

Edited by
Michael Hviid Jacobsen

Anthem Press
An imprint of Wimbledon Publishing Company
www.anthempress.com

This edition first published in UK and USA 2023
by ANTHEM PRESS
75–76 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HA, UK
or PO Box 9779, London SW19 7ZG, UK
and
244 Madison Ave #116, New York, NY 10016, USA

© 2023 Michael Hviid Jacobsen editorial matter and selection;
individual chapters © individual contributors

The moral right of the authors has been asserted.

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without the prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the above publisher of this book.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested.
2023938098

ISBN-13: 978-1-83998-874-5 (Hbk)
ISBN-10: 1-83998-874-6 (Hbk)

Cover Credit: Polski: Zygmunt Bauman podczas uroczystości wręczenia Złotej Pieczęci Miasta Poznania by Michał Nadolski, Creative Commons

This title is also available as an e-book.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments

Contributors

Introduction — Zygmunt Bauman's Sociological Thought: Bridging the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries
Michael Hviid Jacobsen

Chapter One — Zygmunt Bauman: Weberian Marxist?
Peter Beilharz

Chapter Two — A Freudian without Psychology: The Influence of Sigmund Freud on Zygmunt Bauman's Sociology
Matt Dawson

Chapter Three — Modernity and the Holocaust: Exploring Zygmunt Bauman's Contribution to the Sociology of the Holocaust
Adele Valeria Messina

Chapter Four — Zygmunt Bauman and the Continental Divide in Social Theory
Stjepan G. Meštrović, Michael Ohsfeldt, and Jacob Hardy

Chapter Five — Zygmunt Bauman on the West: Re-Treading Some Forking Paths of Bauman's Sociology
Jack Palmer

Chapter Six — Death as a Social Construct: Zygmunt Bauman and the Changing Meanings of Mortality
Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Nicklas Runge

Chapter Seven — Zygmunt Bauman and the "Nostalgic Turn"

Dariusz Brzeziński

Chapter Eight Bauman on Borders: The Role of *Our* Door in the Construction of the Stranger
Shaun Best

Chapter Nine Seeking Windows in a World of Mirrors: Zygmunt Bauman's Difficult Art of Conversation
Mark Davis and Elena Álvarez-Álvarez

Chapter Ten Ambivalence (Not Love) Is All Around: Zygmunt Bauman and the (Ineradicable) Ambivalence of Being
Michael Hviid Jacobsen

Index

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is the outcome of a collaboration between a group of international scholars who have all in their own lives and intellectual careers been inspired by Zygmunt Bauman. Anyone who ever met Zygmunt Bauman can testify that this experience left an indelible impression. Anyone who has ever read the work of Zygmunt Bauman will know that it has a lasting impact on the reader. I want to thank all the contributors to this volume for their insightful and thought-provoking chapters that each in their way show many of the important ideas developed and pursued by Zygmunt Bauman throughout his own work. At the same time, I want to thank all those at Anthem Press involved in the production of this book for their professional assistance as well as extend my gratitude to Bryan S. Turner for incorporating this volume on Zygmunt Bauman into the Anthem Press Companion to Sociology series. This book is a testimony of my friendship with and intellectual inspiration from Zygmunt Bauman.

Aalborg University, Spring 2023
Michael Hviid Jacobsen

CONTRIBUTORS

Elena Álvarez-Álvarez is Lecturer in Contemporary Philosophy at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universidad Internacional de La Rioja, Spain. Her research interests include hermeneutics, humanist sociology, religion and secularism, theory of culture, ethics and dialogue.

Peter Beilharz is Professor of Critical Theory in the School of Literature and Journalism at Sichuan University in China. His research interests include: critical theory and historical sociology, socialism and labor movements, popular culture and cultural sociology, and culture and technology.

Shaun Best is Visiting Lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Winchester, United Kingdom. His research interests include: social theory, the sociology of education, social inclusion and exclusion, and biography and autobiography as research methodologies.

Dariusz Brzeziński is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland. His research interests include: social theory, sociology and anthropology of culture, and contemporary social and cultural change.

Mark Davis is Professor of Economic Sociology at the School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, United Kingdom. His research interests include: economic sociology; relational sociology;

money; financialization; alternative economies; sustainability, climate change, and the environment; consumerism, and social theory.

Matt Dawson is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. He has research interests in social theory and the history of sociology. He has drawn on and written about the ideas of Zygmunt Bauman in a number of different research contexts.

Jacob Hardy is a member of the Sociology faculty at Texas A&M University in San Antonio, Texas, United States. His research areas are classical and contemporary social theory, culture, science fiction, fantasy, and video games.

Michael Hviid Jacobsen is Professor of Sociology at the Department of Sociology and Social Work, Aalborg University, Denmark. His research interests include: death and dying, palliative care, grief, deviance, the sociology of emotions, criminology, utopia, social theory, and creative and qualitative research methodologies.

Adele Valeria Messina is a junior research fellow at Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose (FSCIRE), Bologna, Italy, and she teaches Talmud and History of Judaism in the Modern and Contemporary Era at the Department of Culture and Society, University of Palermo, Italy. Her research interests include: antisemitism and racism, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, Judaism, religious pluralism, and the history of Holocaust sociology.

Stjepan G. Meštrović is Professor of Sociology at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, United States. His research interests include: classical and contemporary social theory, war crimes, Émile Durkheim, and the sociology of religion.

Michael Ohsfeldt is on the faculty in the Division of Sociology at Tarleton State University in Texas, United States. His research interests focus on

entertainment, including sports, film, and video games, and investigating the dynamics of symbols, ritual, and identity.

Jack Palmer is Senior Lecturer of Sociology at Leeds Trinity University, and an Honorary Research Fellow of the Bauman Institute, University of Leeds, United Kingdom. His research interests include: global historical sociology, Holocaust and genocide studies, theories of modernity, the sociology of intellectuals and ideas, and the history of social thought since 1945.

Nicklas Runge is a Master's Student of Psychology at Aarhus University, Denmark. His research interests include: the psychology of death and dying, critical suicidology, death in literature, and the culture of death and immortality.

Introduction

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN'S SOCIOLOGICAL THOUGHT: BRIDGING THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

Michael Hviid Jacobsen

Introduction

The world of sociology is—just as the social world sociologists themselves study—inhabited by many different breeds, forms of life, and creatures. Many years ago, Swedish sociologist Walter Korpi (1990) metaphorically suggested that these different types of sociologists could be captured by the colorful and fairytale-like notions of respectively "pegasuses," "pegasus-groomers," "tree-huggers," "stump-sitters" and "moles"—each with their identifiable features, focus areas and specific modes of working. Korpi defines the first group, the "pegasuses," as a sort of otherworldly creatures hovering well above the prosaic world, looking down upon it, and describing and analyzing it in comprehensive, theoretically abstract, and almost immortal terms. Like in "phosphorous illumination," the pegasuses show us "the way things are" by painting the "big picture" and describing the main tenets of the human condition (Korpi 1990, 3). Korpi specifically mentioned the likes of Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Niklas

Luhmann, Jacques Derrida, and Pierre Bourdieu as such exemplary pegasuses. However, Polish-British sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017) would indeed also qualify as one of these almost otherworldly "pegasuses" of his discipline, one whose writings will continue to be read, reread, discovered and re-discovered, interpreted, and re-interpreted in many decades to come. The reason for this is first of all that Bauman was a man with what may be regarded as a megalomaniac mission—he wanted to humanize not only the discipline of sociology but also the world he was studying. Bauman's sociology was thus an unmistakable humanistic enterprise if there ever was one. Moreover, Bauman was a general social theorist, not someone concerned with the meticulous empirical exploration of this or that small enclave of society or with piling heaps of detailed statistical material to shed light on a relatively limited section of the world. Instead, his eyes were firmly fixed at "the big picture," the way the world was organized and how and why it was constantly changing, and with what human consequences.

Bauman—as most of the other aforementioned pegasuses of the discipline of sociology—was a scholar solidly rooted in the great European intellectual tradition from the latter part of the twentieth century. Korpi had claimed that the ratio of "pegasuses" within sociology was much higher in Europe as compared to the United States. Whether this is indeed correct or not is difficult to determine, but many of the classic and contemporary social theorists whose terminologies and perspectives have become part of the theoretical treasure trove of sociology did, in fact, come from the European continent—think, not least, of the "classics" of the discipline of sociology (such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Ferdinand Tönnies and Norbert Elias) as well as many of the more recent major theoretical contributions (such as the aforementioned Foucault, Habermas, Luhmann, and Bourdieu, not to mention the work of Anthony Giddens, Jean Baudrillard, Ulrich Beck, Axel Honneth and Hartmut Rosa). There is therefore a deep-seated "Europeanness" to Bauman's work (he was also a strong believer in the idea of Europe as an "unfinished adventure," see Bauman 2004b). He belonged to the tradition of the unbroken line of European intellectual thinkers stemming back from the Enlightenment period, standing on the shoulders of their philosophical predecessors throughout the following centuries. These

European philosophers and social theorists were not only dispassionately and disinterestedly describing what went on in the world—their work critically commented on, dissected, and mirrored some of the major changes taking place in the surrounding society: wars, revolutions, social reforms, and the impact of long-term—extensive and intensive—social processes such as urbanization, secularization, individualization, civilization, bureaucratization, globalization, etc. These major changes throughout the past centuries have spawned a concern with conceptualizing and understanding the big issues of social and cultural transformation, not only on the European continent but in sociology in general.

Also in another sense was Bauman's work characterized by an unmistakable "Europeanness"—his life and work reflected the very fate of Europe during the tumultuous twentieth century, a century aptly described by Eric Hobsbawm (1994) as "the age of extremes" with its world wars, atrocities, political division between East and West and the accompanying sources of human suffering. Many of Bauman's books specifically dealt with some of the events and developments that characterized (and marred) the European continent during the twentieth century such as the Holocaust, the Cold War, and the development of the welfare state—events and developments that were obviously not confined to the European continent, but which had worldwide consequences. But Bauman's work also took his readers across the threshold from the twentieth century into the twenty-first century with his analysis of what he came to describe as "liquid modernity" (Bauman 2000). Despite significant changes in human and social life, according to Bauman, society—and human life—is always caught somewhere between the pushes and pulls of freedom and dependency, between individuality and social order, insecurity and certainty, the new and the old. It is in fact the delicate internal balance in the constant struggle between these opposing forces that to a large degree defines and determines the society in which we live and the lives we are able to live. Bauman once described fellow Jewish sociologist Norbert Elias—a sociologist with whom he due to his Jewishness shared the experience of exile and whose work he greatly admired—by stating that there was something very "nineteen-centuryish" about Elias's work (Bauman, 1979, 119). One might say that there is something very "twentieth-centuryish" as well as "twenty-first-centuryish" about Bauman's own writings, embedded in and spanning

a time when the old world order of the Cold War was gradually beginning to come to an end with the coming of what Bauman (2002c) called “the post-trinitarian world” that previously had characterized the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this way, Bauman was very much a man of his time —but also a scholar deeply connected with and indebted to a great European intellectual tradition from the Enlightenment period onwards.

In this introductory chapter, we will briefly look at certain key aspects of Zygmunt Bauman’s life and work. First of all, we shall, however briefly, look at some of the biographical circumstances that shaped Bauman’s life and academic trajectory. Then we will move into a compact outline of some of Bauman’s main ideas relating to the transformation of modernity as well as his vision and practice of sociology. Following this, there is a brief presentation of the purpose and content of this edited volume. All the chapters included in this volume each in their way deal more substantially with a number of specific concerns and topics of Bauman’s work, thus showing his relevance to different areas of sociological research.

A Life in Fragments—From Status to Exile to Stardom

It is almost 100 years ago since Zygmunt Bauman was born into a relatively poor Jewish family in the city of Poznan in Poland. He was born on the November 19. When Zygmunt was a child, his father Maurycy—who was a small village shopkeeper—due to personal bankruptcy attempted to commit suicide by jumping into the cold river, but he survived as he was saved by a group of passing boy scouts. The father’s problems, however, had a significant impact on the family’s situation and on Zygmunt’s childhood (Wagner 2020, 16). Due to anti-Semitism, Zygmunt’s childhood and youth coincided with a growing precarious situation for the Jewish population in Poland (and elsewhere in Europe), and even though the Bauman family were non-practicing Jews, Maurycy nourished strong Zionistic sympathies (Wagner 2020, 11). Zygmunt has later reported that he as a young boy experienced bullying in school due to his Jewish background (Bauman and Leoncini 2018, 39), and he later himself joined a left-Zionist youth movement in Poznan (Maisey 2021). Despite the harshness of the childhood

realities growing up as a Jew in an impecunious family in Poland in the first half of the twentieth century—with unfathomable atrocities waiting to happen for the majority of those who shared the same life-biographical circumstances—Zygmunt Bauman nevertheless ventured into becoming one of the key social theorists during the latter part of the century (for more biographical detail on Bauman's life, see Bauman 2012, 2023; Wagner 2020).

In fact, Bauman's own life biography not only coincided with but mirrored many of the trials and tribulations of the twentieth century—a century seemingly existing in a constant state of transformation and a century generous in its delivery of human suffering and misery (Jacobsen 2021b, 13–17). Contrary to many of those who grew up in Poland with a Jewish background in the first half of the twentieth century, Bauman (and his family) survived the ghettoization, deportation, and inhuman annihilation in the Holocaust madness, but only because his family had fled Poland in 1939. First, the family left for the Soviet-occupied part of Eastern Poland (today Belarus), where Zygmunt continued his education, his mother served as a garrison cook and his father worked as a bookkeeper. When the war campaign moved closer, the family departed for the far Eastern part of the Soviet Union. During World War II, Bauman served as a soldier in the Polish exile army in the Soviet Union, actively participating in the battles of Kolberg and Berlin towards the end of the war. After the war and upon his return to Poland, Bauman was awarded the Military Cross of Valor for his participation in the fight against the Germans and became one of the youngest majors in the Polish army. Following the war, Bauman continued to work for the army, and he also joined the Communist Party. This was a period that later became surrounded by some controversy, not least seen in the light of Bauman's writings on morality and moral responsibility (Bauman 1989, 1993). After the war, Bauman worked in the internal Polish security police (KBW) as a military counterintelligence officer under the code name of "Agent Semjon," and when many decades later in 2007 this became public knowledge due to an article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, it created something of a problem (see, e.g., Edemarian 2007; Musiał 2007). How could someone who in his writings had criticized the brutality of the Holocaust system and who preached an unmistakable moral stance towards others have been working for the secret

police? A recently published biography details certain parts of the secret police work in which he was involved during these post-war years—work focused on identifying anti-Communist partisans and "enemies of the state" (Wagner 2020, 102ff; see also Domosławski 2021). However, Bauman himself did not want to contribute to the clarification of this debate (stating that he had only performed "desk work"), and his years of service in the Polish internal police force are thus surrounded by some obscurity as well as some silence—and perhaps his post-war years of service were somehow at odds with the ideas about morality he later wrote extensively about (Best 2013).

However, due to anti-Semitism—and apparently because his father had been seen making "inquiries" at the Israeli Embassy intending to immigrate to Israel—Bauman was dishonorably discharged and forced to leave the Polish army in 1953. Following this major turning point in his life, being still a relatively young man, he turned to the study of philosophy and sociology at the University of Warsaw. According to his friend Stefan Morawski (1998), Bauman was for quite some time during these early years a still strong believer in the Marxist orthodoxy and in the ideas that were officially espoused by the Stalinist Polish system. Throughout the next 15 years, he thus became a prominent intellectual figure in Poland already with a growing line of work to his name—but he also gradually grew more critical of the orthodox Marxist perspective, not least inspired by his reading of the work of Antonio Gramsci and Georg Simmel (see, e.g., Brzeziński 2014; Tabet 2017). During the 1950s Bauman lectured at the university and inspired by his two teachers, Julian Hochfeld and Stanislaw Ossowski, he embraced a certain humanistic form of sociology that was also increasingly reflected in his own work (Campbell, Davis and Palmer 2018, 352–353). Bauman's career in sociology in Poland thus initially turned out to be very successful. He quickly rose through the ranks and during the latter half of the 1950s and early 1960s became one of the profiled—but increasingly critical—professors of sociology at the strong Warsaw department. Moreover, he was an editor of the several academic journals, and he even went to the United Kingdom to do some research at the London School of Economics in 1957. All in all, Bauman's career was back on track, and he published quite extensively during these years in Poland in Polish as well as increasingly in English, thus making his ideas

available to a larger international audience. Several of the books written during these productive years would later appear in English (see Tester and Jacobsen 2005). But all good things must come to an end and fate once again pulled a trick on Bauman. In the spring of 1968, together with a group of intellectual figures (such as perhaps most prominently Leszek Kołakowski) Bauman—who at that time had become a full professor of sociology—was dismissed from his post at the university as part of the Communist regime's purges aimed at Jewish and critical/dissident scholars. This led him to leave Poland—and to lose his Polish citizenship—to live in exile first for almost three years in Israel (as a professor in Tel Aviv and then Haifa)—a period described by him as disappointing and frustrating, because he did not align well with what he saw as a rampant Israeli nationalism. Then from 1971, following a brief stay in Melbourne in Australia, and after receiving a formal invitation he and his family took root in the suburb of Headingley outside Leeds in the United Kingdom where he lived in the same house until his death. At the University of Leeds, he was an important part of the development of the sociology department—and served as Head for some time—until his official retirement in 1990.

After his arrival in Leeds, for many years throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Bauman did not attract a lot of international attention. Although he published several important pieces of work (some of which had been prepared or even published in Polish during his years in Poland)—books such as *Between Class and Elite* (1972a), *Culture as Praxis* (1973a), *Socialism: The Active Utopia* (1976a), *Towards a Critical Sociology* (1976b), *Hermeneutics and Social Science* (1978) and *Memories of Class* (1982)—it was singlehandedly the publication of *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) that made Bauman an internationally renowned sociologist. This was also a book that earned him several important academic awards including the Amalfi Award in 1989 and the Adorno Award in 1998 (later the importance of Bauman's work was also recognized with the Prince of Asturia's Award in 2010). It was also during this time that the "postmodern movement" began to spread throughout the world of academia and Bauman quickly became one of the scholars closely associated with the postmodern perspective. In books such as *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987a), *Freedom* (1988), in the Appendix of *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991), and not least

Intimations of Postmodernity (1992a) he had laid the foundation for an analysis of emerging postmodern society. Later, in books such as *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* (1992b), *Postmodern Ethics* (1993), *Alone Again* (1994) and *Life in Fragments* (1995) the postmodern perspective was unfolded even more comprehensively. Bauman, however, did not regard himself as a "postmodernist." He drew a line of distinction between a "postmodern sociology" and a "sociology of postmodernity" with the former mimicking the postmodern condition whereas the latter provided a sober and rational analysis of postmodern social life (Bauman 1992a). Bauman's own work belonged to the latter position. Towards the end of the 1990s—with *Postmodernity and Its Discontents* (1997) being the last of his book to bear the notion of "postmodernity" in its title—Bauman began increasingly to dissociate himself from a postmodern perspective that in his view had run out of steam, and perhaps he had also become increasingly bored with it. In an interview he revealed that he felt uneasy about being associated with the postmodern movement, finding himself bunking with bedfellows with whom he did not share a lot of similarities. According to Bauman, his routine ascription to the "postmodernist camp" grew increasingly unsavory and unpalatable, and he thus decided to leave any conceptual affinity with postmodernism behind (Gane 2004, 31). Bauman's work thus took quite a distinct terminological turn (perhaps terminological rather than substantial) at the threshold of the new millennium with the publication of *Liquid Modernity* in 2000. This book spawned an astonishing amount of material published throughout the last 17 years of Bauman's life with each book adding pieces to the ever-expanding jigsaw puzzle that he attempted to lay of life in contemporary "liquid modernity." Towards the end of his life, Bauman was accused of extensive repetition and self-plagiarism in his work, thus apparently breaching the norms of "good scientific conduct." But what the critics overlooked was the fact that this was first of all part of Bauman's whole (hermeneutical) way of working and writing (laying a gigantic jigsaw puzzle necessitates the continuous shifting of individual pieces from one place to another to make them fit, sometimes needing to return them several times to their previous place), that writing more than sixty books simply requires not just a lot of originality and capacity but also some necessary revisiting/restating of previous ideas, and when I saw him the last time Bauman insisted that he

himself owned the "intellectual copyright" to his own ideas (for more on this matter, see Tester 2018).

As mentioned above, Bauman's life with its many dramatic turning points due to religious and political persecution and his forced exile mirrored much of what went on during the twentieth century with its world wars, its polarization between the West and the East as well as its globalization frenzy. Moreover, his work simultaneously reflected much of what characterized his own life and career—in his case, the personal was thus deeply intertwined with the intellectual (Wagner-Saffray 2020, 102), as he himself had also observed in his inaugural lecture at the University of Leeds in 1972 (Bauman 1972b, 185). Moreover, it should be mentioned that Bauman was married twice. His first wife Janina Bauman—with whom he was married from 1948–2009 when Janina passed away—was herself an internationally acknowledged scholar and writer (see, e.g., J. Bauman 1986, 1988), and it was actually her personal experiences as a young Jewish girl who survived the ghetto and concentration camp during World War II that inspired Bauman to write the book *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989). With Janina, Bauman had three daughters, Lydia, Irene, and Anna. In 2015, Bauman married another fellow scholar, Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania, whom he had first met as a master's student at the University of Warsaw back in the mid-1950s (Jasińska-Kania 2018). Bauman died in Leeds on the January 9, 2017, at the age of 91, entering, in the apt words of Jasińska-Kania, "liquid eternity." Although Bauman's mortal coil was thus liquidated, his work lives on and stands as a solid testimony of his lasting contribution to sociology and social theory. In 2010, the University of Leeds—where Bauman had worked for so many years—established "The Bauman Institute" which facilitates the continued scholarly engagement with and discussion of Bauman's work.

The Transformation of Modernity

Zygmunt Bauman's impressive line of writings spanned almost six decades. Throughout most parts, there is an unmistakable continuity in the sensibility of writing and in the subject matters pursued. However, there are also

certain shifts in focus and terminology. Throughout their career, most writers and artists go through different phases or stages in which they change their preferences regarding themes, styles, or use of colors (think of the "young" versus the "old" Karl Marx or the "blue" and the "rose" periods of Pablo Picasso). Perhaps it makes some sense to try and divide Bauman's comprehensive body of work into four periods—however with smooth rather than sharp boundaries and a significant number of thematic overlaps between them (Jacobsen 2004). The first phase may be called Bauman's "Marxist Phase" spanning the 1960s and 1970s. Here his concerns were conventional Marxist topics such as the conditions of the working class as the embodiment of suffering (Kilminster and Varcoe, 1992, 206), the labor movement, education, culture, and utopia, and although Bauman increasingly grew critical of Marxist orthodoxy, he nevertheless in this period paid particular attention to Marxism and Socialism as an integral part of his perspective. The second period is Bauman's "Critique of Modernity Phase" which covers his writings throughout particularly the latter part of the 1980s. Most of the books published during this time deal with defining and critically dissecting what Bauman at that time defined as "modernity" (later rephrased as "solid modernity"), and books such as *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987a), *Freedom* (1988), *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) and *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991) are all attempts at showing some of the dark sides of modern society otherwise often hailed as the apex of social development. Here Bauman specifically targeted the underlying potential for totalitarianism, social engineering, "adiaphorization" (the emptying of actions of moral content and assessment) as well as human suffering and inhumanity inherent in the grand "project of modernity." Almost all of the books published during this phase ended with Bauman reflecting on the topic of "postmodernity," regarding it as a modernity "coming of age" or becoming increasingly "conscious of itself"—its possibilities and not least its limitations. The third detectable period in Bauman's writings was his "Postmodern Phase" covering most of the 1990s. Here, in books such as *Intimations of Postmodernity* (1992a), *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* (1992b), *Postmodern Ethics* (1993) and *Life in Fragments* (1995), Bauman was primarily concerned with trying to put forward an analysis of the emerging postmodern society. This was also a period—a

"Moral Phase," as it were—in which Bauman wrote substantially about the topics of morality and ethics in postmodern times. Particularly the publication of *Postmodern Ethics* (1993) signaled an interest in exploring—however in a rather abstract socio-philosophical manner—the moral foundations for a society in which the unconditional responsibility for "the Other" was the baseline. We will return to this idea again later in this introductory chapter. Bauman's interest in the notion of "postmodernity"—and the exploration of the possibility of a seemingly new and different emerging type of society beyond modernity—began to fade towards the end of the 1990s with *Postmodernity and Its Discontents* (1997) being the last book bearing this particular wording in its title. Finally, and as a rather inclusive period, is Bauman's "Liquid-Modern Phase" (sometimes described as his "liquid-modern turn") starting at the threshold of the new millennium with the publication of *Liquid Modernity* in 2000 and occupying the final 17 years of his writings (for a compact summary of the main characteristics of "liquid modernity," see Bauman 2007a, 1–4). This period consists of a mosaic of many different books and other published pieces in which Bauman unleashed a comprehensive and critical analysis of contemporary "liquid-modern" society (as opposed to its predecessor "solid-modern" society). To Bauman, "liquid modernity"—his recasting of the previously privileged notion of "postmodernity"—is a dystopia of sorts, characterized by the relentless forces of "negative globalization" (Bauman 1998a), the decline of politics (Bauman 1999a), the negative side effects of individualization (Bauman 2001a), new excluding forms of community (Bauman 2001b) and rampant consumerism (Bauman 2007b)—forces that on all sides besiege society and threaten to tear it apart (Bauman 2002a). One may say, as Bauman himself actually did, that his postmodern writings during the 1990s "cleared the building site" and thereby paved the way for the later work on "liquid modernity," much in the same way that Bauman's work in the "Critique of Modernity Phase" had previously paved the way for his longstanding interest in the idea of "postmodernity." It needs to be stressed that these four phases identified in Bauman's writings should not be seen as signs of significant shifts in the tectonic plates of his intellectual foundation or as deep-seated inconsistencies throughout his work that was, in fact, characterized by a longstanding loyalty to the same basic values and worldviews. They are more to be regarded as times during his writing

career when Bauman deliberately decided to shift his attention, change his vocabulary and introduce new ideas into the discipline of sociology.

Bauman's work has been amongst the most cited in contemporary sociology. Throughout his career—as mentioned spanning more than six decades—he published more than sixty books and numerous book chapters and journal articles; his level of energy and productivity was quite simply unmatched. One is sometimes left to wonder when looking through the heaps of work bearing Bauman's name whether this incessant drive towards thinking, writing, and publishing left any time at all to live a "normal life." Bauman wrote at a pace like few others and he covered so much ground throughout his work. Topics such as modernity, postmodernity, liquid modernity, morality, ethics, culture, the Holocaust, the intellectuals, freedom, critique, critical sociology, religion, community, poverty, inequality, utopia, retrotopia, consumerism, identity, individualization, globalization, love, fear, ambivalence, the working class, strangers, Jewish identity, the welfare state, death, and immortality—these are just some of the main areas about which Bauman published substantial work; work that has since become frequent references within sociology and related disciplines. Adding to this, Bauman was also very much a "public sociologist" in some of the ways outlined by Michael Burawoy (2005) who pointed to the importance of the intellectual role as someone who actively engages with issues and problems that resonate with public and political concerns (see also Aidnik 2015). The "public nature," as it were, of Bauman's work, his way of doing it, presenting it, and writing about it, comes in different guises. First of all, until the very end Bauman ceaselessly traveled and gave well-attended lectures and speeches around the world to various audiences—sometimes being, possibly much to his own disliking, described by the media or in posters announcing his lectures as a "sociological superstar" or an "intellectual icon." Anyone who has ever met Bauman in person will know that despite his unmistakable entertainment gene (like an old circus horse that comes alive at the smell of the sawdust in the arena, he loved the sight of the audience from the podium), he was a very humble, generous and compassionate man involved in academia not due to a lust for fame or for seeking personal stardom. Second, Bauman wrote numerous articles and commentaries for British, French, and Polish newspapers commenting on current affairs. Here, particularly throughout

the past decade of his life, Bauman expressed strong views about the Zionist regime in Israel, the Brexit campaign in Britain, and the presidency of Donald Trump in the United States as well as on the conservative nationalist government in Poland, eventually leading to him decide not to go back to Poland again as well as declining an honorary doctorate at a Polish university in 2013. Bauman's blatant critique of the Polish government voiced from his exile also meant that a lecture given by him in the city of Wroclaw in 2013 was disrupted by a group of Polish nationalists shouting "Get the fuck out" and "Down with Communism" while Bauman was still on the stage. Third, Bauman believed that the sociologist not only had the privilege but also the ethical commitment and responsibility to take part in public debates and public life in order to cast light on the persistence of suffering in our world (Tester 2004, 6). Although Bauman was certainly not a "barricade stormer" (this was far from his cup of tea), it was his firm belief that intellectuals should not remain hidden in their ivory towers and simply in disinterested manner watch the world go by from their comfortable armchairs. Finally, Bauman in his writings was also specifically worried about the state of "the public" in contemporary neoliberal, liquid-modern society, lamenting its crumpling and critically calling out against the spreading of "agoraphobia" and the militarization of public places (Bauman 2001c). Such a process would lead to social fragmentation, individual isolation, and political impotence. Bauman instead wanted the public to be engaged and sociology to contribute to the engagement of the public in social and public affairs. In fact, it was Bauman's contention that we have witnessed an increasing "privatization" of the public over the course of several decades. Back in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Jürgen Habermas (1984) had famously stated that the lifeworld was being "colonized" by the system (e.g., by power and money). In his work, Habermas argued that "the subsystems of the economy and state become more and more complex as a consequence of capitalist growth and penetrate ever deeper into the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld" (Habermas 1984, 367). Contrary to Habermas's thesis, Bauman instead believed that the private world increasingly began to invade the public sphere (leading to "agoraphobia") and that private problems and private issues—the "life-politics" mentioned by Anthony Giddens (1991)—were gradually elbowing out a concern with the greater good or large-scale social

issues. This situation also inaugurates a change in the very task of sociology and particularly of critical sociology that no longer—as in the classic work of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, or Jürgen Habermas—should focus exclusively on the problems associated with the "totally administered society" or the "colonization of the lifeworld." Instead, sociology should be attuned to the analysis of how "the public sphere" was under increasingly attack from "private interests" that threaten to tear it apart from all sides. As Bauman thus stated:

> The task of critical theory has been reversed. That task used to be the defence of private autonomy from the advancing troops of the "public sphere", smarting under the oppressive rule of the omnipotent impersonal state and its many bureaucratic tentacles or their smaller-scale replicas. The task is now to defend the vanishing public realm, or rather to refurnish and repopulate the public space fast emptying … It is no more true that the "public" is set on colonizing the "private". The opposite is the case: it is the private that colonizes the public sphere (Bauman 2000:39; see also Bauman 1999b).

As should be evident from the above, one of the key concerns and trademarks of Bauman's work has been to describe and analyze the transformation of modernity. Whereas most of the classical sociologists writing during the "childhood" of the discipline of sociology—Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Ferdinand Tönnies, and Norbert Elias—had been concerned with conceptualizing the transition from traditional or feudal society to modern industrial society, Bauman's work was focused on what could be called a "second transformation" from modernity to postmodernity, or from "solid modernity" to "liquid modernity" during the latter parts of the twentieth century and the early decades of the twenty-first.

Sociology itself was, as it is often stated, a "child of modernity," born out of the "first transformation" from traditional, feudal and premodern society to industrial, urban and capitalist modernity. According to Bauman, sociology was born exactly at a time when the old world order (*l'ancien regime*) was crumpling and a new world order—the modern world—was not yet in place. Bauman's first extensive engagement with the topic of modernity is found in *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987a) in which he

proposed that we can understand changes in and of modernity through the lens of changes in intellectual work and self-understanding from the role of "legislators" (in modern society) to that of "interpreters" (in contemporary society). However, the transformation of modernity is not only about changes in intellectual attitudes, modes, or roles—it is also, as Bauman has shown in many other writings, about changes in the actual conditions of human and social life. In his apt words from the inaugural lecture at the University of Leeds in 1972: "Sociology was conceived as a desperate effort to bridge the gap between the planning, ordering, goal-oriented reason, and apparently chaotic, obstreperous, unruly and intractable human reality. Were there, not this gap, there probably would be no sociology" (Bauman, 1972b, 187). Sociology sought to bridge this gap by making the human and social world amendable to scientific study and understanding. Sociology took off as a search for meaning and explanation at a time when traditional values and religious beliefs were being challenged and undermined by the forces of the market economy, or what Karl Polanyi (1944) had called the "great transformation" when production within the household was increasingly moved to big factory buildings and large-scale production sites. This has a ground-shattering impact on the old, premodern world order. In the immortal words of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, this was a time when all that was solid melted into air and all that was sacred was being profaned. This was indeed a great mark of social transformation. As mentioned, Bauman's own sociology was formulated during another great mark of transformation—that between the now old solid-modern world order (that itself a century and a half earlier had gradually replaced the then old traditional and premodern order) and the arrival of the new liquid-modern disarray and disorder that destroyed "the molds" the previously had held things in place (Bauman 2000). In such a liquid-modern world, according to Bauman, sociology is far from redundant or "unemployed," and perhaps more than at any other time in history it is needed in order to point to the many problems that we are currently facing—in the same way that sociology was invented (and needed) in the first place during the transition from premodern to modern society. He thus observed: "Sociology cannot correct the shortcomings of the world … [but] it can help us to understand them in a more complete manner and in so doing, enable us to act upon them for the purpose of human betterment"

(Bauman and May 2001:116). For Bauman, then, the purpose of sociology is to assist in human understanding.

For some time, Bauman was specifically inspired by the hermeneutic ideal of sociology—an ideal stressing the importance of interpretation and of the cultural and social embeddedness of our perception and understanding of the world (Bauman 1978). Although Bauman did not take the specific perspective from this early book further—a perspective relying very much on a Habermasian understanding—his work continued to be hermeneutical and interpretative, and not least critical. Bauman's own preferred "method" has been described by him as "sociological hermeneutics"—a way of looking at the world in which the focus is on the fact that most of what determines the course of our human lives is often hidden from plain sight (and thus needs to be dug out), the idea that individual human life is always closely interwoven with wider social figurations with other people (and society at large) as well as on how human beings seek to actively understand, manage, deal with and make sense of the—often deep-seated and layered—social conditions that shape the course of their lives (see, e.g., Blackshaw 2002; Dawson 2015; Davis 2020). Even though Bauman, as mentioned, was not a structuralist or a critical realist, he nevertheless believed that there is more to society than meets the eye. This idea that something is constantly boiling below the surface of immediately visible and tangible social life, something that has an important impact on individuals and societies alike, was also one of the reasons why Bauman already early on expressed a critical attitude towards many variants of microsociology—such as behaviorism, interactionism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology and interactionism—that he did not believe would be able to do much more in their studies than to scratch the surface of social life (Bauman 1972b, 1973c). Moreover, Bauman—not unlike C. Wright Mills (1959) in the mid-twentieth century—also remained critical of much mainstream American sociology (although the epithet "American sociology" is admittedly rather diffuse), because he saw it as "downright boring, uninspired and uninspiring," and parts of it "put technical sophistication high above the significance of the issue" (Bauman and Tester 2001, 28).

Besides Bauman's longstanding interest in describing and analyzing the transformation of modernity—but also as an integral part of this endeavor—

another continuous concern in his writings was with the issue of suffering (Jacobsen 2021b). Bauman always looked at the human and social world through the lens of suffering—it was a prism, probably stemming from his Marxist background and lifelong devotion to Socialism, that would allow him to show how the world despite many positive changes and advancements still produced its fair amount of human misery and suffering. In his writings concerned with modern society, it was primarily the problems associated with totalitarianism, genocide, and "adiaphorization" processes (as part of the modern aspiration to order and control the world) that preoccupied him, whereas his liquid-modern writings focused more on how "social evil" was perpetuated and "social suffering" was reproduced but now under new circumstances. Bauman therefore, at least in his later writings, was specifically concerned with the gradual dismantling of the welfare state, the withdrawal of state-sponsored support for the weakest members of society and the turning away from their suffering, the stigmatization, and exclusion of new forms of "human waste," as well as with the privatization of everything in society rather than with a totalitarian state that threatened to repress and annihilate its subjects. Obviously, Bauman knew very well that social control and totalitarianism came in many different forms and guises from the panoptic state that monitored everything people did (as in George Orwell's notion of "Big Brother is watching you" in which the many are under the surveillance of the few) to the "synoptic" consumer society in which people are interpellated through seduction and promises of living happy lives if only they continue to consume (and where the many watch and seek to imitate the successful few) (Bauman and Lyon 2013). It was thus the study and analysis of the continuation of suffering that remained one of the most characteristic trademarks of Bauman's work.

Sociology Beyond Sociology

It is difficult to find a fitting epithet or label that adequately captures and covers Bauman's work, and personally, he was very much unimpressed by any such "pigeonholing" attempts (Kilminster and Varcoe 1992, 205). True,

throughout his life and career he remained a devout socialist and a Marxist —his text "The Importance of Being Marxist" (1987b) explains why—but he also for a while during the 1970s flirted with structuralism (Bauman 1973b), he was a hermeneutically inspired sociologist (Bauman 1978), for some time he was fond of the writings of Jürgen Habermas as an important source of inspiration before this interest later dried out again (Kilminster and Varcoe 1992, 217), and there is no doubt that between the lines he was inspired by many of the so-called "critical theorists" of the Frankfurt School in his concerns and ideas, for some time the postmodern perspective stuck to him (see, e.g., Bauman 1992a), and finally the phenomenological work of Emmanuel Lévinas also had a significant and lasting influence on him (Bauman 1993). But it is difficult to boil down exactly "what" Bauman was, how appropriately to label him, or where specifically to locate his work on the map of sociological theories. Bauman himself believed that the discipline of sociology itself was an inherently ambivalent endeavor, because there were so many different understandings of what sociology is all about, how to practice it, and for what ends. As he once stated in an interview:

> Whether it is praised or castigated and condemned, [sociology] is always considered very much like, in simpler societies, blacksmiths were: people who were sort of alchemists, who sit astride the normal barricades which ought to be used to keep things apart (Bauman in Kilminster and Varcoe 1992, 209).

In many ways, Bauman himself was indeed such a "blacksmith" incarnate, because his work continued to "sit astride" the barriers separating paradigms, research traditions, and schools of thought which we usually use in order to classify thinkers. Despite these difficulties in labeling Bauman's work appropriately, it is, however, safe to say that he was *not* a system-builder, and although he did invent a vast number of important conceptual and theoretical ideas, he—in a manner not unlike that of Georg Simmel—continued to believe in and pursue the fragment. During his younger years, Bauman nurtured grand ambition of constructing a large-scale and comprehensive analytical system with which to explain and understand the complexity of the social world, but later that youthful infatuation with the

project rapidly faded and was replaced by a deep-seated resentment for the whole idea of such an all-explanatory system (Bauman 2008, 235).

Throughout his six decades of doing and writing sociology, Bauman's style was not a usual sociological one. During the first part of his career in Poland and the early years in the United Kingdom, he wrote in a somewhat tedious conventional academic style, not giving in to the potential for creativity that would later come to characterize his way of writing. However, later he developed his own distinctive, much more exquisite and eloquent style as his work matured and his command—not least of the English language—increased (keep in mind that all of Bauman's books from the 1980s onwards were in fact beautifully written by a nonnative English speaker). In many ways, Bauman was a "literary sociologist" in a number of different respects. First of all, he pursued a rather "literary" way of writing and analyzing a number of social phenomena and themes through such means as metaphors (Jacobsen and Marshman 2008a), and by often relying on a well-crafted essayistic writing-style as well as by generously drawing on and quoting insights from the world of literature and fiction. In Bauman's perspective, sociology—like literature—was an attempt at understanding, and he even dedicated an entire book to praising literature and to showing how sociology and literature in many ways approached the same human and social world however from different angles, and using different means (Bauman and Mazzeo 2016). Bauman's way of doing sociology (although he would surely have disliked the very idea of "doing" sociology as this was a much too instrumental view of his vocation) was thus characterized by an unmistakable literary sensibility evident in his extensive use of metaphors, his essayistic style and also his frequent references to literary works. As Bauman once noted: "I personally learned more about the society we live in from Balzac, Zola, Kafka, Musil, Frisch, Perec, Kundera, Beckett (the space limit you gave me would be exploded if I tried to name them all) than say, from Parsons and quite a few other in and out of footnote stalwarts" (Bauman in Blackshaw 2002, 2). In addition, Bauman was not a sociologist who relied neither on qualitative case studies nor on survey material (or only to a very limited and selective degree), and there are no flow charts, statistics, tables, or figures in his texts (in fact, there is only one graphical figure—which is curiously rather redundant—in one of his many books, see Bauman 2002a, 215). Moreover, nowhere in his

work will one find any considerations of a methodological character informing the reader about data sampling and data collection strategies, reflections about coding and analytical strategy, thoughts on validity, reliability and representativity, or how and why the "analysis" turned out the way it did. Also in this way, Bauman's work resembles literary texts or "scholarship" rather than conventional sociological "research."

Moreover, particularly during the later years, Bauman experimented with different writing and publishing formats, and even though his 44 "letters" to a liquid modern world (Bauman 2010) were never posted in any official mailbox, he regarded his own writings as "messages in a bottle" eventually washing up on some shore to be discovered and read by someone who might find them interesting and useful. Moreover, his "diary"—with the teasing title *This Is Not a Diary* (Bauman 2012)—truly was not really a diary in a conventional sense of the term but rather retrospective reflections on the way his life had panned out. Finally, during the latter decade of his life, Bauman was involved in a long series of "interview books" in which he together with colleagues from different places around the world—such as Denmark, Italy, Poland, Lithuania, Finland, and the United Kingdom—engaged in co-analyzing some issues relating to the world situation and discussing his own ideas (see, e.g., Bauman, Jacobsen and Tester 2014; Bauman and Donskis 2013a, 2013b; Bauman and Lyon 2013; Bauman and Bordoni 2014; Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 2015b; Bauman and Mauro 2016; Bauman and Mazzeo 2016; Bauman and Raud 2016; Bauman and Leoncini 2018; see also Dawson 2015). All these interview or conversation books—alongside the many interviews he gave to colleagues, journals, and newspapers—were often the concrete outcome of email based conversations or relaxed chats in the cozy living room in his house in Headingley. Such publications fitted well with his image of sociology, which he fundamentally regarded as an "ongoing dialogue" with human life-experience—a dialogue concerned with making us better equipped to "understand a little more fully the people around us, their cravings and dreams, their worries and their misery" (Bauman 1990, 16; see also Bauman 2011, 160–172). Whereas Jürgen Habermas had famously regarded the aim of his sociology to promote a free and uncoerced deliberation process taking place for example in a sociology seminar room or in a political assembly (and guided by the force of the better rational argument),

Bauman's view on the sociological conversation was in many ways somewhat similar but perhaps also a bit more relaxed—like two or more people sitting in their comfy armchairs with a nice glass of brandy and discussing the state of the world, how we may understand it and what to do about it. The purpose of the dialogue is not to come to some sort of agreement or conclusion or that the wiser would eventually be able to persuade the not-so-wise. Rather, as Bauman once mused, such a "dialogue neither knows nor admits a division into blunders and people-in-the-know, ignoramuses and experts, learners and teacher. Both sides enter the conversation poorer than they will in its course become" (Bauman 2008, 236). By talking to each other, expressing ideas, and sharing viewpoints, we may be better able to see the world from different perspectives and thus enhance our mutual understanding of what is actually going on in the world. Although Bauman did believe that sociology's mission was committed to some sort of "conversion to truth" and enlightenment (Kilminster and Varcoe 1992, 214), he was always cautious not to point to any kind of elitist notion of the intellectual as someone exclusively "in the know." For Bauman, the aim of sociology as a discipline is that it should always attempt to go beyond that which is taken for granted and which is regarded as self-evident or parade as unquestioned. On the one hand, sociology is itself closely connected to common sense, because it builds on and is nourished by the common sense knowledge and experiences of people living their everyday lives often in a sociologically unreflected manner. On the other hand, however, sociology also needs to transcend this common sense in order to penetrate into the deeper layers of our being in this world and to understand and subject to sociological scrutiny the structures that mostly remain invisible to us (Bauman 1990, 8–9). Although Bauman was not a structuralist—even though he, as mentioned, briefly flirted with it, particularly during the 1970s—he did believe that there is more to the world than meets the eye and that we only see the tip of the iceberg. Bauman wanted sociology to be a discipline that looks at the causes and consequences of the way the world is, in all its brutality and beauty, but also to explore if some opportunities or chances for making the world a better place still remain undiscovered.

Besides writing in an unconventional "literary" way—some might even describe it as iconoclastic or semi-sociological—Bauman also wrote about

some rather unconventional topics if seen from the perspective of the sociological mainstream: utopia, morality, evil, freedom, death, immortality, and so forth,—with utopia perhaps being the most continuous presence underpinning his work. Throughout his life, Bauman was a devout utopian. In several of his writings, utopia (and later "retrotopia") was a key concern, serving as a sort of prism for understanding what was happening in the world as a sort of mirror-reflection of reality (Bauman 1976a, 2017). For Bauman, utopia is about the dreams, visions, and ideals that people—often with society as a sort of mediator for collective utopias—entertain regarding their hopes for the future (Jacobsen 2023). Utopia is about wanting to make the world a better place. Bauman, however, was also a highly ambivalent utopian (Jacobsen 2016), because—not least learned from personal experience—he was painfully aware that although utopias can be guiding stars for "the good life" or "the good society," they can also turn into living nightmares for those who are forced to live inside "actually existing utopias" as seen in many totalitarian regimes. For Bauman, utopia always needs to be a critical counter-culture to everything that presents itself as inevitability or necessity. Utopia is a constant affront to the insistence of the so-called "TINA Syndrome" claiming that "There Is No Alternative" (Bauman 2002b). In almost existentialist manner, according to Bauman, there is *always* an alternative—the future is *not* determined once and for all, the world can *always* be different from what it currently is. As Bauman already early on in his work had insisted, the path leading from the past to the present does not necessarily extend into the future. Every moment in history (in the history of society and in the history of the lives of individuals) is in principle an open-ended situation—our future is not predetermined but is, in the last instance, decided by people who think and act (Bauman, 1976a, 12). This is also why Bauman throughout his writings always argued for the importance of uniting *vita contemplativa* (the life of thought) with *vita activa* (the life of action), making sure that people would actively take part in changing the world into the place they wanted it to be (Bauman 2002b).

Bauman's sociology was certainly a critical sociology aimed at critically dissecting and analyzing the world and exploring it's not-yet discovered or realized utopian potentials. It was, simultaneously also a humanistic sociology in at least two senses. First of all, it always took as its point of

departure the human experience of and in the world. This is also why Bauman's book on globalization was sub-titled *Globalization—The Human Consequences* (1998a), thus stressing that his concern was with how the process of globalization—otherwise often described in political or economic terms—in fact, impacts people's lives in a number of highly consequential ways. Second, throughout his career, Bauman was continuously concerned with those who are weak, outcast, regarded as "weeds" or "waste" or threatened with stigmatization or annihilation. In his view, in the last instance, the moral standard of any society can only be assessed by looking at the way it treats its weakest members. As mentioned above, the topic of suffering, therefore, looms large in his work from the first published pieces to the very last. In Bauman's work, there are many different (more or less specific) faces of human suffering (Jacobsen and Marshman 2008b): in the early years the working class served as the embodiment of suffering (Bauman 1972a, 1982), then the Jews suffering from the persecutions, pogroms and the extermination attempts in the industrialized Holocaust atrocities (Bauman 1989), then the strangers (Bauman 1991), then the "underclass" and the "flawed consumers" in the neoliberal consumer society (Bauman 1998b, 2004a), and finally the immigrants and refugees seeking safety and asylum from war, poverty, unemployment, and unworthy living conditions (Bauman 2016). Suffering thus remained one of his main concerns throughout his writings.

Besides being utopian and humanistic (and concerned with the causes and consequences of human suffering), Bauman's sociology was also moral sociology. Throughout his writings—and particularly after his "postmodern turn" in the early 1990s—there is an interest in understanding the sources of human morality, an area according to him overlooked by most of the sociological tradition. Moreover, whenever sociology *did* pay attention to morality, in Bauman's view it was in a sort of Durksonian (a concept constructed by the contraction of the surnames of Émile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons) manner, which relied on a functionalist perspective that saw society as the main production facility or "factory of morality" (Bauman 1989, 170–175). In his work, Bauman rather believed that the source of human morality was pre-social and should therefore be brought back to its original wellspring in the individual human being and his or her choices, compassionate capabilities, and moral responsibility (Bauman

1993). Relying on a re-interpretation of two etiological myths from the Bible—Moses descending from the Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden—Bauman separated between what he described as a "morality of conformity" (sometimes phrased by him simply as "ethics") aimed at setting limitations for human freedom and to keep people on the straight and narrow (often with severe punishment if they strayed off this beaten path), and contrary to this a "morality of choice" (other times simply called "morality"). This latter type of morality offers uncertainty but also freedom as people will here have to make choices themselves often under contingent and unpredictable circumstances, not knowing or being told in advance what is right or wrong (Bauman 1998c). It was Bauman's contention that morality and choice were closely connected and that once the "choice" part was taken out of the equation, morality would cease to be "morality." In several important writings particularly throughout the 1990s, Bauman argued for and teased out the sociological implications of such a different (some might perhaps say unsociological) understanding of morality. Personally, I always found Bauman's description of the truly moral person as someone who is constantly haunted by the gnawing suspicion that he/she is not moral enough (Bauman 1993, 80) not only immensely beautiful but also as a guideline for my own life.

From the above, it should be clear that Bauman's sociology had a mission. It wanted to point to the social causes of human suffering, as we saw above, it wanted to explore the not yet exhausted possibilities of the world, it wanted to awaken our moral conscience, and it wanted to give power to the powerless. Already in his inaugural lecture delivered in Leeds in 1972 when Bauman arrived there after some first tumultuous years of exile, he stated—inspired by his two aforementioned sociology mentors from his years in Poland, Julian Hochfeld and Stanislaw Ossowski—on what he saw as the basis for and the main purpose of his way of practicing sociology:

> There [seems], indeed, to be no end to the drama in which the meaning and the reality, the subjective and the objective, the free and the determined, merge continuously to mould our present into our future. Such—contradictory and mischievously elusive to all clear-cut unilateral descriptions—is the shape of the human world (so I learned), my métier—

> sociology—is about … [E]ither sociology will make sense of the world, thereby giving power to the powerless, or it must admit its own powerlessness to make sense of its own existence (Bauman 1972b, 187, 186).

Sociology, in Bauman's view, must thus carefully navigate in and secure a meaningful dialogue between these different dimensions of human and social life in order to give power to the powerless, to give voice to the voiceless, and to alleviate the suffering of the sufferers. As mentioned above, for Bauman sociology was to be seen as an ongoing dialogue with human life-experience, not a hegemonic monologue. This human life-experience is indeed full of traps, pitfalls, contradictions, ambivalences, dilemmas, schisms and paradoxes, and sociology must try to make sense out of the world it describes and seeks to understand. However, the purpose of sociology is not to tell people how to live their lives, but to aid and abet them in understanding their lives more fully. Throughout his work, Bauman thus remained critical of any kind of legislative reason, and he rather regarded the sociologist as an "interpreter" than a "legislator" (Bauman 1987a, 2011, 160–172)—someone facilitating instead of dictating the dialogue. Despite his aversion towards any kind of legislative reason that would strive for conformity by telling people how to live their lives, by preempting their choices, or by muting their individual imagination and conscience, it was nevertheless Bauman's contention that such a sociological meaning-making endeavor could not proceed from any "neutral," "objective" or "detached" perspective. As here once observed: "There is no choice between 'engaged' and 'neutral' ways of doing sociology. A noncommittal sociology is an impossibility" (Bauman 2000, 216). Bauman's sociology was indeed normative—but not normative in the sense that he had a vision of that world that needed to be implemented or imposed on his partners-in-dialogue. Bauman's dialectics were in this sense mostly "negative" with no promised kingdom to be constructed. I am sure if asked Bauman would have been appalled by the very idea of "Sociology Kings" (equivalents to Plato's "Philosopher Kings" or Auguste Comte's "Positivist Scientists") who have the authority and audacity to tell other people how to live their lives—not least because he personally experienced how the party-affiliated (and anti-Semitic) intelligentsia in

Communist/Stalinist society had turned his own life upside-down several times. Bauman simply wanted, as the inscription above the entrance to the Oracle of Delphi stated, that people think for themselves. In his books, Bauman made it crystal clear what his own position was and from which particular perspective he saw and interpreted the world. But most of all he wanted his readers to make up their own minds, obviously recognizing and realizing what his perspective was—and being then either persuaded, dissuaded, moved, infuriated, sensitized, or in other ways affected by what he wrote. The worst response of all would be utter indifference or insensitivity.

As shown, Zygmunt Bauman was indeed someone who in his work boldly sat astride the barriers intended to keep things apart. He had his very own almost "literary" style of writing sociology that was quite unique, he developed his own vocabulary and openly admitted his incurable eclecticism in choice of sources of inspiration (Kilminster and Varcoe 1992; 211). This distinctive character of his work made him strongly oppose any "pigeonholing" or being categorized as belonging to this or that theoretical camp in sociology. Most readers will doubtlessly be struck with the beautiful phrasing of Bauman's work and his ability to turn an often dry academic or technical style known from so many sociology books into a compelling and morally challenging text. This was also a very humanistic trademark of his work—that Bauman believed that people are in fact capable (if not coerced or seduced) of creating the lives they really want (but, in typical Marxist understanding, not necessarily under conditions of their own choosing). In this endeavor, sociology may serve as a dialogical partner providing people with useful and important insights and assisting them in making sure that their choices remain free, open, and responsible.

About This Book

Let us end this introductory chapter on a more personal note. I was fortunate enough to forge a personal and professional relationship with Zygmunt Bauman. It was not a close one, but it was there and lasted for almost 20 years. My first communication with him was faceless in the late

1990s when I (via email) sent him a copy of my completed master's thesis on the management of death in contemporary society, which was greatly inspired by his own somewhat overlooked 1992-book *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* (1992b). Bauman responded by telefax—one of the few times in my life having ever received such a thing. The first time I met him face-to-face was soon thereafter when he gave lectures at the universities of Aalborg and Copenhagen in Denmark. Since then we began communicating more regularly via email and I had the privilege and pleasure to visit him in his lovely but cluttered house in Headingly several times, discussing sociology and life in general and always sitting in the armchair with a glass or two of something tasty. Here I enjoyed the company of a gentle, brilliant, generous, and humble man. These personal meetings with Bauman had a lasting and indelible impact on me as a human being and as a sociologist. This is the main reason why I have continued to read, reread, interpret, and critically engage with his ideas.

Throughout the years quite a lot of secondary literature—edited volumes, monographs, and biographies—have been published dealing with and deciphering Bauman's life and work (see, e.g., Beilharz 2000, 2020; Best 2013; Blackshaw 2005; Davis 2008, 2014; Davis and Tester 2010; Elliott 2007; Jacobsen 2004, 2017a 2021a; Jacobsen and Poder 2008; Jacobsen and Tester 2005; Jacobsen, Marshman and Tester 2008; Rattansi 2017; Palmer 2023; Polhuijs 2022; Smith 1999; Tester 2004; Wagner 2020—and these are just some of the many international books), each title adding new perspectives and pieces to the jigsaw puzzle of a man and a scholar who has had a lasting impact on the discipline of sociology. This book represents an attempt—albeit to a certain degree an admittedly unsuccessful one—to cover some important angles of Bauman's comprehensive and extensive work. With his astonishing productivity spanning so many decades, Bauman however escapes such attempts at "being covered"—there are always something else that could or should have been mentioned or incorporated. This is what keeps the story going. There is no conclusion, no ending. After all, this was a man who devoted most of his life studying and understanding the world and who insisted that "when everything has been already said, something important, perhaps something most important of all, is still missing" (Bauman 2002d, 2). This book is, therefore, a modest

contribution to our appreciation of some of the main areas of sociology about which Bauman throughout his career wrote—a career that, in his own view, was more a craft and a calling than a "career."

The publication of this book almost marks the centenary of Bauman's birth in 1925. The chapters collected here each in their way deal with important themes or dimensions of Bauman's work. As mentioned above, Bauman's body of work is much too comprehensive to cover or represent in one single volume like this one. However, the book aspires to engage with some key areas of Bauman's writings as well as some more overlooked areas: Bauman as a "Weberian Marxist" (by *Peter Beilharz*), Bauman as a "Freudian without psychology" (by *Matt Dawson*), Bauman on modernity and the Holocaust (by *Adele Valeria Messina*), Bauman and the "continental divide" in social theory between Europe and the United States (by *Stjepan G. Meštrović, Michael Ohsfeldt* and *Jacob Hardy*), Bauman on exile and Eurocentrism (by *Jack Palmer*), Bauman on the social meanings of death (by *Michael Hviid Jacobsen* and *Nicklas Runge*), Bauman and the strangers at our door (by *Shaun Best*), Bauman and the "nostalgic turn" (by *Dariusz Brzezínski*), the "late Bauman" (by *Mark Davis and Elena Álvarez-Álvarez*), and finally Bauman and ambivalence (by *Michael Hviid Jacobsen*). As mentioned already in the beginning of this introductory chapter, there is a certain unmistakable "Europeanness" running throughout Bauman's work—his work mirrored and captured the seminal transition from the twentieth century to the twenty-first in Europe (and later with much more globalized consequences). Moreover, midway through his life, as we saw, his own dramatic life circumstances moved him from Eastern to Western Europe, having thus experienced both the Communist regime and the free-market economy, totalitarianism, and Western democracy. It was almost as if his work could only have been born out of the suffering and misery experienced on the European continent throughout the past one hundred years. The purpose of the craft of sociology, according to Bauman, remains to participate in making the world in which we live a better place and to relieve suffering. As he thus beautifully insisted in *Liquid Modernity*: "Doing sociology and writing sociology is aimed at disclosing the possibility of living together differently, with less misery, or no misery; the possibility daily withheld, overlooked or unbelieved" (Bauman 2000, 215). This remained his conviction throughout his life.

References

Aidnik, Martin. 2015. “A Sociology for the 21st Century? An Enquiry into Public Sociology Reading Zygmunt Bauman.” *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 7 (2): 7–18.

Bauman, Janina. 1986. *Winter in the Morning*. London: Virago.

——— 1988. *A Dream of Belonging: My Years in Postwar Poland*. London: Virago.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1972a. *Between Class and Elite—The Evolution of the British Labour Movement*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

——— 1972b. “Culture, Values and Science of Society.” *University of Leeds Review* 15 (2): 185–203.

——— 1973a. *Culture as Praxis*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

——— 1973b. “The Structuralist Promise.” *British Journal of Sociology* 24 (1): 67–83.

——— 1973c. “On the Philosophical Status of Ethnomethodology.” *The Sociological Review* 21 (1): 5–23.

——— 1976a. *Socialism: The Active Utopia*. London: Hutchinson.

——— 1976b. *Toward a Critical Sociology—An Essay on Common Sense and Emancipation*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

——— 1978. *Hermeneutics and Social Science—Approaches to Understanding*. London: Hutchinson.

——— 1979. “The Phenomenon of Norbert Elias.” *Sociology* 13: 117–125.

——— 1982. *Memories of Class: The Pre-History and After-Life of Class*. London: Routledge.

——— 1987a. *Legislators and Interpreters*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1987b. “The Importance of Being Marxist.” In *Social Theory and Social Criticism—Essays in Honour of Tom Bottomore*, edited by William Outhwaite and Michael Mulkay, 1–9. Oxford: Blackwell.

——— 1988. *Freedom*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

——— 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1990. *Thinking Sociologically*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

——— 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1992a. *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge.

——— 1992b. *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1993. *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

——— 1994. *Alone Again—Ethics After Certainty*. London: Demos.

——— 1995. *Life in Fragments—Essays in Postmodern Moralities*. Oxford: Blackwell.

——— 1997. *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1998a. *Globalization—The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1998b. *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

——— 1998c. "What Prospects of Morality in Times of Uncertainty?." *Theory, Culture and Society* 15 (1): 11–22.
——— 1999a. *In Search of Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 1999b. "Critique—Privatized and Disarmed." *Zeitschrift für Kritische Theorie* 9: 121–131.
——— 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2001a. *The Individualized Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2001b. *Community—Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2001c. "Uses and Disuses of Urban Space." In *Organizing Metropolitan Space and Discourse*, edited by Barbara Czarniawska and Rolf Solli, 16–31. Malmö: Liber.
——— 2002a. *Society Under Siege*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2002b. "Pierre Bourdieu or the Dialectics of Vita Contemplativa and Vita Activa." *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 220: 179–193.
——— 2002c. "The Fate of Humanity in the Post-Trinitarian World." *Journal of Human Rights* 1 (3): 283–303.
——— 2002d, *Beauty, Or the Dream that Fears Awakening*. Unpublished manuscript provided by the author.
——— 2004a. *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2004b. *Europe—An Unfinished Adventure*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2007a. *Liquid Times*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2007b. *Consuming Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2008. "Pro domo sua." In *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman—Challenges and Critique*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Poul Poder, 231–240. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
——— 2010. *44 Letters from a Liquid Modern World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2011. *Collateral Damage—Social Inequalities in a Global Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2012. *This Is Not a Diary*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2016. *Strangers at Our Door*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2017. *Retrotopia*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2023. *My Life in Fragments*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, and Tim May. 2001. *Thinking Sociologically* (2nd Edition). Oxford: Blackwell.
———, and Keith Tester. 2001. *Conversations with Zygmunt Bauman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, and Leonidas Donskis. 2013a. *Moral Blindness: The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, and Leonidas Donskis. 2013b. *Liquid Evil*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, and David Lyon. 2013. *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, and Carlo Bordoni. 2014. *State of Crisis*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, and Stanisław Obirek. 2015a. *Of Man and God*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, and Stanisław Obirek. 2015b. *On the World and Ourselves*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, and Ezio Mauro. 2016. *Babel*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, and Riccardo Mazzeo. 2016. *In Praise of Literature*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, and Rein Raud. 2016. *Practices of Selfhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, and Thomas Leoncini. 2018. *Born Liquid*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Keith Tester. 2014. *What Use Is Sociology?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
Beilharz, Peter. 2000. *Zygmunt Bauman: Dialectic of Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.
——— 2020. *Intimacy in Postmodern Times: A Friendship with Zygmunt Bauman*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
Best, Shaun. 2013. *Zygmunt Bauman—Why Good People Do Bad Things*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
Blackshaw, Tony. 2002. "Interview with Professor Zygmunt Bauman." *Network: Newsletter of the British Sociological Association* 83: 1–3.
——— 2005. *Zygmunt Bauman*. London: Routledge.
Brzeziński, Dariusz. 2014. "The Social Thought of Zygmunt Bauman Before 1968: From the 'Mechanistic' to the 'Activistic' Version of Marxism" (Polish text). *Politeja* 32: 161–182.
Burawoy, Michael. 2005. "2004 Presidential Address: For Public Sociology." *American Sociological Review* 70 (1): 4–28.
Campbell, Tony, Mark Davis and Jack Palmer. 2018. "Hidden Paths in Zygmunt Bauman's Sociology: Editorial Introduction." *Theory, Culture & Society* 35 (7/8): 351–374.
Davis, Mark. 2008. *Freedom and Consumerism: A Critique of Zygmunt Bauman's Sociology*. Farnham: Ashgate.
———, ed. 2014. *Liquid Sociology—Metaphor in Zygmunt Bauman's Analysis of Modernity*. Farnham: Ashgate.
——— 2020. "Hermeneutics *Contra* Fundamentalism: Zygmunt Bauman's Method for Thinking in Dark Times." *Thesis Eleven* 156 (1): 27–44.
———, and Keith Tester, eds. 2010. *Bauman's Challenge—Sociological Issues for the 21st Century*. London: Palgrave/Macmillan.
Dawson, Matt. 2015. "Sociology as Conversation: Zygmunt Bauman's Applied Sociological Hermeneutics." *Sociology* 49 (3): 582–587.
Domosławski, Artur. 2021. *Wygnaniec: 21 scen z z ˙ycia Zygmunta Baumana [The Exile: Twenty-One Scenes from the Life of Zygmunt Bauman]*. Warsaw: Wielka Litera.
Edemariam, Aida. 2007. "Professor with a Past: Interview with Zygmunt Bauman." *The Guardian*, April 28.
Elliott, Anthony, ed. 2007. *The Contemporary Bauman*. London: Routledge.

Gane, Nicholas. 2004. "Zygmunt Bauman: Liquid Sociality." In *The Future of Social Theory*, edited by Nicholas Gane, 17–46. London: Continuum.

Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1984. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 1994. *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1991*. London: Michael Joseph Publishing.

Jacobsen, Michael Hviid. 2004. *Zygmunt Bauman—den postmoderne dialektik [Zygmunt Bauman—Dialectics of Postmodernity]*. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

——— 2016. "Zygmunt Bauman—An Ambivalent Utopian." *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 3 (277): 347–364.

———, ed. 2017. *Beyond Bauman—Critical Engagements and Creative Excursions*. London: Routledge.

——— 2021a. *Zygmunt Bauman*. Copenhagen: DJØF Forlag.

——— 2021b. "Suffering in the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman." *Qualitative Studies* 6 (1): 68–90.

——— 2023. "Solid-Modern and Liquid-Modern Utopias. Zygmunt Bauman's Sociological Contribution to Our Understanding of Utopia." In *Rethinking Democracy for Post-Utopian Worlds—Alternative Political Projects After the Sovereign State*, edited by Julia María Urabayen Pérez and Jorge León. London: Palgrave/Macmillan (in press).

———, and Sophia Marshman. 2008a. "Bauman's Metaphors: The Poetic Imagination in Sociology." *Current Sociology* 56 (5): 798–818.

——— 2008b: "The Four Faces of Human Suffering in the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman—Continuity and Change." *Polish Sociological Review* 1 (161): 3–24.

———, and Poul Poder, eds. 2008. *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

———, Sophia Marshman and Keith Tester. 2007. *Bauman Beyond Postmodernity: Critical Appraisals and Annotated Bibliography, 1989–2005*. Aalborg: Aalborg University Press.

Jasińska-Kania, Aleksandra. 2018. "Living with Zygmunt Bauman, Before and After." *Thesis Eleven* 149 (1): 86–90.

Kilminster, Richard, and Ian Varcoe. 1992. "Sociology, Postmodernity and Exile: An Interview with Zygmunt Bauman," in Zygmunt Bauman: *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge, pp. 205–228.

Korpi, Walter. 1990. "Om undran inför sociologerna." *Sociologisk Forskning* 27 (3): 2–10.

Maisey, Robert. 2021. "The Extraordinary Life of Zygmunt Bauman." *Tribune*, April 9. Available online at: https://tribunemag.co.uk/2021/04/the-extraordinary-life-of-zygmunt-bauman.

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Morawski, Stefan. 1998. “Bauman’s Way of Seeing the World.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 15 (1): 29–38.

Musiał, Bogdan. 2007. “‘Agent Semjon”’ Der soziologue Zygmunt Bauman im Stalinismus.” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 20.

Palmer, Jack. 2023. *Zygmunt Bauman and the West: A Sociology of Intellectual Exile*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.

Polanyi, Karl. 1944. *The Great Transformation: Origins of Our Time*. New York: Farrar and Rinehart.

Polhuijs, Zeger. 2022. *Zygmunt Bauman and Pope Francis in Dialogue: The Labyrinth of Liquid Modernity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Academic.

Rattansi, Ali. 2017. *Zygmunt Bauman: A Critical Introduction*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Smith, Dennis. 1999. *Zygmunt Bauman: Prophet of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Tabet, Simon. 2017. “Interview with Zygmunt Bauman: From the Modern Project to the Liquid World.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 34 (7/8): 131–146.

Tester, Keith. 2004. *The Social Thought of Zygmunt Bauman*. London: Palgrave/Macmillan.

——— 2018. “On Repetition in the Work of Zygmunt Bauman.” *Thesis Eleven* 149 (1): 104–118.

———, and Michael Hviid Jacobsen. 2005. *Bauman Before Postmodernity: Invitation, Conversations and Annotated Bibliography 1953–1989*. Aalborg: Aalborg University Press.

Wagner, Izabela. 2020. *Bauman: A Biography*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Wagner-Saffray, Izabela. 2020. “Bauman as a Refugee: We Should Not Call Refugees ‘Migrants’.” *Thesis Eleven* 156 (1): 102–117.

Chapter One

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN: WEBERIAN MARXIST?

Peter Beilharz

Introduction

How do we make theory? What are the criteria for judging the power of ideas and concepts in the practice of social theory? The work of theory does not always involve building, or the construction of systems, though this may have been the dominant model in postwar sociology from Talcott Parsons to Anthony Giddens. Sometimes it involves something more modest or experimental, a matter of successive approximations, circling, following hunches and leaving hints (Beilharz 2020a). Sometimes it may be more like tracking a snail trail than attempting to capture every detail of the world in a corresponding concept. Even some of the more ambitious of classical precedents, like Karl Marx's *Capital*, may be said to contain as much in their hints as in their broad architecture. The section on the fetishism of commodities is elusive at only a few pages; the image of the architect and bee is less than that, but highly suggestive. The last chapter of *Capital*, on colonization, is indicative of a theory of surplus population and colonization as part thereof. Primitive accumulation is a global process; it represents the modernization part of modernity. Then there is the book's own structural undergirding, indebted to Dante's inferno. In the sprawling text of Marx's *Grundrisse*, some of the most interesting legacies again are

mere fragments: on method, on automation, and on time–space compression. And in Max Weber, the image of the iron cage is a throwaway that has yet become highly generative for critical thinking about modernity, along with various other chilling anticipations as to what the new century would bring.[1]

Karl Marx and iMax Weber come into play here as central sources for Bauman's thinking. In this chapter, I indicate their influences on Bauman, separately and together in the amalgam called "Weberian Marxism." This junction is one key source for the tradition we call Critical Theory. From Marx to Zygmunt Bauman is a long way—from 1867, for *Capital*, to 2000, for *Liquid Modernity*, from the Crystal Place to IM Pei's glass pyramids, from Marx's coat to the costumes of Vivienne Westwood. *Liquid Modernity* may also be said to be a hint, rather than a theory, though the book by that title is methodical enough: its chapters lead with "Emancipation" and "Individuality," and follow on to "Time/Space," "Work," and "Community" (Bauman 2000). It rests on a single idea that derives in one sense from another key hint and mistranslation, the phrase "all that is solid melts into air" usually credited to Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*, but actually derivative of William Shakespeare in *The Tempest* (Beilharz 2016a). The theory was left for Marshall Berman to develop or at least to pluralize in his book of the same title, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, in 1984 (Berman 1984; Beilharz 2016b). Bauman was plainly influenced by Berman. We all were. Berman had named something in the ether. Modernism was an energy as well as an aesthetic. Bauman renamed this "liquid modernity." Berman's was an important book and a serious *leitmotif* for a new round of new times. The idea of liquid modernity came to have a similar symbolic function, not so much as a theory than as an optic, or an orientation. Something was in the air, a sense of uncertainty, of fragility, an anxiety about the contingency and turbulence of it all. The same could be said for Marx's companion image in *The Communist Manifesto*, that of the Sorcerer's Apprentice, indicating the growing possibility of modernity understood as an irreversible magic spell, a culture set in motion and now well out of control.

Zygmunt Bauman's work can be characterized variously. In the last 20 years, it has become identified with this critique of liquid modernity. Its

method has become more recognizably essayistic, or conversational. His earliest published work in English is relatively mainstream, conventional, and monographic, with lots of footnotes and authorities. In between, from the 1990s, it may have been a commitment to the postmodern without illusions; a sociology of culture and socialism—earlier again, a critical sociology. Its monuments remain. There are the great books, like *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) and *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991a); but the brilliance of his thinking is often to be found in smaller compass, in essays, or in books that read like essays, such as *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987), and even the greater books can be read as essays, or successive approximations, attempts at understanding.

The kind of hints referred to above are also various in Bauman's work. They include, as I have suggested elsewhere, possible projects such as an anthropology of modernity (Beilharz 2010b); a sociology of surplus populations, or a sociology of waste (Beilharz 2010a). In the suggestions of others, to modify David Frisby's (1981) thinking with Georg Simmel, there might be possible projects such as a sociological impressionism, with Mark Davis (2016) a sociology of freedom and consumption, with Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Sophia Marshman (2008) a sociology of suffering, with Jack Palmer (2023) a critical reflection on the West, and so on. In the most capacious sense, as with Dariusz Brzeziński (2022), Bauman's project may be thought of as a theory of culture (though of these, there are many).

Then there is the idea that Bauman's work may be some kind of Weberian Marxism. This would be to think with Bauman of intellectual culture as a stock, or storehouse, where the major tropes have already been established, are borrowed, developed, and exercised. The idea of Weberian Marxism may be less to view theory as a project in the making than as a result of previous arguments and criticisms maneuvering together key insights from Marx and Weber, among others, and adjusting them to the present. This is a way of thinking that has a prehistory. And so we follow three steps, in this chapter: the first, to discuss the very idea of Weberian Marxism; the second, to examine the presence and influence of Marx, in Bauman's work; and the third, to follow the same line of curiosity with Weber.

Weberian Marxism

Across a number of works, I have suggested that Bauman's work might also be understood as "Weberian Marxism." There are various hints of this possibility in Bauman's writing, which I pursue here in this chapter. As for myself, I have been leaving hints since 1983 through to the present. In 1983, I published a piece called "Marx and Weber—Beyond the Great Divide" (Beilharz 1983), which aired some of these issues, through to 2021, when I puzzled further on these matters in a piece called "Onkel Max" for *Max Weber Studies* (Beilharz 2020c). The image appears recurrently and spasmodically in other essays on Bauman (Beilharz 2000a, 2000b). I make no special claim to originality in this field. This is not my idea, so much as the result of a series of hints laid by others that precede me. Others working in this field include Derek Sayer (1995) in *Capitalism and Modernity*, Michael Löwy (Löwy 1996; Löwy and Sayre 2002), Harry Dahms (1997), and earlier Richard Wolin (1985). These views, and many others like them, seek to think of Marx and Weber together as diagnosticians of capitalism and modernity, looking for sympathies, perhaps elective affinities, working around core claims regarding the rationalization, and commodification of the world. My sense is that this is a pattern of thinking, which also informs and structures the work and ideas of Bauman.

What might this mean, Weberian Marxism? The idea may first itself have been a hint, indeed, planted in the writing of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty dedicates a chapter of *Adventures of the Dialectic* to the earliest exemplar of Western Marxism, Georg Lukács, but in the preceding chapter, "The Crisis of Understanding," he refers rather to Weberian Marxism, where Weber becomes an optic for reading or supplementing Marx and the best of the Marxist tradition (Merleau-Ponty 1973 [1955], 29). This hint is highly suggestive. As Merleau-Ponty proposes, the most interesting Marxists after Weber pursued a theory of historical comprehension, of many-sidedness, and of creative choice, together with a philosophy that questioned history. A crucial junction here is that between Weber and Lukács. Weber and Lukács were at the same time friends, as is well known, their relationship was based on the honesty of critique. Lukács may well have been the figure of Weber's critique of the redemptive

political personality in “Politics as a Vocation,” the advocate of the ethic of ultimate ends in contrast to the carrier of the more sober ethic of responsibility (recognizably Weber himself). So the lineage can be traced back to Lukács, under the influence, in addition, of Simmel. So much of the power of Lukács’s 1923 essay on reification is suggestive of their mutual colleague Simmel, another radical companion here who as Bauman put it in another throwaway “started it all” (Bauman 1991b, 204). With Lukács, the idea of reification brings together the Weberian motif of rationalization with the Marxian theorem of commodification. Rationalization here is aligned with calculation and emergence of modern capitalism, Taylorism, and standardization. Bureaucratization stood alongside and over all these processes, but much more powerfully so after Marx’s death in 1883 and the time of Weber, until his exit in 1920. This was the new world captured so powerfully by Fritz Lang in *Metropolis* in 1927 and then by Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times* in 1936. How to characterize this brave new world? It was struggling to become solid, in Bauman’s way of thinking, but was doomed in this to fail.

“This rationalization of the world appears to be complete, it seems to penetrate the very depth of man’s physical and psychic nature” (Lukács 1971 [1923], 101). Marx? Weber? Lukács? Lukács!! His message is clear. Reification, or “thingification” pervades all, and the new culture of capitalism and calculation comes to be like a second nature, a second skin for moderns. After Lukács, the second main practical agent of Weberian Marxism is Karl Löwith, in his 1932 essay *Max Weber and Karl Marx* (1983 [1932]), looking now from Weber to Marx rather than the other way round. Löwith’s purpose is less to synthesize Marx and Weber than to align their thinking as diagnosticians of the human condition in modernity. Here Marx can usefully be viewed as the critic of alienation and Weber as the critic of rationalization. Are these different processes, or different ways of naming the same or similar processes? For Löwith, these are distinct but complementary views of modernity. Marx and Weber bring differing philosophical anthropologies, but they are both also deeply interested in the idea of culture, or second nature.

This way of thinking left the field open also to the 1970s enthusiasm for syntheses of Marx and Weber, as there were for Marx and Freud in the hands of some of the less prominent figures of the Frankfurt School, such as

Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm. George Lichtheim suggested that Weber's work could be accommodated in total into Marx's project, as superstructure or sociology of religion to economy or base. This view is suggestive, but it does not do justice to the richness of Weber's own project, even if it is indicative of the spirit of the times. Other, new left thinkers were to follow: Trent Schroyer with *The Critique of Domination* (1973), Robert Antonio and Ron Glassman with *The Weber-Marx Dialogue* (1985), and Norbert Wiley with *The Marx-Weber Debate* (1987). Then, among economic historians and those interested in historical materialism, there were strong research interests in the historical development of capitalism, and how it might best be explained. Earlier these issues were exercised in the *Science and Society* debate on the origins of capitalism in the 1950s (Hilton 1976). Now the *Grundrisse* and *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* were useful to be aligned if not synthesized. This interest was brought on by the final English translation of the *Grundrisse* in 1972, to follow the earlier fragments available as *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*. Alongside this historical enthusiasm for connecting the interests of Marx and Weber, others pursued further the kind of sociological/philosophical motifs leading in the direction of civilizational analysis, as in the work of Johann Arnason (1978), looking to contrasts and convergences, to read them together if not in synthesis. Differently again, the sympathies of Marx and Weber would circulate together later, echoes in the work of Fernand Braudel and then Immanuel Wallerstein, in critiques of imperialism, and then world systems analysis, which would always refer back to states as basic units of analysis, and therefore back to Weber's notion of states as legitimate holders of the monopoly of violence.

The point is not only that after the radical turn of the 1960s Weber became a useful additive or corrective to Marx. It is also true that Weber's own critique of modernity cut deep into what he called the most fateful force of our times: capitalism and its culture, or what Lukács, following Hegel, would call second nature. Bauman, for his part, would write extensively about the idea of second nature in his *Towards a Critical Sociology* (Bauman 1976a). Disenchantment became a motif no less captivating than alienation. Here there were often also hints in Weber, the latter gathered and scrutinized by scholars like Lawrence A. Scaff in *Fleeing the Iron Cage* (1989). Weber could easily be assimilated into the

tradition of cultural pessimism. The iron cage is closed, though as has been observed, cages have locks and doors. The image of mechanized ossification in Weber is more complete and total. Modernity is total, totalizing, and is open to totalitarianism.

Weberian Marxism may further be seen as a broader historical trend in thinking, for example, Karl Kautsky's interest in Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, state and bureaucracy and in the idea of politics as a calling or vocation, the hard and sober boring of hard boards rather than the elusive thrill of the revolutionary assembly armed like Leon Trotsky in leathers with a pistol. All this became apparent again only later in English, in *The Materialist Conception of History*, translated in 1988 (Kautsky 1988 [1930]). Here the influence of Weber was apparent in the presence of the ethic of responsibility in contrast to the redemptive stream in Marxism, from Marx to Lukács. The influence of the ethic of sobriety was apparent not only in Kautsky but also in Eduard Bernstein and the moderate wing of German Social Democracy that Weber too took an interest in. Beyond the continent, British Fabianism and its kindred spirits might be seen as intuitively sympathetic to Weber's sensibilities, oriented as it typically was to the worldly rather than the realm of the otherworldly (Beilharz 1992). It is in addition a pattern of thinking set to work in American sociology and socialism, for example, by Daniel Bell (1967 [1952]).

After the 1960s, the expansion of the radical optic from capitalism to modernity itself may be taken to indicate an intellectual transition from Marx to Weber. Capitalism and empire were arguably the dominant facts of the nineteenth century. The state was a dominant fact of the twentieth century, and then rampant commodification, captured by George Ritzer as McDonaldization (Beilharz 1999). There is a long line of critique of bureaucratization from Bruno Rizzi and James Burnham to Cornelius Castoriadis and *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. Stalinism, Fascism, and State capitalism seemed to manifest the same global trend.

A major stream in Critical Theory into the 1970s came to foreground the state as a major problem and threat. For the Frankfurt School, this was implicit in Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972 [1944]), explicit in Horkheimer's "Authoritarian State," and then developed in Jürgen Habermas's *Legitimation Crisis*.

Habermas is an exemplar of the Marx/Weber crossover within sociology before he meets Talcott Parsons (and Bauman then turns away). Democracy, public sphere, and legitimation came to be central concerns, after Weber. An efflorescence of state analysis into the 1970s included important work by Habermas, Claus Offe, Boris Frankel, James O'Connor, and Nicos Poulantzas (see Frankel 1978). Taken to its logical conclusion, the idea of the relative autonomy of the state could lead to the in-principle possibility that the state had a leading degree of autonomy, as the iron fist of the Nazi party and Soviet party-state already indicated. In the West, the power of the capitalist state loomed large ever since Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal." The state, indeed, could appear more like the behemoth than the capital.

Alongside this more recent episode of state analysis, there is the longer trajectory of Critical Theory tradition associated with the Frankfurt School. There is also the tradition of East European Critical Theory. Bauman belongs here, but also especially the thinkers of the Budapest School. The centrality of Soviet experience and its permutations through the satellites of Eastern Europe after World War II gives a concrete, and everyday rather than merely abstract dimension to the work of these scholars living in Eastern Europe in actually existing socialism. The path from tracking capitalism to modernity indicates the expanding optic of Critical Theory from Marx to Weber (Dorahy 2019; Pickle and Rundell 2018).

For the Frankfurt School, there was no question of the significance of Weber, in combination with Marx or not, even if there was to be some huffing and puffing about epistemology and value freedom. Weber was the primary analyst of the rationalization process, which held one key to making sense of our lives, this coming to a peak in Habermas and the revived distinction between system and lifeworld.

All this begs the question of the nature of Bauman's relation to Marx. In the following, we address this first, before turning to question his relation to Weber and then this hybrid, Weberian Marxism. But first a step back, to check the component parts, Marxism and Weberian, which may not always readily be separable.

Where Is Karl?

We take it as given that Bauman was a Marxist. What might this mean? There are many different kinds of Marxists. To simplify, Bauman's broad and lifelong sympathies are with humanist Marxism. This is consistent with the politics of his teachers, Julian Hochfeld, Stanislaw Ossowski—closer to Weber—, and Adam Schaff, where the markings are the enthusiasm for the early Marx, philosophical anthropology, as in Löwith but also with the general atmosphere of Marx Renaissance in Eastern Europe. Western Marxism had yet to achieve the prominence afforded by its English language discussion and repackaging in the 1970s. When it came to the Bolsheviks, the limited enthusiasm of Bauman was for Lenin, not Trotsky. Trotsky has his humanist moments but was primarily a Jacobin hothead, in Bauman's terms for the young Marx and Engels. Vladimir Lenin comes out relatively well in earlier works like *Socialism: The Active Utopia*, as a man of action and not only a Jacobin (Bauman 1976b). Antonio Gramsci serves as something of a compass for Bauman here. The ambivalent thread of Leninism in Gramsci's thinking made him strategically useful for Bauman in socialist Poland, and reflective also of Bauman's own ambivalence. Bauman was also, after all, a Leninist in his capacity as a Party actor of a sort for some years into the 1950s. Later, he is intellectually sympathetic to structuralism, in anthropology, especially via Claude Lévi-Strauss, this with a Gramscian twist on culture and praxis; but not Louis Althusser. Bauman views Althusser as the Stalinist Parsons, the solid modern Marxist, able to address social reproduction rather than change. Gramsci remains atmospheric, from Bauman's Polish encounter with these traces and hints from 1963, when he first writes about Gramsci, characterizing the Italian Marxist as a sociologist.

Let us begin with the question of intellectual formation. What was the atmosphere in which Bauman's views were formed? What were the Marxian themes that captured his attention? Bauman had a solid background in social sciences, European and American, as mentioned (see Wagner 2020, chapter 8). Into the 1960s, there was the warm current afforded by neo-Marxism and the Marx Renaissance, which spread as far as Eastern Europe. Themes of praxis and alienation dominated discussion for

the 1960s' New Left. In Eastern Europe, period influences included Habermas, André Gorz, Roger Garaudy, Henri Lefebvre, and Herbert Marcuse as well as the powerful sources of local Marx Renaissance in Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, and the Praxis School. Utopia is figured here as a major Marxian theme. Marx's own disavowal of utopia denies the presence of at least five distinct images of utopia across his work (Beilharz 1992). For his part, Bauman was given to argue for socialism in the West as a counterculture. His book on socialism and utopia was his most Gramscian (Bauman 1976b, chapter 5). Or, Gramsci might also be aligned with Weberian Marxism, as in the reality principle of Weber. Gramsci never believed history was on his side. He was a practical rather than a redemptive Marxist. Praxis, for Bauman, remains a perennial fact as an organizing action (Bauman 1976b, 17). The critique of Jacobinism in the book on utopia prefigures that in *Legislators and Interpreters* (Bauman 1987). Though skeptical of claims concerning the New Prince, Bauman does not here direct this critique at Marx but highlights differences between utopias that seek simplicity and those that pursue complexity (Bauman 1976b, 31). Utopia is snagged by scale and complexity. The associated problem emerges, whether socialism is just another way of organizing capitalism or modernity (Bauman 1976b, 48).

Class and inequality became major themes for Bauman. Into the 1970s in the West, Marx and Weber were widely viewed as competing if not exclusive paradigms, not least under the influence of Thomas S. Kuhn and the emerging prominence of the philosophy of science; mutually exclusive, you could have one paradigm, but not the other. Sometimes Weber was presented as the "Bourgeois Marx." Actually, the two ways of thinking about class are analytically compatible. For example, one can be transposed over the other, like a template in the image of a multidimensional pyramid —class/status/party, with the coincidence of interest in the class. Weber's method is pluralist, claiming separate spheres with differing logics and priorities. Weberian innovations were followed by writers like Frank Parkin, Anthony Giddens, and Jeremy Seabrook. It remains important to recognize that for Weberians, Weber could be a self-sufficient source of a theory of domination. Marxists, after all, have no monopoly on the topic of inequality, which they tend immediately to translate into class, even though

inequality may be seen as the fact to be explained and class rather as a tool of interpretation.

Bauman comes to the conclusion that class theory in the Marxian tradition is also a problem, a projection, or an occlusion. Inequality remains here as a practical moral concern in *Chronicle of Crisis* (Bauman 2017), *Does the Richness of the Few Benefit Us All*? (Bauman 2013), and all his work on globalization, including books like *Collateral Damage* (Bauman 2011) and the classic *Wasted Lives* (Bauman 2004).

Bauman's first book in English worked across the nexus between Marx and Weber. *Between Class and Elite*: its title itself is suggestive of Bauman's location between Marx and Weber, in between class and elite, respectively (Bauman 1972). The working class, represented by the British labor movement, comes to be dominated by its elites, in the form of its party and unions. It is a story of integration and incorporation, leading to later interests in the idea of corporatism. A decade on, *Memories of Class* announces Bauman's post-Marxism, at least in the sense of transcending orthodox Marxism based on class analysis (Bauman 1982). Its spirit reminds of the Marx of repetition rather than revolution; the Marx of *The Eighteenth Brumaire* rather than *The Communist Manifesto* or *Capital*. Earlier, Bauman, following Hochfeld, had differentiated between the polarization model in Marx and the more developed and complex historical work on class (Bauman 1974, 132). Here, famously, people make their own history—but under the dead weight of history itself and summoning the rallying cries of past precedents and ghosts, rather than futures yet untold. Class theory for Bauman becomes disabling, as it refers to radical days bygone, where it might be presumed that once named, classes would only need to spring into action to do their work and make a revolution. The logic in Bauman's early study is, rather, Weberian—classes do not act, parties, interest or status groups, maybe unions and later clearly identified social movements do. Politics is not determined by economics; the problem is less explicitly one of class than of inequality and domination in general.

There is an important shadow work informing Bauman's case. It is the crossover essay of E. P. Thompson from 1967. Thompson's own contempt for the field of sociology was unremitting (Beilharz 2020b, 128–129), but this does not make his work any less interesting to sociologists. The essay in point is "Time Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism," which echoes

all kinds of motifs from Marx and Weber, as well as anticipating the larger and approaching shadow thrown by the presence of Michel Foucault (Thompson 1967). Foucault may, in the 1980s, have acted or been used as a kind of proxy for Weber, given the allergy that orthodox Marxists had for "Onkel Max." Foucault's credentials were different, indirectly legitimated for French Marxism by his shared biographical milieu with Althusser. What then became known as the "Foucault Effect" was also, in a sense, a "Weber Effect." Critical theorists became more interested again in noneconomic forms of domination. Foucault was received in ways that Weber, who had been appropriated by decades of American political science, could not yet be. Critical Theory now expands toward France, as well as its earlier home in Germany. History is not ideal, or in the realms of false consciousness but material, evident in the disciplining of bodies in pursuit of total control of body and soul. Class struggle is less governed by division of surplus than by politics or by politics of control rather than a political economy of resources. Bauman indeed describes his study as "The Birth of the Factory," evoking both Foucault and Marx (Bauman 1982, 51–59). Population and imperialism again come into play, as do colonialism and slavery come into vision as precedents for this European politics of control via the manipulation of surplus population (Bauman 1982, 54). Primitive accumulation is also the impulse for the political imperative of Stalinism understood as a population policy (Bauman 1985). As in Marx's *Capital*, primitive accumulation is a precedent for the politics of dictatorship in the world around.

The spirit of Weber's critique of modernity is apparent in Bauman's pages, as the iron cage of industrial labor now appears as the fate of the proletariat (Bauman 1982, 12). The claim had earlier been made by Thompson, and then by Craig Calhoun (1982) that early working-class politics was often literally reactionary, based on resistance and desire to maintain the old status quo and its claims to the community. Recent times, for Bauman, are characterized rather by the emergence of a new class, with a nod to the contemporary arguments of George Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi (1978) and Alvin W. Gouldner (1978). The "New Class" is a complicating factor, with its implications for the emergence and consolidation of a new kind of Keynesian welfare state. The "New Class" was also a State class. In other words, for Bauman, orthodox Marxists in the 1980s were still fighting

the previous war, in ideological terms. Similarly, the established Weberian scholars were happy to rerun the claim that it was the Protestant Ethic, and not the will to power, that held the experiment called modernity together (Bauman 1982, 59–63).

The result of the modern path of development in Western capitalism for Bauman is the trend toward corporatism, here understood as the rationalization of capital, via the economization of politics and the domination of politics by producer groups, mediated by labor or peak union organizations and the state, and the new class. Politics would become increasingly simulated. Bauman relies on Offe and anticipates Seabrook on new forms of pauperization or what more recently has become known as precarity. Offe was relied upon both for critical acumen and for the policy advocacy of guaranteed income. Bauman retained this element of his socialist politics: poverty was not the end of the story.

Bauman's views on commodification and consumption sometimes still convey a sense of the radical atmosphere of the 1960s counterculture, which he of course did not experience. He was not a hippie, and he was in Socialist Warsaw rather than Paris at that moment. But he had already identified socialism as the counterculture of modernity, following a clue from Tom Bottomore. As his earlier work, such as the Polish text redressed as *Thinking Sociologically* argued, repair was a sensible alternative to the culture of disposability (Bauman 1990). This was a line of argument that would later lead to books like *Wasted Lives* (2004), where humans as well as material goods could readily be treated as disposable goods. In this earlier period, the spirit was perhaps reminiscent of Vance Packard's 1960 *The Waste Makers*, disposability, planned obsolescence. The plastics revolution had barely begun to make its mark in the towering garbage tips across the third world, showing the disposability of both people and things. Bauman's sensibilities also intersect with Agnes Heller's *Theory of Needs in Marx* from 1976 or those of Herbert Marcuse in *One Dimensional Man* from 1964. More fundamentally, with Marx, this is a world dominated of the world by things, more literally by stuff, by the dialectics of quantity and quality which hold up *Capital*.

What, then, of rationalization? All the research interests and writing above can be taken to refer to the rationalization of the Western world, or of bureaucratic capitalism. The cult of reason leads to state engineering.

Stalinism exemplifies state engineering, but the central case in Bauman's work is Nazism. *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) is not, contrary to its common reduction, a monocausal interpretation of that event. In the classical social science style, Bauman identifies multiple explanatory variables or causes for the Holocaust (Beilharz 2000a, 2022). Rationalization is a key precondition of this process. But clearly, for Bauman, the Holocaust is a rational, calculative process of mass murder facilitated by modern bureaucracy, industrial and technological mechanisms, and thinking. Key factors include social engineering framed by eliminationist anti-Semitism delivered by modern bureaucracy and rational techniques, trains, chemicals, the paperwork, and planning of the *Konzlager*, and the rest of the murderous list (Bauman 1989, xii).

Bauman refers systematically to Weber in *Modernity and the Holocaust*, though it is not a systematic book, so much as an assemblage, a series of approximations in the manner alluded to above in the beginning. And it is not a strong echo of the claims and arguments put in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Horkheimer and Adorno (1972 [1944]), with which it is sometimes associated in the Bauman reception. A moment's reconsideration of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* serves to remind us that it is a highly idiosyncratic text, one in which there is very little structural resemblance to *Modernity and the Holocaust*, or even a source of many of the kinds of hints we may pursue in reading Bauman.

Other echoes of Marx persist. Bauman has a lifelong, if intermittent interest in surplus population, migration, and forced mobility, the political geography or demography of modern times since their formation. Forced mobility tracks from the Enclosure Acts to the population policy of the Third Reich, the plight of the Jews, Romany, and then migrants and refugees. Nation-states include and exclude at will. Assimilation offers at best a conditional tolerance. Exclusion represents the other side of the politics of citizenship, pride, and joy of the social democratic tradition.

A final item on a provisional checklist tracing Marxian clues in Bauman might then be the theme of *Liquid Modernity* (2000) itself. The idea of "liquid modernity" echoes the motif ascribed to Marx, all that is solid melts into air. So does a hint beget another hint, as we struggle to make sense of our lives in postmodern times? Marx may be said to have been ahead of his

time; liquidity is now a norm, an everyday sensibility. Nothing stays the same.

Where Is Max?

Into the postwar period, it was customary in the life of university scholars to corral Marx and Weber, and to minimize the philosophical components in Weber understood by Löwith as a critic of modern times. Weber had a strong presence in political sociology, which was also a significant presence in Cold War scholarship. Western scholarship presumed the stability of the USSR and the satellites. Bauman anticipates later work, for example, of the Budapest School on Soviet-type societies with specific reference to problems of legitimation. For socialist societies, the in-principle reference point of legitimation would not be the past, or tradition, but claims to the future. Central here was the modern political party. Weber's colleague Roberto Michels had much earlier made it clear in his classic *Political Parties* (1915) that the party could become the behemoth, even if in waiting, or at least the state within the state, a locus of power completely beyond the imagination of Marx in 1867, when a party meant something else altogether, including the laughably small and disorganized numbers of communists in his own time. The ostensible absence of capitalism in Eastern Europe threw focus onto the predominance of the state, and for some others like C. L. R. James and Raya Dunayevskaya onto the idea of state capitalism, where state and capitalism would merge (Beilharz 1987).

A good example of Bauman's earlier interest in this kind of Weberian political sociology is "Officialdom and Class: Bases of Inequality in Socialist Society" (Bauman 1974). For Bauman, the interest is less in Weber's idea of patrimonialism than in what he calls "Partynomialism" (Bauman 1974, 134). Here Bauman argues that East European societies are shaped by two relatively autonomous and even antagonistic power structures, which are mutually irreducible. These two power structures are officialdom and class (Bauman 1974, 140–141). Bauman makes clear that he prefers the plurality of spheres in Weber to the economism or monocausalism latent in Marx (Bauman 1974, 143). Later, in *Socialism:*

The Active Utopia (1976b), Bauman follows the leading period Weber scholar Reinhard Bendix, arguing that modernity is best viewed as a combination of impersonalism and plebiscitarianism (Bauman 1976b, 38–39). The USSR is dominated by the party, rather than the charismatic leader (Bauman 1976b, 95–96) though as Bauman was to argue elsewhere, Josef Stalin's declaration of war on the peasants was central. Class analysis remains, powerfully, for example, in this idea of Stalinism as a war on the peasantry—again, primitive accumulation is registered as a political imperative, or general trope for population policies of modern times (Bauman 1985).

In conversation, Bauman distinguished between an American and a German Weber, as received, though his American Weber may also have resembled C. Wright Mills, a strong and direct personal influence on Bauman and his cohort in Warsaw in the 1950s (Beilharz 2000b, 335–338). Weber may be present in spirit rather than letter. Like Mills, Bauman mixes the ideas of the masters together. It is also instructive to recall that Bauman places Marx and Weber shoulder to shoulder in his review of the traditions of hermeneutics published in 1978: chapter 2, "Understanding as the Work of History: Karl Marx" and chapter 3, "Understanding as the Work of History: Max Weber" (Bauman 1978). Thinking more methodologically than usual, and under the influence of Wilhelm Dilthey, Bauman aligns and proceeds to build upon the shared projects of Marx and Weber. Bauman was, of course, an interpreter by choice; hermeneutics was his field and project by default. But the reception of Bauman in this text may be overshadowed by a period of scholarly obsession with the idea of objectivity, now exhausted, if shadowed still now more persistently by the perennial question of truth. Marx, for Bauman, transforms epistemology into sociology (Bauman 1978, 58). There are echoes of pragmatism here, a rare tradition in that Bauman does not formally draw upon it. Weber, for Bauman, dwells on in the land of *Verstehen*. Bauman maintains his personal preference for praxis over disenchantment (Bauman 1978, 88). As we shall see, Weber is a stronger presence in Bauman's thinking than this suggests.

Weber has a particular presence in Bauman's thinking, not as a model builder, but as a source of anthropological wisdom in the philosophical sense. As in Löwith, Weber often appears as a diagnostician of the human condition, the author of the uncanny insight which can also take on a

different meaning across place and time. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* has become a sacred text for sociologists, who sometimes behave as though its claims are universally true as a description of the emergence of capitalism rather than merely useful or suggestive: a series of fruitful hints. Bauman, in contrast, sees Weber as a source of insights, or hints. One such, which resurfaces in *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987), is in the idea of the protestant personality type and what might follow in subsequent permutations of capitalism.

There are different ways to read or appropriate *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. It can be read as a philosophy of history, a kind of rationalization thesis where history turns back on itself. The Calvinists seek the kingdom of God, or at least a place for themselves in it, but rather secure the Kingdom of Mammon. The diligence of their own self-enforced abstinence generates the fund base of capitalism and kills God in the process. The result is the so-called iron cage of modernity, the famous mistranslation of Talcott Parsons, who renders it via John Bunyan from *Stahlhartes Gehause*, a housing as hard as steel. Bauman puts a novel twist on this tale, in which they themselves were originally invisible. He suggests rather that is it a story about the intellectuals themselves: *de te fabula narratur*, of you the story is told! or at least that it is a projection of their own values of self-esteem, as though they are the Calvinists, the model citizens, the saved who alone are able to read the path of history as the tragedy that unfolds before them:

> The intellectuals, more than anyone else, liked Weber's tale immensely. In the myth of the Puritan, they immortalized a mirror image of themselves, of their unfilled though still vivid ambitions for that mastery over historicity for which they craved and sometimes—against odds—credited themselves with possessing. (Bauman 1987, 149)

Here the sociologist appears as a hero, enough to make him the potential agent of redemption, which is what classical early modern sociology saw as its task—*Weltverbesserung*, as though this could also be imagined as an ambition without consequences.

Now there is the more substantive question of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, or what comes after, as the productivist

imagination gives way to the consumptive imagination in the West. This was a major concern of the later book entitled *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (Bauman 1998). Published in 1998, this may be one of Bauman's last more methodical books, before the arrival of the little books of single theme or conversation. Bauman makes it clear that he, and we, are after Marx in that we are after the world of productivism. It is not that work is not central, but that consumption increasingly jostles with it as a major determinant of everyday life. Identities are no longer prescribed by job location, but by the capacity to consume brands and icons in conspicuous ways.

Work becomes an obsession, and not only for others; for Bauman, too, remained chained daily to his computer and the need to work, to write, to leave a mark; later in life, to push away death. Bauman does not discuss here, though it is implicit in his concern, the drive for the financialization of global capitalism. If the early labor movement may be said to have sought a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, or even perhaps the whole result of their labor, by our own times, the utopia held up for all was that of finance, share ownership and real estate; money for nothing. With Weber and Bauman, the poor need to be educated to work. Compliance was a major systemic goal, alongside productivity at least in the preceding stages of capitalism. The message was clear: Work or Perish; and a peculiarly English set of state, Poor Law responses emerged in response to the ensuing difficulties represented by the recalcitrant. Work, or its absence, became caught up with stigma, which itself becomes a constant concern for Bauman. Is it not a human universal to be needed, valued, recognized, and allowed dignity?

As in *Memories of Class* (1982), Bauman relies here on Weber. He does not pick up on the echoes in Marx's *Grundrisse*, the passage on the Quashees, those emancipated slaves who in Jamaica would rather work less than more, confounding the expectations of their befuddled colonial masters (Marx 1972 [1857], 325–326). In the West, the work ethic rules, regardless of the disputation around its desirability. Work was good for you, even if you had to be educated into accepting the sensibility. After Marx, after Weber and his lifespan, however: after World War Two, there is a discernible shift from the work ethic to an aesthetic of consumption. The crucial conclusion for Bauman is that the cost of noncompliance was no longer the Poorhouse but poor housing or else no house, together with the

incapacity to consume the right goods more often than not. This was what Bauman began to call the world of flawed consumers. An iron cage, for Bauman? Maybe not, at least not in this book. For his crucial political conclusion, after Offe, concerned the potential prospect of decoupling work and income, that is, separating the human valuation process from work and money (Bauman 1998, 47). Socialist politics here would lead to the claim for the decommodification of labor and, we should add—the deconstruction of consumption, the reconstruction of systems of needs. This is a world beyond and after Max Weber, notwithstanding his own countercultural interludes (Whimster 1999).

Finally, as we have seen, the Weberian theme of rationalization becomes a *meistermotif* for Bauman. As in the leading book, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), bureaucratization and rationalization lead to the wider societal process. This is not so much the nihilism of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, but the logic of unintended consequences. Like technology, bureaucracy can be put to any variety of purposes, but these trends also develop logic of their own. As with Marx, the road to hell may be paved with good intentions, as for the Calvinists of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*—or evil, as the case may be, as with the Nazis. More broadly, the road to hell is paved with the imperative of rational mastery, the need to control life, human and natural, and its results in hubris and disaster. History turns back on itself; progress turns into the result of domination.

There are other echoes of Weber in Bauman's work. The asymmetrical distribution of life chances remains fundamental, even if with precarity as a new frame of reference. The image of lifestyle becomes a staple of social theory and everyday life throughout the globe. The notion of spheres of existence persists, leading to concern about the end of politics as an independent sphere (Bauman 1999). But the worry about the rationalization of the world frames the critical horizon.

Conclusion

Zygmunt Bauman is widely recognized to be a syncretic, even a promiscuous thinker. This is a hallmark of his way of kaleidoscopic thinking. Instead of pretending to constantly invent new ideas, he sets to work intellectually using what comes to hand. Precarity? Pierre Bourdieu, Guy Standing. Dirt? Mary Douglas. Slime? Jean-Paul Sartre. Totalitarianism? Hannah Arendt. Holocaust? Raul Hilberg. Commodification? Karl Marx. Rationalization? Max Weber. Sigmund Freud, variously. A host of writers, from Jorge Luis Borges and Albert Camus to J. M. Coetzee. Wild cards, elective affinities like Richard Rorty and Richard Sennett. And so on. There is a cast of thousands in his work (Beilharz 2000a). Bauman employs a conversational model, interlocutors left and right. This does not prevent some from seeking to identify a magical or special secret thinker in his work, such as Theodor W. Adorno or Emmanuel Lévinas. And we may persist in arguing that there are some central thinkers; Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Georg Simmel, Janina Bauman, as well as other likely suspects, well observed. Michel Foucault, as we have seen here, is a significant influence in Bauman's critique of modernity, this not least as Foucault also has theoretical affinities with both Marx and Weber, and together with Critical Theory.

Over the years, there has been much talk over the question of whether Bauman is a pessimist. He did not come up with anything as dark as Weber's foreboding that we were entering a polar night of icy darkness or a new era of mechanized petrification. Culture, or second nature, constrains us; though cultures are also elastic. Across the history of Marxism, Bauman's sympathies are with Marx, via Rosa Luxemburg to Cornelius Castoriadis and the choice: socialism or barbarism. Gramsci offers a compass, and the legacy of the early Georg Lukács is an enduring concern with rationalization. Alongside all these Simmel: but that is another story, and another essay, as with the echoes of C. Wright Mills.

We find hints and traces of these arguments in Bauman, but also organizational principles, such as rationalization, commodification, and later consumerism. This takes us away from the how of Weberian Marxism and to the why. Why Marx and Weber? Marx and Weber remain two of the pillars of social theory and Critical Theory in particular. Representing the spirits of Prometheus and Sisyphus, revolution and repetition, their labor disappears into the practice of theory like labor into the commodity. The

classics disappear into the critique of modernity. Behind Marx and Weber, there are others, William Shakespeare, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Lukács demonstrated the power of the combination in the critique of reification, and Karl Löwith explained how the two diagnoses of modern times could be aligned. Bauman?

As I have suggested here, there are strong and constant presences of these legacies at work in his writing, whether in critique of West or earlier of the East. With differing emphases, Bauman could be a "Weberian Marxist," or a "Marxist Weberian." This serves to remind us that Critical Theory is also a tradition, or in addition a Traditional Theory, as well as a critical theory; and that capitalism and bureaucracy forever frame our lives and patterns of thinking. For the present, for Bauman and for us, there is nothing outside modernity, however it is configured, or varied by place and time. If only we might have the will to configure, again. This remains the direction in which Weberian Marxism points us, together with Bauman, and after.

Note

1 Thanks to Zygmunt Bauman, Michael Hviid Jacobsen, Christopher Robbins, Harry Dahms, and Sian Supski—as ever.

References

Antonio, Robert, and Ronald Glassman. 1985. *A Marx-Weber Dialogue*. Lawrence: University of Kansas.

Arnason, Johann. 1978. *Marx and Weber—Contrasts and Convergences*. Melbourne: La Trobe University (unpublished manuscript).

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1972. *Between Class and Elite*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

——— 1974. "Officialdom and Class: Bases of Inequality in Socialist Society." In *The Social Analysis of Class Structure*, edited by Frank Parkin, 129–148. London: Tavistock.

——— 1976a. *Towards a Critical Sociology*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

——— 1976b. *Socialism: The Active Utopia*. London: Allen & Unwin.

——— 1978. *Hermeneutics and Social Science—Approaches to Understanding*. London: Hutchinson.
——— 1982. *Memories of Class: The Pre-History and After-Life of Class*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
——— 1985. "Stalin and the Peasant Revolution." *University of Leeds Sociology Occasional Papers*, no 19.
——— 1987. *Legislators and Interpreters—On Modernity, Postmodernity and Intellectuals*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 1990. *Thinking Sociologically*. Oxford: Blackwell.
——— 1991a. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 1991b. *Intimations of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 1998. *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
——— 1999. *In Search of Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2004. *Wasted Lives*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2011. *Collateral Damage*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2013. *Does the Richness of the Few Benefit Us All?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2017. *Chronicle of Crisis*. London: Demos.
Beilharz, Peter. 1983. "Marx and Weber—Beyond the Great Divide?." *Politics* 18 (2): 112–116.
——— 1987. *Trotsky, Trotskyism and the Transition to Socialism*. London: Croom Helm.
——— 1992. *Labour's Utopias—Bolshevism, Fabianism, Social Democracy*. London: Routledge.
——— 1999. "McFascism? Reading Ritzer, Bauman and the Holocaust." In *Resisting McDonaldization*, edited by Barry Smart, 222–233. London: Sage Publications.
——— 2000a. *Zygmunt Bauman—Dialectic of Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.
——— 2000b, ed. *The Bauman Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.
——— 2010a "Zygmunt Bauman." In *From Agamben to Žižek*, edited by Jon Simons, 45–59. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
——— 2010b. "Another Bauman—The Anthropological Imagination." In *Bauman's Challenge—Sociological Issues for the 21st Century*, edited by Mark Davis and Keith Tester, 62–69. London: Palgrave/Macmillan.
——— 2016a. "Marx, Modernity and Motion." In *Circling Marx*, edited by Peter Beilharz, 61–69. Leiden: Brill.
——— 2016b. " 'All That Is Solid' ... Modernity and Maelstrom in Zygmunt Bauman, Marshall Berman and the Ones in Between (Marx, Trotsky, Faust and Spengler)." *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 277 (3): 291–304.
——— 2020a. *Circling Marx*. Leiden: Brill.

——— 2020b. *Intimacy in Postmodern Times—A Friendship with Zygmunt Bauman*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

——— 2020c. "Onkel Max: Or, a Footnote to Max Weber." *Max Weber Studies* 20 (2): 202–208.

——— 2022. "From Capitalism to Modernity and Back: Adventures with the Budapest School." *Edukacja Filozoficzna* 74: 231–238.

Bell, Daniel. 1967 [1952]. *Marxian Socialism in the United States*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Berman, Marshall. 1984. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Brzeziński, Dariusz. 2022. *Zygmunt Bauman and the Theory of Culture*. Toronto: McGill Queens University Press.

Calhoun, Craig. 1982. *The Question of Class Struggle*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Davis, Mark. 2016. *Freedom and Consumerism: A Critique of Zygmunt Bauman's Sociology*. London: Routledge.

Dahms, Harry. 1997. "Theory in Weberian Marxism Sociological Theory." *Sociological Theory* 15 (3): 181–214.

Dorahy, James. 2019. *The Budapest School—Beyond Marxism*. Leiden: Brill.

Frankel, Boris. 1978. *Marxian Theories of the State*. Melbourne: Arena.

Frisby, David. 1981. *Sociological Impressionism*. London: Routledge.

Gouldner, Alvin W. 1978. *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*. New York: Seabury.

Hilton, Rodney. 1976. *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*. London: New Left Books.

Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor W. Adorno. 1972 [1944]. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Herder and Herder.

Jacobsen, Michael Hviid, and Sophia Marshman. 2008. "The Four Faces of Human Suffering in the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman." *Polish Sociological Review*, 168: 3–24.

Kautsky, Karl. 1988 [1930]. *The Materialist Conception of History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Konrad, George, and Ivan Szelenyi. 1978. *Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*. Brighton: Harvester.

Lukács, Georg. 1971 [1923]. *History and Class Consciousness*. London: Merlin.

Löwith, Karl. 1983 [1932]. *Max Weber and Karl Marx*. London: Routledge.

Löwy, Michael. 1996. "Figures of Weberian Marxism." *Theory and Society*, 25: 431–446.

Löwy, Michael, and Robert Sayre. 2002. *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity*. Raleigh: Duke University Press.

Marx, Karl. 1972 [1857]. *Grundrisse*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1973 [1955]. *Adventures of the Dialectic*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Palmer, Jack. 2023. *Zygmunt Bauman and the West*. Toronto: McGill Queens University Press.

Pickle, James, and John Rundell, eds. 2018. *Critical Theories and the Budapest School*. London: Routledge.

Sayer, Derek. 1995. *Capitalism and Modernity*. London: Routledge.

Scaff, Lawrence A. 1989. *Fleeing the Iron Cage—Culture, Politics and Modernity in the Thought of Max Weber*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Schroyer, Trent. 1973. *The Critique of Domination*. New York: Braziller.

Thompson, E. P. 1967. “Time, Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism.” *Past and Present* 38: 56–97.

Wagner, Izabela. 2020. *Zygmunt Bauman: A Biography*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Whimster, Sam. 1999. *Max Weber and the Culture of Anarchy*. London: Palgrave.

Wiley, Norbert. 1987. *The Marx-Weber Debate*. London: Sage Publications.

Wolin, Richard. 1985. “Merleau-Ponty and the Birth of Weberian Marxism.” *Praxis* 5 (2): 115–130.

Chapter Two

A FREUDIAN WITHOUT PSYCHOLOGY: THE INFLUENCE OF SIGMUND FREUD ON ZYGMUNT BAUMAN'S SOCIOLOGY

Matt Dawson

Introduction

Zygmunt Bauman was famously eclectic. Reading his work, one encounters clear and hidden influences from a wide range of writers, not just sociologists, but philosophers, theologians, and novelists. This chapter discusses one of those influences: Sigmund Freud.[1] The inverse relation between how frequently Bauman mentioned Freud and how often he is discussed in the secondary literature is initially puzzling. It is perhaps less so when we recognize, as I show in this chapter, that while these influences from Freud were deep and profound, they were also somewhat "un-Freudian." Bauman used Freud's insights to enrich his sociology, but in a way that decouples him from psychology.

The chapter begins by discussing the ways that Bauman uses Freud. Then we will assess this use, most notably the detachment of Freud from psychology and Bauman's metaphorical use of concepts (a frequent part of his sociology, see Jacobsen and Marshman 2008). Here, I will suggest that

we can see Bauman as a "Freudian without psychology" and will relate this to how Freud's late sociological writings have been discussed. Bauman's use of Freud highlights, reflecting an earlier point from Keith Tester (2007), a general humanist trend in his sociology focused upon the human attempt to produce a meaningful world.

The most notable discussion of Freud's influence on Bauman to date occurred in a special issue of the *Journal of Anthropological Psychology*, which contained an article by Bauman on Freud and a number of responses (see, among these, Beilharz 2009; Tester 2009). These responses tended to focus on the empirical accuracy of Bauman's argument concerning the reality and pleasure principles in liquid modernity rather than assessing Bauman's use of Freud more generally. We can also find a rare link between the two in Riccardo Mazzeo's introduction to Bauman and Agostino Portera's *Education and Intercultural Identity* where Bauman is called a "Freudian," at least in the context of social psychology (Mazzeo 2021, 11). Beyond this, any mentions of the two together are *en passant* and tend to fall into three categories: Bauman and Freud as fellow Jews with the latter inspiring Bauman's work on this topic (Palmer 2023; Eyerman 2013); passing notes that Bauman used Freudian notions such as the pleasure/reality principle (Beilharz 2000; Blackshaw 2005); and pieces from writers who would not otherwise be considered Bauman scholars which discuss the two in the context of a particular topic, such as love (Sayers 2007) or pleasure (Zeuthen and Køppe 2009). Important as this work is, my goal is here to develop these links more fully across Bauman's *oeuvre*.

There are three reasons why Bauman's use of Freud is important. First, it provides a different perspective on Bauman's influences. While acknowledging Bauman's aforementioned eclecticism, discussions of his key influences have mostly revolved around notions of him as some form of Marxist (see Beilharz's contribution to this volume). Here, however, I suggest a different reading, which foregrounds Freud in Bauman's sociology. Second, as I will discuss in the conclusion to this chapter, not only does this indicate a broader humanism in Bauman's sociological project but also the innate need for sociology to make assumptions about human nature (Wrong 1961). Finally, as I will also discuss later, bringing Freud into discussion with Bauman reflects an increasing tendency to revisit

Freud's later, sociological works as central to his contemporary contribution (DuFresne 2017). The "sociological" Freud, long a significant influence on social theory, remains important for these writers and, I would suggest, Bauman's fruitful use of his work is an example of why this is so.

Bauman's Freudian Discussion of Modernity

One thing that is notable about Freud's frequent appearances in Bauman's work is, unlike the sparse way Bauman often uses his inspirations, Freud is quoted extensively (see, e.g., Bauman 1997, 1–3; Bauman 2001a, 41–43). While *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud's "sociological" masterpiece, is inevitably most cited, Bauman also quotes directly from *The Future of an Illusion* (Bauman 2001b, 25), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *The Ego and the Id* (Bauman 1992b, 16–22) and "On Narcissism" (Bauman 2017, 127). Beyond these lengthy discussions, Bauman also makes passing references to Freud throughout his *oeuvre*. Therefore, he is a significant figure in his work and one who is invoked much more frequently, and in a much more sustained way, than many of Bauman's other inspirations. Indeed, Bauman was clear on how important Freud was for him:

> Just as all psychoanalysis cannot but be post-Freudian […] so all sociology of human cohabitation and human subjectivity would be unthinkable in any other but post-Freudian form. Personally, I am part of the latter, the so to speak "outer circle"—or to sharpen the point yet further, periphery; grateful to Freud for the hints and clues that enable me, a sociologist, glean the connections that could slip otherwise unnoticed. (Bauman 2009b, 31)

There are five areas in which Bauman uses Freud's insights: the Freudian conflict/Baumanian pendulum between freedom and security; the relation of the reality and the pleasure principle; ambivalence and death; the construction of "others," strangers and community; and the shifting forms of narcissism.[2] I will now discuss each of these in turn.

Freedom and Security

While this and the next element of the reality and pleasure principles are often conflated by Bauman, I will discuss them separately before drawing them together. For Bauman, the move from solid to liquid modernity[3] was a shift in one of the key principles underlying social formation: the conflict between freedom and security, what Bauman terms "a dyad of *sine qua non* human values" (Bauman 2000, 170–171). Solid modernity emphasized security and emerged as "a desperate search for structure in a world suddenly denuded of structure" (Bauman 1992a, xv) with the decline of traditional forms of social order. In so doing, it set itself up against ambivalence. For Bauman, all forms of ambivalence became something to be removed by being subjected to ordering processes which embody the solid modern "task of order" (Bauman 1991, 4).

This desire for order inevitably produces forms of security; an ordered existence is one which is predictable, controlled, and rational. Here, modernity created a distinct role for intellectuals whose role was to excise the "manifestations of ignorance" and so shape common sense and everyday activity to facilitate this order (Bauman 1991, 24). For Bauman, while this reaches its tragic apotheosis in the Holocaust, the underpinning principles of control and rationality, the security which comes from knowing the predictable world around us, were modernity's. Therefore, formations such as the welfare state, with their desire to make life more ordered and harmonious, while also ensuring security in terms of income and life situation, are as much an archetype of solid modernity as any other (Bauman 1991, 29).

Bauman links his notion of solid modernity directly to Freud's theorization of 'civilization', arguing:

> So went Freud's message. As "culture" or "civilization" modernity is about beauty […] cleanliness […] and order […] Nothing predisposes humans "naturally" to seek or preserve beauty, to keep clean and observe the routine called order (if they seem here and there to display such an "instinct", it must be contrived and acquired, *trained* inclination, the surest sign of civilization at work). Humans need be forced to respect and appreciate harmony, cleanliness and order. (Bauman 1997, 1–2)

For Freud, to understand civilization as this "trained inclination," we need to start with understanding our innate drives. By the time he came to write *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud saw these drives as defined by "the struggle between Eros and death, between the life drive and the drive for destruction" (Freud 2004 [1929], 74). Eros, linked to the desire for gratification, marked itself out by seeking sexual and other forms of immediate gratification. The death instinct—defined by the "compulsion to repeat," to return to the original inorganic state and therefore remove the trauma of life (Freud 1984 [1920])—manifests itself in aggressiveness. Allowing individuals to live out these drives would be bliss for just the one strongest person and impossible for everyone else. This is where civilization comes in. Here, Freud rejected the notion of humanity as socially changeable, instead arguing the asocial and aggressive instincts are innate:

> Human beings are not gentle creatures in need of love, at most able to defend themselves if attacked; on the contrary, they can count a powerful share of aggression among their instinctual endowments. Hence, their neighbour is not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to take out their aggression on him, to exploit his labour without recompense, to use him sexually without his consent, to take possession of his goods, to humiliate him and cause him pain, to torture and kill him. *Homo homini lupus* [Man is a wolf to man]. Who, after all that he has learnt from life and history, would be so bold as to dispute this proposition? (Freud 2004 [1929], 60–61)

Therefore, for Freud, the emergence of civilization is an attempt to lessen the expression of these drives to allow for social action to take place. One of the key ways this is achieved is via sublimation whereby the energy attached to these drives is redirected into socially acceptable activity. This can include producing wealth, the "narcissism of small differences," and artistic production (Freud 2004 [1929]). This sublimation of drives is aided by other pressures, such as moral codes, a concern with beauty, and religion (Freud 2001 [1927]). Constitutive of all of these, however, is the need for coercion:

> It seems rather that every civilization must be built up on coercion and renunciation of instinct.[…] One has, I think, to reckon with the fact that there are present in all men destructive, and therefore anti-social and anti-cultural, trends and that in a great number of people these are strong enough to determine their behaviour in human society. (Freud 2001 [1927], 7)

This process of coercion has many forms for Freud. Historically, the "lullabies about heaven" contained in religion produced it. He also notes the role of "enlightened leaders" who lead the "masses" to these civilized outcomes. However, everywhere the lesson is the same, as Freud puts it: "the principal task of civilization, its actual *raison d'être*, is to defend us against nature" (Freud 2001 [1927], 15), including human nature.

How does this relate to security? It is important to note here that Freud only mentions "security" as an aspect of civilization *en passant*. Instead, as I will discuss further in the next section, Freud is more concerned with civilization as hindering happiness. Nevertheless, the security provided by civilization should be clear from the above. We are protected against the worst impulses of our fellow citizens and instead their, and our own, innate drives are directed into activity which is socially acceptable, such as economic activity, the art we enjoy, the religions we take part in, and the development of beauty in the world. As Freud puts it, in fundamentally sociological language: "the individual partakes in the development of humanity while making his own way through life" (Freud 2004 [1929], 100). Here, we see Bauman's initial sociological rereading of Freud; the following of the impulses is read as "freedom" and the sublimation and repression of them is read as "security." This is the start of the broader trend I want to note, Bauman's use of Freudian psychological concepts as sociological ones, untied from Freud's biological focus. But, it is undoubtedly the case that Bauman is being faithful to Freud when he posits a conflict between these two forces, since Freud argues that

> individual liberty is not an asset of civilization. It was greatest before there was any civilization, thought admittedly even then it was largely worthless, because the individual was hardly in a position to defend it. With the development of civilization it underwent restrictions, and justice requires that no one shall be spared these restrictions.[…] Much of mankind's struggle is taken up with the task of finding a suitable, that is to say a happy

> accommodation, between the claims of the individual and the mass claims of civilization. One of the problems affecting the fate of mankind is whether such an accommodation can be achieved through a particular moulding of civilization or whether the conflict is irreconcilable. (Freud 2004 [1929], 42)

In many ways I would suggest this quote is "Bauman's Freud" in his purest form, with an inevitable, insatiable conflict between two forces, here rendered as the individual/freedom and civilization/security that shape society. It was this that led Bauman to make his conclusion about Freud's overall perspective, namely:

> And so, humans must be *forced* into forming society […] there is a price to be paid for the emancipation from the beastly existence: for that comfortable and comforting security that only a coercive power of society can provide. There are no free lunches, as English popular wisdom would have it: you get something, you lose something else. (Bauman 2009a, 2)

You get something, you lose something; throughout his writings on Freud, Bauman would continually invoke this idea (see Bauman 1997, 1; Bauman 2001a, 42). It is Bauman's key Freudian lesson: that society requires trades-off and that having freedom and security at the same time or in the same amount is impossible. The security offered by solid modernity, often now looked back on nostalgically as part of our "retrotopias" (Bauman 2017) came with the curtailment of individual freedom; a boring job for life is secure but lessens the freedom to explore. Of course, Bauman then took Freud's observation one step further:

> I wonder what Freud would say were he to revise [*Civilization and its Discontents*] to prepare its 2008 edition. My guess is that he would generalize his verdict and insist that *all* and *any* civilization, that is any form of human togetherness risen above the "animal status"—is a trade-off.[…] But I also guess that he would reverse his diagnosis of the commodities exchanged in that trade-off. He would probably say that the major discontents of our time come from the need to surrender a good chunk of our security for the sake of removing, one by one, ever more constraints imposed on our freedom. As far as that minority is concerned from which patients seeking psychoanalytical cure tend to be recruited, the source of misery seems to be now the dearth of *security*, which poisons the joy of unprecedented individual *freedom*. (Bauman 2009a, 3)

Here we see a subtle, but significant, shift. Whereas Freud had highlighted the quest for a "happy accommodation" between the dictates of the individual and civilization, an accommodation which, for Freud, psychoanalysis was partly developed to achieve (Freud 1984 [1923], 297), Bauman now defines this as all civilizations having to decide on the exact trade-off. He also suggests that the time of liquid modernity has reversed this trade, with freedom valued over security. I will explore the reasons for this more in the next section. It is also important to note a further change. Bauman goes on to conceptualize the two values as two ends of a pendulum, the "perpetual pendulum between the desire of more freedom and the want of more security" (Bauman 2009a, 8) rather than a continuum. Therefore, liquid modernity, with its emphasis of individual freedom against security was an inevitable outcome of the emphasis of the former in solid modernity. In turn, the desire for security we see today—Bauman's frequently invoked example concerns the curtailment of our freedom we are happy to accept to keep us "safe from terrorism" (Bauman 2009a)— is a response to the lack of it we have more generally in liquid modernity.

Therefore, while this is a start of a trend of Bauman decoupling Freud from the psychological, even biological, basis of his claims about humanity, we see clearly here how Bauman's categorization of modernity in its solid and liquid forms are based upon Freudian insights. This carries over into his discussion of consumerism.

The Reality and the Pleasure Principle Strike a Deal

Freud had seen the development of civilization as related to questions of happiness. The need to repress and sublimate our drives meant that for Freud (2004 [1929], 17) "what we call happiness … the fairly sudden satisfaction of pent-up needs" had to be given up, instead we needed to learn the "postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure" (Freud 1920, 278). In short, we need to learn to be content with our lot, to work hard and

delay satisfaction. Therefore, Freud was clear, "happiness" has no role in the creation of civilization (Freud 2004 [1929], 16).

Part of the psychological processes, which achieve this forestalling of happiness for Freud, concerns socialization and morality. As we grow up in civilization, we develop our "super-ego," the internalized sense of authority that admonishes us for wrongdoing. Therefore, like many sociologists to follow him, Freud argues that the values and norms of society are reproduced through self-surveillance and self-monitoring. However, Freud is unique in pointing to a particular emotional formation of this: guilt. This becomes central in ensuring civilization's continuation; in Freud's famous phrasing:

> The tension between the stern super-ego and the ego that is subject to it is what we call a 'sense of guilt'; this manifests itself as a need for punishment. In this way civilization overcomes the dangerous aggressivity of the individual, by weakening him, disarming him and setting up an internal authority to watch over him, like a garrison in a conquered town. (Freud 2004 [1929], 77)

Therefore, the story of civilization is a "loss of happiness, arising from a heightened sense of guilt" (Freud 2004 [1929], 91) which ensures that aforementioned security. You get something, but you lose something indeed.

It is here we turn to the reality and the pleasure principle. The pleasure principle, emerging from our Id, is the impulse within us to seek gratification, satisfaction, and recreation. It is, for Freud, this principle which "determines the purpose of life" but, as we have seen, realization of this principle would be "at odds with the whole world … it is quite incapable of being realised; all the institutions of the universe are opposed to it" (Freud 2004 [1929], 16). Therefore, for the ego to maintain a healthy position between the id and superego, this principle has to be, in Freud's language, "transformed" into the reality principle which "counts oneself lucky to have escaped unharmed and survived suffering; and that in general the task of avoiding suffering pushes that of obtaining pleasure into the background" (Freud 2004 [1929], 17). It is this principle which helps direct

the asocial drives into productive activities; Freud suggests it is central in the acquiring of wealth for instance (Freud 2001 [1927]).

Therefore, Freud's conceptualization of the freedom/security conflict is aligned with the development of the reality principle against the pleasure principle. It is unsurprising therefore that Bauman gave it extensive discussion. Indeed, Bauman notes how Freud's "civilization" and his "solid modernity" as a society of producers share a need for the reality principle:

> The "solid modern" society analysed by Freud was indeed a society of producers and soldiers.[…] There was a strong mutually reinforcing feedback between the demands of the factory floor and military barrack on one hand, and a family rules by the principles of supervision and obedience, trust and commitment, on another. (Bauman 2009a, 4–5)

In this conflict, the reality principle would guide individuals as it would "hold them in check" when their desires exceeded what was socially desirable (Bauman 2009a, 5). Not only did it ensure security by limiting human drives, it also aided the ethic of working hard and delaying gratification until a later point (Bauman 1997). Hence, the reality principle was in chime with, and assisted the social reproduction of, solid modernity. It also caused the solid modern "discontents" which Bauman, like Freud, saw psychoanalysis as an attempt to confront (Bauman 2009a, 3). In liquid modernity, however, Bauman argues the relations of the reality and the pleasure principle have shifted:

> The "reality principle" as Sigmund Freud famously declared, was the limit set to the "pleasure principle."[…] The two principles were at cross-purposes; it did not occur to either the managers of capitalist factories nor the preachers of modern reason that the two enemies could strike a deal and become allies, that pleasure could be miraculously transmogrified into the mainstay of reality and that the search for pleasure could become the major (and sufficient) instrument of pattern maintenance.[…] And yet this is precisely what the consumer society is about: enlisting the "pleasure principle" is the service of the "reality principle" […] Instead of fighting vexing and recalcitrant but presumably invincible irrational human wishes, it has made them into faithful and reliable (hired) guards of rational order. (Bauman 2002, 187)

The "seductive" rather than "repressive" order of a consumer society for Bauman does not need to stifle desire, instead it is encouraged. Here, Bauman argues, the freeing of the pleasure principle has had different outcomes than those predicted by Freud. Rather than the dystopia of, to use Freud's phrase, man being a wolf to man, this freeing of the pleasure principle, given it matches the need for insatiable appetites found in the consumer market, actually produces the social order of liquid modernity, much as Freud thought the reality principle achieved this in its solid form. The pleasure principle is "the rationality of consumer society … built out of the irrationality of its individualized actors" (Bauman 2002, 188).

Therefore, Bauman's invoking of the reality and pleasure principle not only shows a further debt to Freud in his sociology but also gives his theorization of the transformation from a solid modern society of producers to a liquid modern society of producers a seemingly greater basis in human desires and impulses. However, much as with his invocation of the security and freedom pendulum, to achieve this, Bauman decouples Freud's concepts from their psychological base. We have seen how Freud comes to the reality and pleasure principle from his conception of human desires. While *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the text in which Freud introduces this conflict, is highly theoretical, it is based upon his long-running consideration of this question in a cynical setting (Roudinesco 2016, 219–226). These principles reflect innate drives Freud believed his work had identified in individuals. Instead, note an instance of how Bauman discusses the reality principle:

> The "reality principle" is nowadays considered guilty until it proves being innocent.[…] It is now the turn of the "reality principle" to profusely argue its reasons to its pleasure antagonist and apologise for the inconvenience it caused by overstaying its welcome. (Bauman 2009a, 8)

In many ways here we see a trend that Mark Davis (2008) notes in Bauman's work, a reification in which concepts are given agency. It also reflects a long-running trend for Bauman of metaphorical thinking. He is using the notions of a reality and pleasure principle not, as Freud was, to grasp the psychological processes at work for us to exist in society, but

rather as metaphors to understand long-running social change. Note, here, how Bauman suggests the reversal in the reality and pleasure principle came to happen:

> There must be someone (or something) for whom the happy reunion of the reality and pleasure principle was an objective to be systematically purposed or a stratagem consistency deployed, being calculated to suit their interests. Many studies of consumer facilities and habits bear an uncanny resemblance to detective novels: in the stories told of the birth and ascendancy of consumer society, the plots tend to grind relentlessly to the unmasking of the scheming culprit(s).[…] What is missing in the argument and left out of consideration is the possibility that, far from being deceived and falling into a skilfully laid trap, the members of consumer society try hard, just as all human beings do, to respond sensibly to the conditions of life which may be, but may not be, rational and suitable for rational conduct and render rational strategies effective. (Bauman 2002, 188–189)

Here we see all the hallmarks of Bauman's method of "sociological hermeneutics" (Dawson 2016): the desire to understand how individuals navigate the pressures they face in society and seek rational paths of action. We can also, therefore, see Bauman's invocations of these concepts in much the same way as he once argued "society" itself was a metaphor (Bauman and Tester 2001), namely attempts to grasp the ways in which individuals make sense of their world, seeking to ascertain order and act appropriately. Their value rests in their hermeneutical potential rather than their empirical psychological basis.

I will return to the overall value we can take from Bauman's nonpsychological use of Freud later. Before then, there are three more things Bauman takes from Freud which are less connected to questions of security/freedom and reality/pleasure.

Ambivalence and Death

Bauman's discussion of Freud in *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* (Bauman 1992b) is notable in its breadth. This book draws upon *Civilization and Its Discontents*, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *The Ego and the Id*, and, quoted second hand, "Timely Reflections on War and

Death." In this breadth, Bauman links Freud to a concept they share: ambivalence (see Troha 2017).

As discussed above, Bauman sees modernity as a mission to remove ambivalence. In most of his writings, this ambivalence is seen to emerge from the lack of societal structuring, more specifically, ambivalence is a "language-specific disorder: a failure of the naming (segregating) function that language is meant to perform" (Bauman 1991, 1). In *Mortality, Immorality and Other Life Strategies*, however, Bauman turns to Freud to highlight a different source of ambivalence. Bauman and Freud share the view that ambivalence "precedes society: it is in place before society starts its work" (Bauman 1992b, 19); however, Freud's pre-social conception rests upon his opposition of the death and life instincts. When introducing the aforementioned death instinct, Freud argued it was different to other instincts. While, as we have seen, most Freudian instincts are productive and drive action, the death instinct is "an expression of the *conservative* nature of living substance" (Freud 1984 [1920], 309) defined by the desire to return to an inactive state.

For Bauman, at the level of metapsychology, the balance of the life and death instinct is functional since it aids the "preservation and continuation of the species" (Bauman 1992b, 20). However, at an individual level, the experience of conflicting instincts produces ambivalence due to the contradictory and unordered pressures the individual experiences. Therefore, following Freud's thoughts on the death instinct through his writings, Bauman suggests that for Freud "*ambivalence* is a fundamental phenomenon … the fusion *cannot* be completed: the permanent co-presence of Eros and Thanatos casts a gigantic shadow of ambivalence on all human existence" (Bauman 1992b, 21). Accepting this insight, Bauman suggests that humans cope with this ambivalence by excising the knowledge of death. Inspired by Freud's remark that "no believes in his own death" and consequently we have "the unmistakable tendency to push death aside, to eliminate it from life" (Freud 2005 [1915], 183) Bauman details the ways that cultures emphasize either mortality (making death less likely through order and death-avoidance) or immortality (providing things that "live on" once we are gone) so that

mortality and *immortality* (as well as their imagined opposition, itself constructed as a cultural reality through patterned thoughts and practices) become approved and practised *life strategies*. All human societies deploy them in one form or another, but cultures may play up or play down the significance of death-avoidance concerns in the conduct of life. (Bauman 1992b, 9)

Here we see another instance, akin to his discussion of freedom/security and pleasure/reality, of Bauman turning to Freud to explain what he sees as innate human impulses which modernity responds to. In this case by making living with death possible.

Community, the Other and the Stranger

Initially, invoking Freud as an inspiration for Bauman's work on community, the other and the stranger may seem, if the reader will forgive the pun, a strange choice. This work has been seen as indebted to Georg Simmel (Månsson 2008) and/or as emerging from a debate with communitarianism (Lash 1996; see also Bauman 1995). Undoubtedly, reflecting my opening comment about Bauman's eclecticism, there is truth in these claims. Therefore, rather than saying that Freud is *the* basis for Bauman's thoughts on community, the other and the stranger, I want to draw out direct and indirect links between the two.

In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud discusses the commandment "love thy neighbor as thyself." For him, this is an absurd command, but it is precisely its absurd nature, and the inability to realize it, which makes it valuable since it induces the guilt central to civilization (Freud 2004 [1929], 56–61). What is important for this discussion is how Freud defines his neighbor. He is a "stranger" who "appears not to have not the least love for me and shows me the slightest consideration" (Freud 2004 [1929], 59). The neighbor/stranger's presence seems ambivalent, but his very presence makes Freud wary, he may be a "potential helper or sexual object," but my fear is that they seek to take out their aggression on me, or to use my labor without reward (Freud 2004 [1929], 61). Being a "stranger" Freud suggests

we inevitably fear the worse. Something similar is contained in Bauman's suggestion:

> The stranger comes into the life-world and settles here, and so—unlike the case of mere 'unfamiliars'—it becomes *relevant* whether he is a friend or foe. He made his way into the life-world *uninvited*, thereby causing me on the receiving side of his initiative, making me into the object of action of which he is the subject: all this, we remember, is a notorious mark of the *enemy*. (Bauman 1991, 59)

Freud uses these reflections as a prompt to discuss one of his aforementioned elements of civilization: the construction of communities. For Freud, communities, from the family circle upward, exist since they "allow the aggressive drive an outlet in the form of hostility to outsiders" (Freud 2004 [1929], 64). Here the famous "narcissism of small differences" allows for communities who live near each other to take out aggression in a peaceful, mocking way. Each construction of community inevitably produces new outsiders subject to varying degrees of aggressiveness (Freud 2004 [1929], 65).

I would suggest this focus on community as exclusion, as the creation of others, is one which is invoked often by Bauman. While, as he notes, community as a word "feels good" and conveys a " 'warm' place, a cosy and comfortable place" (Bauman 2001b, 1), it is in empirical formation an attempt "to fortify the borderline separating the 'inside' from the 'outside' " (Bauman 2008, 21). Indeed, Bauman (2008, 150–155) discusses Freud's invocation of the "love thy neighbor" command and sees Freud's discussion as indicative of the modern attempt to reconstruct a feeling of community via the nation-state.

Therefore, Bauman and Freud share similar thoughts on the stranger and what we might call the dark side of community. While Freud thought the formation of "the other" was an inevitable part of civilization and largely—especially when confined to the "narcissism of small differences" form—productive, he saw its potential downfalls. In an exchange with Albert Einstein, Freud (2005 [1933]) argues that while one success of civilization had been the construction of nation-states with their coercive apparatus, one drawback had been the creation of enemies "out there" who in this case

were backed up by national armies. Therefore, Freud, much like Einstein, uses the letter to propose a form of world state. This, while it would not cure wars which he saw an inevitable (see Freud 2005 [1915]), would lessen them.

While not explicitly endorsing a notion of a world state, Bauman, like Freud, did also see the formation of national communities as obstacles to human togetherness. He ends his last solo-authored book, *Retrotopia*, by highlighting the challenge of the political moment:

> In stark opposition to all previous (ultimately successful) battles to raise the scope of integration to a higher level, this one—the ascent of integration to the level of humanity as a whole—*can't deploy either the "appointment of a shared enemy" weapon or the "us against them" device* [...] its coming of age is tantamount to the abandonment of the "enemy" and the "once a stranger, forever a stranger" ideas, those foundations of the "us vs. them" division. And so the challenge of the moment consists in nothing less than designing—for the first time in human history—integration without separation to rest on. (Bauman 2017, 160–161; original italics)

This quandary, of community without exclusion, the same one Freud confronted leads Bauman to propose a form of cosmopolitan awareness founded in the notion of dialogue propagated by Pope Francis (Bauman 2017, 164–166). While the religious inspiration for this appeal would perhaps be anathema to Freud, it shows how Bauman grappled with a similar problem to Freud and came to a similar need—community without exclusion—although prescribed a different solution.

Narcissism

The last link takes us back to *Retrotopia*. Here, in his discussion of how liquid-modern society has gone "back" to a number of solid-modern life strategies, Bauman pens a chapter entitled "Back to the Womb." This concerns what he sees as an increasing trend of liquid modernity: the desire to retreat inward and therefore avoid the inevitable choices which liquid modernity brings, a form of what he sees as narcissism. While Bauman

takes inspiration from Christopher Lasch, he also discusses Freud's text "On Narcissism" in depth. This case is unique, since it sees Bauman drawing on a Freud text which, while written as he moved toward broader sociological concerns, was explicitly based in his cynical work, with no real concern for "civilization" (bar a few sentences at the end, which Freud (1995 [1913], 562) frames as "somewhat loosely strung together").

"On Narcissism: An Introduction" was Freud's attempt to explain narcissism with reference to his libido theory. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to fully explore this theory, but a key point for Freud was the distinction between "object-libido" (the desire for an other) and "ego-libido" (sexual desire directed to one's self). While the latter had initially been seen to mark out patients of schizophrenia (or "paraphrenia" in Freud's rendering), Freud's radical suggestion was to universalize it, saying:

> We have not, however, concluded that human beings are divided into two sharply differentiated groups, according as their object-choice conforms to the anaclitic or to the narcissistic type; we assume rather that both kinds of object-choice are open to each individual, though he may show a preference for one or the other. We say that a human being has originally two sexual objects—himself and the woman who nurses him—and in doing so we are postulating a primary narcissism in everyone. (Freud 1995 [1913], 554)

Therefore, while Freud universalizes the possibility of narcissism, he does so on sexual grounds, dismissing the notion that anything other than sexual desire can mark out libido (Freud 1995 [1913], 550).

Bauman in his discussion of this topic, as he usually did, quotes extensively from Freud and, in so doing, acknowledges that Freud saw narcissism as based in sexual desire (Bauman 2017, 127). However, the key point he takes from Freud's study, his "premonition turning into a psychosocial norm" (Bauman 2017, 128), is the universal possibility of narcissism. Bauman describes how neoliberal entrepreneurship, with its notion of the individual unencumbered with connections and concerns, has chimed well with a desire to retreat from the overwhelming choices faced under liquid modernity. Hence, the desire to return "to the womb" since this is a "lonely place—but also one that is secure, unchallenged and

uninterfered-with—with no competitors vying to impair the stature of its sole resident or steal its bonuses or privileges" (Bauman 2017, 148–149).

It seems initially that in framing contemporary narcissism as an attempt to return to the "womb" Bauman is making a further Freudian point, of the desire for, to use Freud's words, "the woman who nurses" us in early years combined with self-love. However, Bauman's use of the term is actually taken from a collection of essays entitled *So Sad Today* by Melissa Broder (2016), an essayist who begins her collection desiring a return to the womb (Bauman 2017, 143). Therefore, much as with the earlier sections, I would argue here Bauman is using Freud's concepts to make a broader claim about the way we respond to societal demands: facing the pressures of endless choice, we desire the comfort of somewhere peaceful, where we were left alone, and these choices were made for us. To return to an earlier point, when facing too much freedom, we long for security. Much as with this earlier Freudian inspiration of Bauman, this is not a psychological claim based in impulses/drives of the type Freud made, but rather a sociological, or perhaps even anthropological, claim about humanity.

Assessing Bauman's Use of Freud

As we have seen, Bauman draws upon Freud for some of the key elements of his work on modernity. As I have noted, Bauman uses Freud's concepts in a way that decouples them from their original psychological basis. Indeed, one contribution to the aforementioned symposium in *The Journal of Anthropological Psychology* notes that Bauman's use of Freud is undeveloped, especially in relation to writers such as Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse (Zeuthen and Køppe 2009).

Bauman's response to Katrine Zeuten and Simon Køppe is instructive. This is in line with the interpretation I have offered throughout this chapter, that Bauman is using these concepts, as in much of his work, as metaphors:

> Not being a Freud scholar, I readily and willingly accept that my "interpretation of Freud" could be far, far "more elaborated" than it has been. But then I borrowed from his toolbox only such instruments which I found particularly relevant to the job of engraving legible

contours on the formless ore of current social trends and individual *Lebenswelten*. (Bauman 2009b, 31)

Bauman's use of Freud is not an attempt to develop Freudian theory, but rather to use the concepts that prove useful for sociological understanding. Freud's concepts, most notably the reality/pleasure principles therefore become not psychological truth claims, but metaphors Bauman uses to understand modernity and the pressures under which we live.

As noted by Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Sophia Marshman (2008), Bauman's metaphorical use of concepts has advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is the value of metaphors as ways to think. The reality and the pleasure principle are excellent examples of this, and by drawing upon these notions, Bauman is able to capture processes of historical change effectively in a way which communicates something tangible to the reader; the pleasure the reader gets when they buy something nice is directly relatable by them to Bauman's sociology. At the same time, this is also a good example of the problems of such an approach. If the reality and the pleasure principle are not drives, what are they? This question is especially important if, as we saw above, Bauman ascribes these principles to agency; metaphors do not act.

I would suggest, therefore, that while Bauman is using concepts such as the reality and pleasure principles as metaphors, they are also indicative of a broader tendency in his sociology: to make claims about innate tendencies and needs of humanity. The pendulum between freedom and security is a good example here. Bauman is not completely using these as metaphors, while they differ from Freud's usage given their more philosophical basis, they are being used to indicate what Bauman sees as innate elements of being human. This can be seen in how he defines them relationally; it is only the absence of freedom that makes us aware of and desire it, and vice versa (Bauman 1997). The same can be said of the link between ambivalence and death. Such claims are an inevitable part of an inherently humanist sociological project such as the one Bauman pursues (Dawson 2019). Indeed, I would suggest they are part of the sociological project which, whether it likes it or not, has to make assumptions about humans as part of its work (Wrong 1961).

Of course, saying Bauman is using these concepts for sociological humanist, rather than psychological ends, opens up a further question: From where do they emerge? If they indicate innate human tendencies and needs, are they not in fact "psychological"? The difference here rests, I would suggest, on the truth claims resting behind the concepts. For Freud, the reality and pleasure principle could be directly demonstrated through psychoanalytical study, such as the therapeutic setting and its related case studies. We may question the strength of such truth claims, but there is some attempt to link them to identifiable part of the individual psyche. Bauman, in using them in a more metaphorical and philosophical manner, moves the truth claim away from directly observable action to a hermeneutical basis, these concepts are useful to the extent to which they help us make sense of society, in Bauman's words, to "glean the connections that could slip otherwise unnoticed" (Bauman 2009b, 31).

However, it could also be said that in shifting the basis of the claims behind these concepts, Bauman may not be as unlike Freud as suggested. Recent scholarship on Freud has, approvingly and disapprovingly, paid increasing attention to his turn toward what has been called "philosophical anthropology" (Whitebook 2017, 92) or a "a philosopher doing sociology" (DuFresne 2017, xvi) in his late writings. Some writers have gone so far as to say that Freud's late writings—the writings which, with the exception of "On Narcissism," Bauman draws upon—show him "not as the medical scientist he publicly claimed to be, but as the social philosopher he always aspired to be" (Kaye 2019, vii). As biographers have noted (Whitebook 2017; Roudinesco 2016), in many ways these later works are a return to Freud's earliest concerns.

Freud was, for these writers, a theorist fundamentally concerned with modernity, most notably in its not necessarily emancipatory elements, the "dark enlightenment" (Roudinesco 2016); "counter-enlightenment" (Whitebook 2017), or even romantic (DuFresne 2017) critique of modernity. Or, in Bauman's reading, as a Jew, representative of the ambivalence modernity hoped to exorcise (Bauman 1991). In making these claims, Freud would draw upon claims of "human nature" (Kaye 2019) to explore the ways individuals exist within, and navigate, social life. In so doing, for many of these writers, Freud's answers may well be "wrong" (Kaye 2019) and they may indeed be "wrong" because of their

psychoanalytical basis. Indeed, Todd DuFresne (2017, 256) goes as far to say that "few thinkers in the history of Western thought have been so wrong about so many important things." But, Freud's inaccuracy does not really matter since:

> Freud's lifework remains a stunningly ambitious, startlingly imaginative, and in many respects worthwhile way to think about the project of being human. For all of his foibles and faults, Freud demonstrates over and over again how it's done […] the colossal effort of it all is still exemplary, still amazing, and somehow still encouraging. Arguably it represents the grandeur of a life spent not just *doing*, but *thinking*. (DuFresne 2017, 256)

Freud, therefore, was an exemplary theorist who, even if his answers were wrong, encouraged us to ask the right question and to always think about what it is to be human.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the influence of Sigmund Freud upon Zygmunt Bauman's sociology. This influence is significant across Bauman's work and different from the case with many of his other influences, Bauman quoted Freud extensively, especially in his work on modernity. I have highlighted five areas in which Freud directly influenced Bauman. First, in the conflict between freedom and security, which Bauman theorizes as a pendulum which shapes modernity's solid and liquid forms. Second, the relationship between the reality and pleasure principle in civilization/solid modernity has, for Bauman, undergone a shift away from an antagonistic relationship to one where pleasure sustains reality in liquid modernity. Third, Bauman sees an innate human ambivalence in the relation between death and life instincts for individuals, which is then manifested in the societal attempt to excise the knowledge of death. Fourth, some direct and indirect influences on communities, stranger and the other, where each emphasizes the fear of the stranger as an unknown, the use of the community as a means of exclusion, and the perils of nation-states for human togetherness. Finally, in Bauman's late work on narcissism, where

he took Freud's claim for the universal nature of narcissism, uncoupled it from its sexual basis, and saw this as a widespread tendency of liquid modern life.

I have noted that what the above influences share is that, unlike other social theorists influenced by Freud, Bauman decouples Freud's concepts from their psychological basis and instead uses them as metaphors and/or philosophical claims about innate human tendencies. This can produce problems, most notably in Bauman's broader tendency toward reification where these metaphorical concepts, such as the pleasure principle, are given agency. However, I would suggest Bauman's use of such concepts reflects an innate humanist tendency of his sociology to have to make claims about human nature. As seen in discussions of the conflict of freedom and security as well as ambivalence and death, Bauman is using these concepts as hermeneutic devices to illuminate human impulses which modernity, in its solid and liquid forms, had to respond to. I have also suggested that, in transforming these concepts from psychological to philosophical, Bauman shares a reading of Freud with some Freudian writers, for whom the problematic nature of Freud's psychology shows how he is best understood as a philosopher doing sociology seeking to highlight the key questions of what it is to be human.

The desire to direct our attention to the right questions to ask was a fundamental part of Bauman's sociology and, in many ways, I would suggest here he shares a legacy with the "sociological" Freud who so inspired him. Bauman shows it is possible to be "a Freudian without psychology." While his use of these concepts without a psychological basis is not without problems, it is that very same psychological basis which has sometimes been seen as problematic by those commenting on Freud. Instead, we should look at Bauman's Freudianism as in keeping with his broader goal of sociology as attempting to grasp human experience and link these to the social situation; to, in his words, understand "human choices as manifestations of strategies constructed in response to the challenges of the socially shaped situation and where one has been placed in it" (Bauman et al. 2014, 50–51). In this goal, Freud, with his insights into how our social situation reflects historical conflicts between innate tendencies in humanity which had to be reconciled in civilization was a useful guide for that prime Freudian without psychology, Zygmunt Bauman.

Notes

1 My thanks to Kieran Durkin, Michael Hviid Jacobsen, and Luke Martell who read a draft version of this chapter and provided valuable comments.
2 Freud also figures significantly in *Modernity and Ambivalence* as an archetypical figure of the "Jew as stranger" who uses this position to question the universalism of modernity. Freud, like all Jews, carried "the knowledge of *ambivalence* and the skill of living with this knowledge" (Bauman 1991, 174). While Freud is discussed extensively in this text, since he was used as an example of, rather than inspiration for, Bauman's claims and due to limits of space, I will not discuss this in depth.
3 In this chapter, I use the language of "solid" and "liquid" modernity with "postmodernity" being treated as synonymous with its "liquid" form.

References

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 1992a. *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge.
——— 1992b. *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 1995. "Communitarianism, Freedom, and the Nation-State." *Critical Review* 9 (4): 539–553.
——— 1997. *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2001a. *The Individualized Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2001b. *Community: Seeking Shelter in an Insecure World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2002. *Society under Siege*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2008. *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?* Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press.
——— 2009a. "Freudian Civilization Revisited—Or Whatever Happened to the Reality Principle?." *Journal of Anthropological Psychology* 21: 2–9.
——— 2009b. "Reply." *Journal of Anthropological Psychology* 21: 31–35.
——— 2017. *Retrotopia*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, and Keith Tester 2001. *Conversations with Zygmunt Bauman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Keith Tester. 2014. *What Use Is Sociology?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
Beilharz, Peter. 2000. *Zygmunt Bauman: Dialectic of Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.

——— 2009. "Therapy with Bauman." *Journal of Anthropological Psychology* 21: 10–12.

Blackshaw, Tony. 2005. *Zygmunt Bauman*. London: Routledge.

Broder, Melissa. 2016. *So Sad Today: Personal Essays*. London: Scribe.

Davis, Mark. 2008. *Freedom and Consumerism: A Critique of Zygmunt Bauman's Sociology*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Dawson, Matt 2016. "Keeping Other Options Alive: Zygmunt Bauman, Hermeneutics and Sociological Alternatives." In *Beyond Bauman: Creative Excursions and Critical Engagements*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 224–242. London: Routledge.

——— 2019. "Humanist Structuration Theory: A Review of Zygmunt Bauman's *Sketches in the Theory of Culture*." *European Journal of Social Theory* 22 (3): 432–436.

DuFresne, Todd. 2017. *The Late Sigmund Freud, Or, the Last Word on Psychoanalysis, Society, and All the Riddles of Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eyerman, Ron. 2013. "Social Theory and Trauma." *Acta Sociologica* 56 (1): 41–53.

Freud, Sigmund. 1984 [1920]. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." In *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, edited by Angela Richards, 269–338. London: Penguin Books.

——— 1984 [1923]. "The Ego and the Id." In *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, edited by Angela Richards, 350–401. London: Penguin Books.

——— 1995 [1913]. "On Narcissism: An Introduction." In *The Freud Reader*, edited by Peter Gay, 545–562. London: Vintage.

——— 2001 [1927]. "The Future of an Illusion." In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume XXI*, edited by James Strachey, 5–56. London: Random House.

——— 2004 [1929]. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. London: Penguin Books.

——— 2005 [1915]. "Timely Reflections on War and Death." In *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*, edited by Adam Phillips, 167–194. London: Penguin Books.

——— 2005 [1933]. "Why War?." In *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*, edited by Adam Phillips, 221–232. London: Penguin Books.

Jacobsen, Michael Hviid and Sophia Marshman. 2008. "Bauman's Metaphors: The Poetic Imagination in Sociology." *Current Sociology* 56 (5): 798–818.

Kaye, Howard L. 2019. *Freud as a Social and Cultural Theorist: On Human Nature and the Civilising Process*. London: Routledge.

Lash, Scott. 1996. "Postmodern Ethics—The Missing Ground." *Theory, Culture & Society* 13 (2): 91–104.

Månsson, Niclas. 2008. "Bauman on Strangers—Unwanted Peculiarities." In *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman: Challenges and Critique*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Poul Poder, 155–171. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Mazzeo, Riccardo. 2021. "Introduction." In *Education and Intercultural Identity: A Dialogue between Zygmunt Bauman and Agostino Portera*, edited by Zygmunt Bauman and Agostino Portera, 3–14. London: Routledge.

Palmer, Jack. 2023. *Zygmunt Bauman and the West: A Sociology of Intellectual Exile*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Roudinesco, Elisabeth. 2016. *Freud: In His Time and Ours*. Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sayers, Janet. 2007. "Liquid Love: Psychoanalysing Mania." In *The Contemporary Bauman,* edited by Anthony Elliott, 154–167. London: Routledge.

Tester, Keith. 2007. "Bauman's Irony." In *The Contemporary Bauman*, edited by Anthony Elliott, 81–97. London: Routledge.

——— 2009. "Pleasure, Reality, The Novel and Pathology." *Journal of Anthropological Psychology* 21: 23–26.

Troha, Tadej. 2017. "On Ambivalence." *Problemi International* 1: 217–244.

Whitebook, Joel. 2017. *Freud: An Intellectual Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wrong, Dennis. 1961. "The Oversocialised Conception of Man in Modern Sociology." *American Sociological Review* 26 (2): 183–193.

Zeuthen, Katrine and Simo Køppe. 2009. "What Is Reality and What Is Pleasure?." *Journal of Anthropological Psychology* 21: 19–22.

Chapter Three

MODERNITY AND THE HOLOCAUST: EXPLORING ZYGMUNT BAUMAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIOLOGY OF THE HOLOCAUST

Adele Valeria Messina

Introduction

The Holocaust stands as a tragic but instructive test case for the usefulness and accuracy of the historical concept of modernity. Intense debates on this subject have surrounded Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989). Since its publication in 1989—the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall—the book has provoked scholars to speculate whether the Holocaust represented a lapse into a barbaric past—a break with modern civilization—or whether, on the contrary, it epitomized the nastiest aspects of modernity.

Modernity and the Holocaust has been called an unattractive book (see Irwin-Zarecka 1991, 217). Who wants to read about the death of millions of Jews, or how the plans for these deaths were formed at the heart of the twentieth century? But Bauman's approach, always framing modernity as his backdrop, has been welcomed by many other scholars. Bauman offers a

new interpretation of the Holocaust, both for sociologists and for historians. He puts aside the conventional category of anti-Semitism—long the focus of sociologists and historians—and adopted modernity itself as his object of study. He sees the extermination of the Jews in Europe as an outcome of the concepts of modern rationality and bureaucracy. With this argument, Bauman introduced a change of scholarly perspective that has produced endless debate, with many ups and downs, among both sociologists and historians. Moreover, Bauman's new perspective has been brought to the scene of "Holocaust Studies" sociological discipline, considered to be delayed in its study of the Holocaust. Thus, Bauman's approach has been welcomed by sociologists such as Jack N. Porter (1993), Judith M. Gerson and Diane L. Wolf (2007), and Burton P. Halpert (2007) who appreciated the role of his work in opening the way to the post-Holocaust sociology. Likewise, historians such as Zoë Waxman (2009) and Mark Roseman (2011) have admired the book's universalistic perspective, which serves to solve the knotty tensions among functionalist and intentionalist historians (notably, Bauman has been labeled a functionalist by historians like William W. Hagen and Tom Lawson).

To address these matters and explain the relevance of Bauman's perspective for sociological thought, and especially to situate the role Bauman's book has played in the sociological study of the Holocaust (should it be considered an outlier in the field?) we shall reconstruct here Bauman's approach to the Holocaust within the existing historical and sociological literature. In particular, we will highlight some understudied scholarly critiques within which Bauman's thesis can be contextualized, and we will individuate the crucial concepts around which both historical and sociological criticism turn. A comprehensive and in-depth study of Bauman's legacy—taking account of both historical and sociological criticism—has yet to be written. However, we cannot fail to consider the critique of Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* advanced by the philosopher Arne Johan Vetlesen in 2005. What else is there to say? Our decision to concentrate on the historical and sociological critiques—omitting theological or anthropological debates—has a motive. Bauman offers a theoretical explanation of why the Holocaust happened: this represents, for historians and sociologists dedicated to the study of the Holocaust, something of a provocation, an answer to a scholarly conundrum

(even if, for historians, the price was that Bauman failed to comprehend exactly what genocide is).

Bauman's Approach to the Holocaust within the Historical Discipline

To rethink these issues this chapter will endeavor to present a basic overview of the historical and sociological literature. In order to give a well-organized overview of Bauman's criticism we will proceed in a chronological fashion.

Let us first touch on the difference between the historical critiques of Bauman and the sociological ones. When we distinguish sociological work from historical work, we refer to things that go far beyond mere methodology. We will not dwell here on conceptual differences, but we will note two points: that the historians who have reviewed *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) are not sociologists, and that they have commented on it, for the most part, indirectly. Only a few historians wrote book reviews of the book, publishing in academic history journals. Sociologists, on the other hand, dedicated many pages in their sociology journals to reviews of Bauman's work. Moreover, Holocaust historians have remained hesitant to contextualize *Modernity and the Holocaust* within a broader comparative historical framework.

To reconstruct the historical critique of Bauman we should distinguish between two large categories of historians, taking as a benchmark the publication of Jan T. Gross's *Neighbours* in 2001. Specifically, let us separate historians of the first and second period: those commenting on Bauman before 2001 (such as Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg in 1990), and those commenting after Gross. These latter historians—such as Yehuda Bauer (2001), Omer Bartov (1998), Daniel Goldhagen (1996), and Robert S. Wistrich (2001)—have been less inclined to define *Modernity and the Holocaust* as a groundbreaking book on the sociology of the Holocaust. Rather, they question whether Bauman's perspective does enough to explain the Holocaust, considering the fact that it explicitly intends to reduce the central role attributed to anti-Semitism, and in doing so to illustrate the

genocidal potential of the modern national state. For them, Bauman works with generalizations that are too sweeping. An example from historian Kirk W. Goodlet:

> As Yehuda Bauer rightly points out, the Nazi bureaucratic machine 'was a fumbling, ineffective, contradiction-ridden machine', far from the sophisticated administration Bauman portrays. Another crucial aspect of the Holocaust Bauman ignores is that the *Einsatzgruppen* did not require Jewish councils in Soviet territory to secure 'the smooth flow of the annihilation process'. They accomplished this themselves with deadly efficiency (Goodlet 2012, 523).

These historians, despite the considerable variety of their theoretical approaches, pose one common question: What makes Bauman's work crucial to Holocaust Studies? The question can be extended: Is the legacy of Bauman's work warranted, given the fact that he ignores what happened in the territories of the Former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)? The question is crucial because, after the end of Communism, it has become possible to open the archives of ex-URSS countries and come to terms with almost half of six million Jewish deaths in mass graves and not only with those in concentration and death camps (see Salomoni 2007) as argued by Bauman. Moreover, "[s]ince 1989, research in the files of the Former Communist regime … has revealed its extensive attempts to influence political life" (Herf 2016, 19).

To our two categories of historians, we might add a third: historians unconcerned by *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Namely, historians such as Ian Kershaw (1991), Christopher R. Browning (1992b), and Götz H. Aly (1995), who adopt the same concepts as Bauman—of the Nazi bureaucratic machine, modern rationality, authority, and power—but without mentioning him, or if yes, without emphasis. It is curious how Bauman's categories return in their works (see Baranowski 2000, Goodlet 2012).

Notably, finally, there are historians like Leo Lucassen (2010), who explains the social government policies of North European countries in the 2000s by referring to Bauman's social engineering and its perfect garden categories. This case could lead us to reflect on another issue: How Bauman's reception can be placed in its own historical context.

Historians of the First Period

Our first step is to consider some of the reviews of this period that explore the lynchpins of Bauman's approach to the Holocaust. Second, we will consider those critiques that first contributed to the appreciation of the work's importance.

In 1990, in the *Association for Jewish Studies Review*, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) was reviewed alongside *The Jews of Warsaw* (1982) by Israel Gutman, and *The Mirror Maker* (1986) by Primo Levi. Three years later, in December 1993, the book was reviewed in the *Australian Journal of Politics and History*.

Among the earliest historical commentaries on Bauman, Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg stand out with their seven-page book review, in 1990, in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*. The authors immediately focus on "Bauman's primary concern [which] is … to show how the mass of historical material that has already been generated can be incorporated into a social theory of modernity" (Milchman and Rosenberg 1990, 337). They go on to stress the novelty of Bauman's connection between civil modernization and the Holocaust. They stress that "[f]or Bauman, the Holocaust was integrally linked to the civilizational core of modernity" (Milchman and Rosenberg 1990, 337), such that, if he is right, all sociological theories dealing with modern civilization have to be reconsidered—from those of Talcott Parsons and Reinhard Bendix to those of Norbert Elias and Jürgen Habermas. But Milchman and Rosenberg wonder whether Bauman's thesis indeed works. They have two focal concerns: first, by considering Elias's theory on the civilizing process, mass violence—such as the Holocaust—constitutes a crack or break within modernity, a deviation from the overall civilization process. For Bauman, by contrast, mass violence is at the apex of modernity: the core structures of modernity constitute the essential conditions that lead to the planning and organization of the Holocaust. Second, Bauman's vision of Nazism as a historical product of the social engineering of the modern bureaucratic state contradicts the traditional theories of Nazism, according to which Nazi ideology is antimodern and fundamentally irrational.

In assessing Bauman's thesis—that racism has been linked to modernity since the Enlightenment—Milchman and Rosenberg make the criticism that Bauman neglects to consider the Frankfurt School, which first conceived this idea. Thus, "the cutting edge of his own argument is somewhat blunted" (Milchman and Rosenberg 1990, 339). For Milchman and Rosenberg then, Bauman fails also in his attempt to connect the ratiocentric domain of bureaucracy with the destruction of the Jews. Why? Because he does not refer to "Marx's vision of capitalism as a reified world and Weber's view of the outcome of the process of rationalization as an 'iron cage of bondage'" (Milchman and Rosenberg 1990, 339). However, Milchman and Rosenberg underscore Bauman's ability to portray the complicity and cooperation of the Jewish victims with their Nazi perpetrators. In Bauman's eyes, it is social distance that generates the conditions for total genocide, a point that permits the rethinking of Hannah Arendt's famous thesis on the immorality of Jewish leaders. Lastly, in 1990, Milchman and Rosenberg write: "What makes *Modernity and the Holocaust* such an important work … is that it raises the Holocaust from the ranks of an historical question … to that of a burning issue for the future of our species" (Milchman and Rosenberg 1990, 342). Here they are, albeit unknowingly, the first to stress that Bauman's book approaches the concept of the uniqueness of the Holocaust, elaborated for the first time in 1980 in "Whose Holocaust?" by Yehuda Bauer.

In the Spring of 1991, in *German Politics & Society*, a decidedly positive review is written by historian Hugh Murray. There are ulterior motives for us to consider Murray's review a special case. First, the author notes how Bauman "gathers sufficient material from varied sources to challenge the prevailing view of the Holocaust" (Murray 1991, 82). For instance, Bauman discarded *The Authoritarian Personality* of the Frankfurt School (Theodore W. Adorno et al. 1950), giving more space to Richard Rubenstein's reconsideration of Max Weber. Bauman also contested writers such as Sigmund Freud and Norbert Elias, according to whom the brutality of Hobbesian violence is overcome by the processes of rationality in modern civilization. Bauman challenges the functionalist tradition of anthropology and sociology—that of Clyde Kluckhohn, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Émile Durkheim—regarding the connection between morality and society. However, in what Murray calls a useful volume, there emerges a debate.

Precisely, when Bauman stresses that Nazis are moral persons (products of the moral disconnection of modern rationalism, a function of the division of labor of the modern factory system), or when he demolishes Durkheim's concept of morality, he proposes a somewhat strange theoretical model, which comes from Hobbes and coincides with a pre-societal model. Secondly, Murray's evaluation aligns with some points already made by Milchman and Rosenberg, keeping its distance from what Gross states in his book. This allows us to make a further comparison; namely, all three scholars (i.e., Murray, Milchman, and Rosenberg) stress how, for Bauman, the process of rationality in the modern bureaucracy is the essential condition that produced the Holocaust. The Holocaust was possible precisely because a modern state undertook a rational purpose: to establish a state free from the unfit (i.e., the Jews). The Nazi state, like a gardener, aimed simply to wipe out the wild plants from its garden. Decisive for Bauman's interpretation (of a bureaucracy that produces mass death) are the classic experiments of Stanley Milgram. Modern bureaucracy can produce murders because it cannot see what happens to the victims, just as in the modern factory, where workers spend their lives on an assembly line chain without ever seeing the ultimately manufactured product. Such assertions—and particularly Murray's point that "the Nazis killed more Jews than pogrom upon pogrom. In Nazi Germany, few Jews were slain in pogroms" (Murray 1991, 84)—strike a distance from the accounts in Gross's publication, subsequent to the opening of the archives in the former Communist regime.

Alternatively, Elisabeth Domansky was the first historian to demonstrate the novelty of Bauman's thought, even if indirectly. It was in the Spring-Summer of 1992 when she addresses, in *History and Memory,* the " 'Kristallnach', the Holocaust and German Unity." In the article, discussing the questionable speech of Philipp Jenninger on the fiftieth anniversary of the *Kristallnacht* on November 10, 1988, Domansky underscores how the destruction of the Jews, in Bauman's view, is an assembly-line type of destruction. In addressing Jenninger's speech, Domansky considers a question that is central to Bauman's book, and that is a persistent problem for historians: Can the Holocaust be explained?

Also published in 1992, Christopher R. Browning's *Path to Genocide* (1992b) included two essays of particular interest: "Bureaucracy and Mass

Murder" and "German Technocrats, Jewish Labor, and the Final Solution." Both chapters address the role of bureaucrats as perpetrators of the Holocaust. Browning, however, does not mention Bauman's ideas. Thus, he can be considered one of the first historians treated here who is utterly "unconcerned" with Bauman. At this point, it is probably appropriate to mention in advance Götz H. Aly's *Endlösung* (1995). The work, relying on Bauman's concepts of rational modernity and social engineering, does not emphasize Bauman's approach. Daniel Goldhagen, for his part, rejects Bauman's functionalist focus on rational bureaucracy. In his *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996), he shares Browning's (1992a) account of the Jewish mass murders perpetrated by Reserve Police Battalion 101 in occupied Poland.

The first response to Bauman that pertains to the cultural construction of gender in the Holocaust arrives in 1997 with Ann Taylor Allen: "I shall use the absence and presence of gender in Bauman's text as a starting point for an examination of the historiography of women and gender and its relevance for our understanding of the Holocaust" (Allen 1997, 349).

On the occasion of a *Forum Essay* for the *American Historical Review* in 1998, Omer Bartov contributes with an article, "Defining Enemies, Making Victims," in which he considers the reciprocal relationship between the victims and the perpetrators, confronting a topic not addressed by Bauman: the "German self-perceptions and attitudes toward Jews" and vice versa (Bartov 1998, 771). Like Domansky in 1992, Bartov fundamentally wonders if the Holocaust can be explained. In footnote 53, he clarifies that "[r]ecent works on the links between genocide and modernity have both the potential of distancing us from the horror (by sanitizing it) and of making us all complicit in it (since we belong to an age that perpetrates horror)" (Bartov 1998, 799). For Bartov, the Holocaust must be explainable, because it is a historical phenomenon. Of particular interest for us, at this point in the chronology of comments and reviews, is the writing of Vinay Lal (1998) in the subsequent issue of *Forum Essay*. Lal responds to Bartov's concerns. The title is suggestive: "A Response to Omer Bartov." As Lal reviews Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*, he stresses the close connection that Bauman describes between the Holocaust and the assembly-line-essence of the modern nation-state. Thus, Lal positions himself among the pro-Bauman historians.

What to add? If Bartov liquidates *Modernity and Holocaust* with a brief footnote and does not write a book review, Shelley Baranowski in *The Historical Journal* in December 2000 confronts both Bauman's *Modernity and Holocaust* and Bartov's *Murder in Our Midst* (1996)—just as Anthony D. Moses had in 1997. A closer look at their criticism reveals compelling similarities. Both Bartov and Bauman focus on the alignment of the attempted extermination of the Jewish people and the modern processes of factory mass-production. However, even if "Bartov has been greatly influenced by Zygmunt Bauman's book" (Moses 1997, 441), in his later essay of 2005–2006 he revisits the thesis of modernity and follows Gross's ideas.

The Turning Point: Historians Confronting Bauman after Gross's *Neighbors*

In the last two decades, Bauman's contribution to the sociology of the Holocaust has been scrutinized a great deal as a direct result of the publication of Jan T. Gross's *Neighbors* (2001), which examines Bauman's thesis of modernity.

When Alvin H. Rosenfeld in 2001 writes "The Assault on Holocaust Memory" for *The American Jewish Year Book*, a pattern of negative criticism (direct and indirect) begins to be directed at Bauman's book. Instead of thoroughly reviewing the book, or even addressing Bauman's thesis, Rosenfeld states that "sociologist Zygmunt Bauman reiterated the notion of an aggressive Israel that manipulates Holocaust memory for self-serving ends" (Rosenfeld 2001, 14).

In the same year, Yehuda Bauer's *Rethinking the Holocaust* (2001) highlights the most glaring defect of Bauman's book: his apparent underestimation of the role of Nazi anti-Semitism in the Holocaust. Bauer explains that it is not suitable to ascribe the destruction of the Jews only to modernity "because the United States and Britain were no less modern than Nazi Germany, factors other than modernity must explain why a Hitler regime arose in Germany and decided to murder the Jews" (Bauer 2001, 75). The same holds for bureaucratic culture. In the same context, the

criticism of William W. Hagen and Mark Mazower can be considered a more agreeable and thoughtful passage. If Hagen, in commenting on Gross's *Neighbors*, in *Slavic Review* (2002), places Bauman among scholars who follow a Marxian-Weberian-Foucauldian theory of disenchantment, self-alienation, bureaucratization, and rationalization, Mazower, still in 2002, addressed the relationship between the mid-twentieth century cases of mass murder and totalitarianism, although in a footnote (number 3 of page 1159). Mazower identified the relevance of modernity at the heart of mass violence. His position is another case in point: both Bauman and Mazower link the Holocaust and genocide to modernity, although in different ways. Bauman adopted the category of "modernity" to explain the Holocaust, proposing a kind of rational-choice model of modernity. Mazower, by contrast, used the category of the Holocaust, its features of ordered genocide, to illustrate modern mass violence.

In 2005, Arne Johan Vetlesen's *Evil and Human Agency* sheds light on the role of evildoers in human life. He draws heavily on Bauman, devoting pages 14–51 to an analytical critique of Bauman's book. Although Vetlesen is a philosopher and not a historian, his criticism must be considered a historical evaluation due to the historical methodology he adopts in illustrating the main criticisms of Bauman's book.

As previously noted, almost all historical reviews are not explicit in their criticism of Bauman's book. Authors like Zoë Waxman and Leo Lucassen, for instance, chose a topic from Bauman's approach to the Holocaust and take it as an occasion to explore other topics more familiar and relevant to them. In 2009, Waxman, using Bauman's sociological concepts of boundary and community, describes the crisis of morality; in 2010, Lucassen, in the *International Review of Social History*, addresses topics such as citizenship and social reform (discussed at length in *Modernity and the Holocaust*). In the latter case, Lucassen needs these concepts to elaborate a comparison between the theories of social reform and the policies of left wing parties in the North of Europe: Bauman's ideas help him to illustrate the conditions under which fragile social groups come to be the object of eugenic political measures.

No less relevant is Elizabeth Borgwardt's review in a 2008 *Law and History Review*. Borgwardt addresses the overarching topic of crimes against humanity, drawing heavily on *Modernity and the Holocaust* and

highlighting the importance Bauman ascribes to law and institutions in guaranteeing social order. There is much external evidence of this issue, including Tom Lawson's *Debates on the Holocaust* (2010), which—is offering an exhaustive Holocaust historiography—deals with Bauman's critique of intentionalism and his favoring of functionalism.

On the occasion of an AHR Roundtable on *National Socialism and the End of Modernity*, Mark Roseman places Bauman's work among scholars "identifying essential connections between Nazism's most striking and disturbing features and 'modernity'." (Roseman 2011, 693) However, Roseman notes (as did Milchman and Rosenberg in 1990 and Murray in 1991) that Bauman does not mention the Frankfurt School's theories of modernity and the rationalization process. Still, Roseman stresses that Bauman's purpose is explicitly to negate the central role of anti-Semitism in the Holocaust, focusing instead on the modern industrial genocidaire nation-state.

In 2012, an article was written by Kirk W. Goodlet, at the time still a doctoral student when he reviewed Bauman's work. He read it through an interesting sociological lens: the historical context of the Lodz ghetto administration in the years 1940–1944. Goodlet throws light on how "modern rational society" and "bureaucratic culture" (Goodlet 2012, 504, 510) are supportive devices for comprehending the Holocaust. He describes how Bauman deals with recent theories explaining the Holocaust and how his work is a watershed work that has awakened Holocaust sociology. Goodlet observed that "because of its myriad regional and institutional variants, the Holocaust requires an overarching interpretation or paradigm that can be applied to a diverse set of social and historical contexts … Bauman provides the most satisfactory sociological and theoretical interpretation of the Holocaust available" (Goodlet 2012, 524). Goodlet continues to criticize historians for having failed to consider Bauman's proposals:

> [T]he centrality of Hitler and his visionary objectives must not be underestimated. While bureaucratic culture, social engineering, careerism, and lust for power and resources help explain why individuals throughout Europe collaborated with the Nazis, all of these 'modern' factors, whether intentionally or not, contributed to the goals of Hitler and his regime (Goodlet 2012, 524).

However, as I discuss in *American Sociology and the Holocaust*, Bauman is often considered *the* originator of the sociology of the Holocaust (see Messina 2017, 269–310).

Adding to this, "The Subjective Dimension of Nazism," published by Moritz Föllmer (2013) in *The Historical Journal*, invites us to reflect on the fact that "the Third Reich venerated certain stereotypical twentieth-century figures, such as the heroic warrior or the racially defined *Übermensch*, while marginalizing others, especially those associated with weakness and Jewishness, to the point of extinction." (Föllmer 2013, 1118)

Finally, we can complete our chronological overview with Valeria Galimi and Dimitri D'Andrea's review of 2016. Galimi represents another case in point: she addresses Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*, by revising *Reparto assassini* of Abram de Swaan from 2015, who in turn deals with Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*. If Galimi and de Swaan support Bauman's thesis on the industrial planning of the destruction of the Jews in death factories, they nonetheless stress that the Final Solution was a consequence of the development of the contingencies of the World War II. Thus, once again, Bauman's thesis of the close connection between modernity and the Holocaust is challenged.

Bauman's Approach to the Holocaust within the Sociological Discipline

In recent times there has been much talk of the "Bauman phenomenon" (Beilharz 2020) in sociology. Again, today, Bauman's thesis finds itself well-received among sociologists: scholars such as Michael Banton (1991), Peter Beilharz (2002), Eric Dunning and Stephen Mennell (1998) have all reevaluated the notion of modernity in their works in the light of Bauman's categories of genocide or state violence. As Bryan S. Turner had pinpointed in 1992, "Bauman's book has already received extensive and laudatory reviewing; it was also awarded the European Amalfi Prize for Sociology" (Turner 1992, 507). However, other sociologists such as Moishe Postone, as well as the same Turner, have not refrained from criticizing that "several aspects of his book are problematic … Bauman's discussion of the

relationship between modernity and anti-Semitism is not fully satisfactory" (Postone 1992, 1522).

Sociological reviews celebrate *Modernity and the Holocaust* as unique for two reasons. First, it breaks the professed silence of sociology in Holocaust Studies. Bauman, in Jack N. Porter's words, "has written the definitive sociological treatment of the Holocaust" (Porter 1993, 184–185). Second, the book seems to resolve the dialectic debate between functionalist and intentionalist historians.

The appreciation of Bauman's perspective in sociological scholarship is wholly different from its assessment in historical literature. However, unlike the historical literature, it is not proper to distinguish sociologists of a "first" and "second" period. Nor is it possible to individuate a sociological phenomenon (such as the historical event of the opening of the archives after the Fall of the Berlin Wall) and choose it as a watershed caesura in order to differentiate between periods of positive and negative sociological appreciation. The motivation is simple: in the sociological field, the pattern of positive and negative criticism does not depend on the fall of the Berlin Wall. Rather, critics are scattered over the years. For example, we can regroup Beilharz and Turner's criticism and define them as "sociologists for whom rationalizing modernity holds no value." Or we can link together recent sociologists such as Sandro Segre (2019) and Michael Strand (2018), who challenge Bauman's thesis. Specifically, to counteract Bauman's ideas, they cannot rely on the works of historians Browning and Gross. They go against his ideas on modernity in light of his successive elaboration on globalization and liquid modernity. Thus, in considering Bauman's approach to the Holocaust within the sociological literature, we cannot exclusively follow a chronological criterion. Furthermore, as previously observed, sociological reviewers are more in number than historical ones. Here, we can choose just a few of them: those that are significant and representative, capable of reassessing Bauman's concepts and continuing their evolution.

We can start by noting Brian Goldfarb's response immediately after the publication of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, stressing, in 1990s *Sociology*, the novelty of Bauman's thesis: how in Bauman's view of Nazi ideology and anti-Semitism try (but fail) to account for the Holocaust.

Michael Banton published one of the first reviews of Bauman's book in March 1991s *British Journal of Sociology*—Banton, recalling both Raphael Lemkin's discourse and the text of the UN Convention on Genocide, appreciates Bauman's work. Also in March of 1991, Iwona Irwin-Zarecka stresses in *Contemporary Sociology* how innovative Bauman's reading of the Holocaust is, particularly with its focus on state and bureaucracy: "In its scope and depth, his is the most serious attempt to date to integrate the reflection on the Holocaust within the mainstream of social science" (Irwin-Zarecka 1991, 216). In the same vein, a few years later, Jack Porter will articulate the hallmark of Bauman's book, namely its way of framing the Holocaust as "a rare yet significant and reliable test of the hidden possibilities of modern society" (Porter 1993, 185).

In June 1992, the *American Sociological Review* of the American Sociological Association features a review of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, and two months later, in August 1992, Turner's aforementioned review in *Sociology* refers to Bauman's *Modernity and Holocaust* as a "provocative analysis of explanations of genocide" (Turner 1992, 507). However, for Turner, "there are many issues and problems with Bauman's thesis" (Turner 1992, 507). Turner objects, for instance, to Bauman's characterization of the Holocaust as "the supreme manifestation of modernity, conceptualized within a Weberian paradigm of instrumental rationality … not driven by an irrational, anti-scientific ideology of anti-Semitism" (Turner 1992, 507). He likewise takes issue with the fact that Bauman "does not comment on the national anxiety about declining birth rates, sterilization and criminality, and the fear of racial poisoning as the background to the eugenics movement in Germany" (Turner 1992, 507). However, his deepest concern regards the fact that "in Bauman's thesis nobody in particular is to blame for the Holocaust … Everyone has become a little cog in the machine. This blame-everybody doctrine may be appropriate for a post-Holocaust generation, but what about the victims and the survivors?" (Turner 1992, 508).

Five years after Bauman's book was published, Peter Wagner published *A Sociology of Modernity* (1994). This book harbors a particular appreciation for Bauman's depiction of the Holocaust. It is at the far-opposite pole of what Michael Freeman writes, the following year, in 1995: for the philosopher of the University of Essex, Bauman's arguments detract

immensely from orthodox sociological theories. His objection boils down to the following: Why does Bauman not focus on the history of genocide and the features of the national history of Germany, unlike Elias, who contemplates civilization as a pacification process of edges? Bauman does not explain "what was not modern in that genocide … [and] does not … locate the Holocaust in the more general theoretical consideration of genocide" (Freeman 1995, 209). In trying to explain the Holocaust through the unique notion of modernity, Bauman does not, in Freeman's view, offer a complete picture of the destruction of the Jews. By locating their annihilation in the Western space, he does not consider the public massacres committed in the Eastern regions through decidedly unmodern methods, later highlighted by Gross in *Neighbors* (2001) and Bartov in 2005–2006. Additionally, the dissimilarities between Bauman and Lemkin's assumptions on the Holocaust are ample. For example, for Lemkin, the Nazi experience is always a return to barbarism notwithstanding the practice of modern methods (in stark contrast to Bauman's understanding of the Holocaust as the complete manifestation of modern civilization). This aspect looks very different once we are aware of the carnage perpetrated in the former Soviet territories against the Jews. Freeman likewise concentrates on the consequences of Bauman's thesis: to see the implications of Freeman's criticism, note how it advances the understanding of the Holocaust in the East, accelerating further work in Holocaust historiography (see Salomoni 2007). Freeman also concentrates on the consequences of Bauman's thesis which permits us to comment on what was underlined at the start of this paragraph: the phenomenon of Bauman himself. Namely, if modernity produced the Holocaust, it also produced the sociological and moral critique of genocide.

Now if, for Freeman, Bauman does not consider what happened in the Eastern countries of Europe, Eric Dunning and Stephen Mennell, in 1998 likewise note that Bauman does not deal with the historical phenomenon of the fall of the *Kaiserreich*. Both sociologists compare Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* and *The Germans* (1996) by Norbert Elias: if both agree that an intentional annihilation of a people falls inside the realm of mass society, they diverge regarding the theory of the civilizing process: for Bauman, civilization legitimates totalitarian power; for Elias, it is the pacification of the national boundaries. This means that Bauman does not

consider the process of German democratization in Germany, the political tensions between the House of Hohenzollern and that of Habsburg during the Weimar Republic years, nor the combination of rapid industrialization with the structures of the Prussian dynasty, and the myth of Aryan beauty. Thus, this process, called "de-civilization" by Elias and "reactionary modernism" by Jeffrey Herf, is not crucial for Bauman. This represents a conundrum for Dunning and Mennell—especially because, in this way, the process of the non-nationalization of the masses (meaning that the state omits their social claims) does not constitute a basic condition for the Holocaust.

It is no coincidence that Robert van Krieken in the year 1999 demonstrates the steps through which the Holocaust can become a sociological category. Starting from an account of the Holocaust, he moves to an account of the organized removal of indigenous children from their families, mostly for reasons of systematically eradicating the ethnic identity of the Aborigines. What the Australian sociologist puts into evidence is the ambivalence of modernity: modern societies turn brutal in their evolving.

In 2002, Postone returns to the question of what the civilizing process is: for him, Bauman's book is a "thought-provoking" (Postone 2002, 1521) work, especially in reconsidering Elias and Max Weber's theories. It is also "puzzling" (Postone, 1523), because Bauman misrepresents Theodor W. Adorno's contribution to *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), distancing his work from concepts such as society and morality as elaborated by the Frankfurt School. For Postone, Bauman fails in his conceptualization of anti-Semitism. He does distinguish anti-Semitism from prejudice

> but does not sufficiently distinguish modern anti-Semitism, which culminated in extermination, from other forms of racism, which do not implicitly point toward the annihilation of the other … Bauman could have more successfully overcome the opposition between "functionalist" positions, that argue that the Holocaust emerged contingently as a goal in the course of Nazi rule, and "intentionalist" positions, that argue that the Holocaust was planned from the beginning (Postone, 2002, 1522).

In addition, Beilharz pinpoints a crucial aspect of Weber's legacy in Bauman: his *Modernity and Communism* (2002) displays how the

predominance and compenetrating of a-reflexive rationality are legitimate genocidal practices.

Sociological Criticism 10 Years after the Publication of *Modernity and the Holocaust*

The criticism of the Swedish Sociologist Caj Schmitz represents a special case: in 1999, in *Sociologisk Forskning*, the scholar highlights how Bauman is a postmodern sociologist who nonetheless adopts the sociological categories dealing with modernity, rather than those linked to post-modernity, to explain the Holocaust. As shown by Hans Scherrer in "The Inhumanity of Government Bureaucracies" in *The Independent Review* (2000), these categories are the same as Herbert Kelman's concepts of "processes of authorization" and "dehumanization" of victims (Bauman uses them to clarify his ideas of the rationalization of bureaucracy).

In a different vein, Małgorzata Melchior, in the introduction to a work on the biographical experience of the Holocaust (published in 2002 for the *Polish Sociological Review*), looks at the new methodology Bauman had conceived in studying the Holocaust. In the same year, Deborah A. Abowitz (2002), in her effort to promote teaching about genocide and the Holocaust at universities, considers how many sociologists dealt with the genocide and the Holocaust: among them she includes Bauman.

It is possible, at this point, to bundle together three different works: Petra Rakušanová's 2003 essay; Martin Shaw's (2003) article, and Tony Blackshaw's 2005 book: what binds all three works is their shared focus on the gloomy side of modernity, and on the construction of the Jew as the enemy.

A completely different Bauman evaluation arrives in 2011s *Criticism* by Stef Craps and Gert Buelens. The authors explore the reading of *Modernity and the Holocaust* by postcolonial scholars such as Paul Gilroy and Enri Dussel. If Gilroy stresses concepts such as ethnicity and race, Dussel instead focuses on how the modernization process includes genocidal practices and violence. Both scholars start in 1492 and outside the European context, that is, in the Americas. This translation in space and time is

important for both scholars because it permits the transfer of the concept of genocide to any space and at any time: in other words, it universalizes the human will to exterminate. For both, modernity is something far larger than that presented by Bauman.

In 2016 Bob Cannon, who hopes to confirm the normative legitimacy of modernity, elaborates a detailed review of Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cannon proposes the crucial debate between intentionalists and functionalists in Holocaust scholarship and offers Bauman's arguments in support of modernity's role in the Holocaust. He explains the ideas which, in his view, have influenced Bauman, namely, Weber's lesson on instrumental rationality, Foucault's texts on corrective practices, and Arendt's elaboration of *Schreibtischtäter*, the impersonal bureaucrats performing administrative functions in an instrumentally rational mode without regard to moral consequences. Cannon stresses how Bauman's claim diverges from Durkheim's position, and how he does not consider Jeffrey Herf's criticisms of Adorno and Horkheimer.

In more recent years, Michael Strand (2018) and Sandro Segre (2019) have reviewed a book on Bauman: *Bauman and Contemporary Sociology* (2017) by Ali Rattansi. Both note the Rattansi's strong criticism of Bauman: the lapses in Bauman's interpretations of the Holocaust, that is, his limitation in analyzing only Western societies, only the role of bureaucracy. Not having considered the role anti-Semitism played in the destruction of the Jews, or the history of Germany, Bauman offers an ahistorical frame of modernity (according to these scholars). With too many generalizations, Bauman plays with a high level of abstraction by not using typical sociological routes, such as the concepts of gender and ghettoization. Finally, he seems unwilling to work out an elaboration of the sociology of morality.

More recently, in 2021 Karen Berger uses Bauman's book to explain the new situation in Australia. The scholar juxtaposes the Aboriginal genocide to the Jewish Holocaust, by stressing the concepts of responsibility, border, and identity (somewhat differently than van Krieken had done in 1999).

That Bauman's sociological lens of modernity—the notion that Auschwitz produced death precisely as a modern factory produces goods—certainly echoes in other sociological writings, such as those of George Ritzer (1996), as Beilharz notes in another of his works. Specifically, in

2000, Beilharz looks at the conceptualization of the so-called “murderous Fordism” that can lead to outrageous parallels, such as Ritzer’s comparison of the Holocaust to McDonald’s production (see Beilharz 2000, 91).

Two Contrasting Appraisals in the Sociological Scholarship

When we contextualize *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), a clear picture of its legacy emerges. Most scholars affirmed in the 1970s that sociology had “been slow to ‘confront’ the topic” of the Holocaust (Rapaport 2008, 1794). Barry Dank stated in 1979 that “there is in essence no American sociological literature on the Holocaust” (Dank 1979, 129). At this point, a question arises: does post-Holocaust sociology begin after the fall of the Berlin Wall, with the publication of *Modernity and the Holocaust*? During the 2001 conference “Sociological Perspectives on the Holocaust and Post-Holocaust Jewish Life” at Rutgers University, scholars such as Michal Bodemann, Debra Renee Kaufman, Martin Oppenheimer, Judith M. Gerson, and Diane L. Wolf, mostly agreed that sociology had been delayed in studying the genocide of the Jews and that before *Modernity and the Holocaust*, scholars had “been reluctant to study the Holocaust” (Katz 1982, 273). They were speaking of the sociological discipline’s silence on the Holocaust, a troubling “dearth of a sociological understanding of the Shoah” (Gerson and Wolf 2007, 3, 11). A belief began to grow that the few sociological studies that did treat the extermination of the Jews did not contain appropriate sociological tools or theoretical systems to properly analyze the phenomenon of genocide. Thus, it seemed that Bauman’s book in and by itself had shattered the silence of sociologists on the Holocaust. This opened the way for a favorable appraisal (followed later by sociologists such as Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, Petra Rakusanova, and Małgorzata Melchior), that sees a watershed in the book that finally roused a post-Holocaust sociology.

However, it should be noted that by sifting through sociological works, and looking at the key concepts typical of sociologists later concerned with the Holocaust (like movement, bureaucracy, totalitarianism, and political

violence), it has been discovered "that several sociologists approached the Holocaust, and not only after 1945 but even during World War II itself" (Messina 2017, 381). This means that one can disagree with what several authors argued in the conference of 2001 and individuate a critical appraisal, according to which Bauman did not revive the post-Holocaust sociology.

For example, Otto Kirchheimer's 1939 article, "Criminal Law in National Socialist Germany," *The German Universities and National Socialism* (1937) by Hartshorne, Hans Gerth's "The Nazi Party," the research *Anti-Semitism among American Labor* conducted by the Frankfurt School in 1944–1945, the works of Otto von Neurath; the writings of Talcott Parsons on National Socialism, and Everett C. Hughes's "Good People and Dirty Work" (Hughes choose not to publish his piece on the banality of evil in 1948). Together, these pieces of work represent the first sociological works criticizing publicly the Nazi socialism. They paved the way for a sociology of the Holocaust, smashing the stereotype of sociology's lapse or delay on this subject. (One can additionally enumerate the studies of Rudolf Heberle, Peter H. Merkl, and Seymour M. Lipset, which analyze the Nazi regime starting from the idea of a political group).

Adding to this, Edward A. Shils and Morris Janovitz investigated the characteristics and influence of German militarism, while Barrington Moore, by evidencing the conditions of the alienation of the working class, conceived the Holocaust as possible because economic or political power was unable to distribute goods. The sociological analysis of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp as elaborated by Anna Pawełczyńska in 1973 is also important. Completely original in post-Holocaust sociology is the thesis of Celia Heller concerning Polish nationalism and anti-Semitism, which permitted the genocide of the Jews in Poland. Heller's thesis is especially novel in that it anticipates, in 1977, what emerges in the publication of *Neighbors* by Gross in 2001. By contrast, *Accounting for Genocide* (1979) by Helen Fein is based on the crucial sociological means employed by nationalized anti-Semitism and Nazi control.

The period from 1980 to 1989 is also fertile. It can be labeled as a fundamental period of sociological studies of genocide: scholars such as Leo Kuper and Irving L. Horowitz coin the concept of "state-sponsored" genocide. These works find a further continuation in Wolfgang Sofsky's and

Emil Katz's later studies. Both stress, even if differently, the phases of "routinization" and "bureaucratization" in the extermination of the Jews.

Finally, this brief overview of post-Holocaust sociology can be concluded by mentioning Nechama Tec's *Dry Tears* (1982) in which the author presents her personal history. Thus, our question hovers: Why did scholars such as Jack N. Porter and Lynn Rapaport, or the scholars of the 2001 conference, argue that Bauman himself roused the sociology of the Holocaust?

Conclusion

From this attempt at a reconstruction of the responses by sociologists and historians to Zygmunt Bauman's important book *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), more questions emerge. First, why is Bauman's book on modernity and the Holocaust still relevant today, and why has it produced so much discussion and debate among Holocaust scholars? Second, has his category of modernity solved the tensions between functionalists and intentionalists, and was it responsible for the awakening of post-Holocaust sociology in 1989?

We have noted that the category of modernity has been used, even if differently, by certain historians before Bauman. There are also those who used these categories after Bauman, but without acknowledging him. The distinction between historians of the first period, who responded to Bauman's work before the 2001 publication of Jan T. Gross's *Neighbors*, from those of the second period has been crucial in the development of historical criticism around Bauman's work.

Additionally, we noted that few historians wrote book reviews of his volume, publishing the critiques in academic history journals, unlike sociologists, who dedicated many pages of their sociological journals to reviews of Bauman's book. We emphasized that for sociologists *Modernity and the Holocaust* has been considered a unique text, rousing sociologists to enter Holocaust studies (even if, as we showed, there were in truth numerous sociologists before Bauman who discussed the Holocaust). The nexus between sociological and historical interpretations of *Modernity and*

the Holocaust is a promising field for further research, especially for the issue of the uniqueness of the Holocaust (an issue raised by Bauer in 1980), and how to compare it to the genocides of other national, ethnic, and religious groups.

References

Abowitz, Deborah A. 2002. "Bringing the Sociological into the Discussion: Teaching the Sociology of Genocide and the Holocaust." *Teaching Sociology* 30 (1): 26–38.

Adorno, Theodor W. et al. 1950. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Allen, Ann Taylor. 1997. "The Holocaust and the Modernization of Gender: A Historiographical Essay." *Central European History* 30 (3): 349–364.

Aly, Götz H. 1995. *"Endlösung": Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag.

Banton, Michael. 1991. "Review of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, by Zygmunt Bauman." *British Journal of Sociology* 42 (1): 164.

Baranowski, Shelley. 2000. "Nazism and Polarization: The Left and the Third Reich." *The Historical Journal* 43 (4): 1157–1172.

Bartov, Omer. 1998. "Defining Enemies, Making Victims: Germans, Jews, and the Holocaust." *American Historical Review* 103 (3): 771–816.

——— 2005–2006. "L'Europa orientale come luogo del genocidio." In *Storia della Shoah: La crisi dell'Europa, lo sterminio degli ebrei e la memoria del XX secolo*, edited by Marina Cattaruzza, Marcello Flores, Simon Levis-Sullam, and Enzo Traverso, 419–459. Turin: Utet.

Bauer, Yehuda. 1980. "Whose Holocaust?." *Midstream* 26 (9): 42–46.

——— 2001. *Rethinking the Holocaust*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beilharz, Peter. 2000. *Zygmunt Bauman: Dialectic of Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.

——— 2002 "Modernity and Communism: Zygmunt Bauman and the Other Totalitarianism." *Thesis Eleven* 70: 88–99.

——— 2020. *Intimacy in Postmodern Times: A Friendship with Zygmunt Bauman*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Berger, Karen. 2021. "Performing the Bounds of Responsibility." *Humanities* 10 (4): 112–125.

Blackshaw, Tony. 2005. *Zygmunt Bauman*. London: Routledge.

Borgwardt, Elizabeth. 2008. “New Deal for the Nuremberg Trial: The Limits of Law in Generating Human Rights Norms.” *Law and History Review* 26 (3): 679–705.

Browning, Christopher R. 1992a. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York: Harper-Collins.

——— 1992b. *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cannon, Bob. 2016. “Towards a Theory of Counter-Modernity: Rethinking Zygmunt Bauman’s Holocaust Writings.” *Critical Sociology* 42 (1): 49–69.

Craps, Stef, and Gert Buelens. 2011. “Traumatic Mirrorings: Holocaust and Colonial Trauma in Michael Chabon’s *The Final Solution*.” *Criticism* 53 (4): 569–586.

Dank, Barry M. 1979. “Review of *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars*, by Celia S. Heller.” *Contemporary Sociology* 8 (1): 129–130.

Domansky, Elisabeth. 1992. “ ‘Kristallnach’, the Holocaust and German Unity: The Meaning of November 9 as an Anniversary in Germany.” *History and Memory* 4 (1): 60–94.

Dunning, Eric, and Stephen Mennell. 1998. “Elias on Germany, Nazism and the Holocaust: On the Balance between ‘Civilizing’ and ‘Decivilizing’ Trends in the Social Development of Western Europe.” *British Journal of Sociology* 49 (3): 339–357.

Elias, Norbert. 1996. *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Föllmer, Moritz. 2013. “The Subjective Dimension of Nazism.” *The Historical Journal* 56 (4): 1107–1132.

Freeman, Michael. 1995. “Genocide, Civilization and Modernity.” *British Journal of Sociology* 46 (2): 207–223.

Galimi, Valeria, and Dimitri D’Andrea. 2016. “Review of *Reparto assassin: La mentalità dell’omicidio di massa*, by Abram de Swaan.” *Cambio. Rivista Sulle Trasformazioni Sociali* 6 (12): 271–280.

Gerson, Judith M., and Diane L. Wolf, eds. 2007. *Sociology Confronts the Holocaust: Memories and Identities in Jewish Diasporas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Goldfarb, Brian. 1990. “Review of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, by Zygmunt Bauman.” *Sociology* 24 (2): 306–307.

Goldhagen, Daniel J. 1996. *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Goodlet, Kirk. W. 2012. “Rethinking *Modernity and the Holocaust*: The Application of Zygmunt Bauman’s Thesis to the Jewish Council of Lodz, 1940–1944.” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 25 (3): 504–530.

Gross, Jan T. 2001. *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jews Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hagen, William W. 2002. “A ‘Potent, Devilish Mixture’ of Motives: Explanatory Strategy and Assignment of Meaning in Jan Gross’s *Neighbors*.” *Slavic Review* 61 (3): 466–475.

Halpert, Burton P. 2007. "Early American Sociology and the Holocaust: the Failure of a Discipline." *Humanity & Society* 31 (1): 6–23.

Herf, Jeffrey. 2016. *Undeclared Wars with Israel: East Germany and the West German Far Left 1967–1989*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Irwin-Zarecka, Iwona. 1991. "Review of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, by Zygmunt Bauman." *Contemporary Sociology* 20 (2): 216–217.

Katz, Fred E. 1982. "A Sociological Perspective to the Holocaust." *Modern Judaism* 2 (3): 273–296.

Kershaw, Ian. 1991. *Hitler: Profiles in Power*. London: Longman.

Lal, Vinay. 1998. "Genocide, Barbaric Others, and the Violence of Categories: A Response to Omer Bartov." *American Historical Review* 103 (4): 1187–1190.

Lawson, Tom. 2010. *Debates on the Holocaust*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Lucassen, Leo. 2010. "A Brave New World: The Left, Social Engineering, and Eugenics in Twentieth-Century Europe." *International Review of Social History* 55 (2): 265–296.

Mazower, Mark. 2002. "Violence and the State in the Twentieth Century." *American Historical Review* 107 (4): 1158–1178.

Melchior, Małgorzata. 2002. "Threat of Extermination in Biographical Experience of the Holocaust Survivors." *Polish Sociological Review* 137: 53–70.

Messina, Adele Valeria. 2017. *American Sociology and Holocaust Studies: The Alleged Silence and the Creation of the Sociological Delay*. Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press.

Milchman, Alan, and Alan Rosenberg. 1990. "Review of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, by Zygmunt Bauman." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 5 (3): 337–342.

Moses, A. Dirk. 1997. "Modernity and the Holocaust." *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 43 (3): 441–445.

Murray, Hugh. 1991. "Review of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, by Zygmunt Bauman." *German Politics & Society* 22: 82–86.

Porter, Jack N. 1993. "The Holocaust as a Sociological Construct." *Contemporary Jewry* 14 (1): 184–187.

Postone, Moishe. 1992. "Review of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, by Zygmunt Bauman." *American Journal of Sociology* 97 (5): 1521–1523.

Rakušanová, Petra. 2003. "Review of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, by Zygmunt Bauman." *Sociologický Cˇasopis/Czech Sociological Review* 39 (1): 105–106.

Rapaport, Lynn. 2008. "Review of *Sociology Confronts the Holocaust: Memories and Identities in Jewish Diasporas*, by Judith M. Gerson and Diane L. Wolf." *American Journal of Sociology* 113 (6): 1794–1796.

Rattansi, Ali. 2017. *Bauman and Contemporary Sociology: A Critical Analysis*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Ritzer, George. 1996. *The McDonaldization of Society*. Newbury Park, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Roseman, Mark. 2011. “National Socialism and the End of Modernity.” *American Historical Review* 116 (3): 688–701.

Rosenfeld, Alvin H. 2001. “The Assault on Holocaust Memory.” *The American Jewish Year Book* 101: 3–20.

Salomoni, Antonella. 2007. *L’Unione Sovietica e la Shoah: Genocidio, resistenza, rimozione*. Bologna: il Mulino.

Schmitz, Caj. 1999. “Auschwitz: Det moderna projektets kulmen eller kollaps?.” *Sociologisk Forskning* 36 (2): 5–35.

Segre, Sandro. 2019. “Review of *Bauman and Contemporary Sociology: A Critical Analysis*, by Ali Rattansi.” *Contemporary Sociology* 48 (1): 88–90.

Shaw, Martin. 2003. “Strategy and Slaughter.” *Review of International Studies* 29 (2): 269–277.

Sherrer, Hans. 2000. “The Inhumanity of Government Bureaucracies.” *The Independent Review* 5 (2): 249–264.

Strand, Michael. 2018. “Review of *Bauman and Contemporary Sociology: A Critical Analysis*, by Ali Rattansi.” *Social Forces* 97 (1): e9.

Turner, Bryan S. 1992. “Review of *Modernity and the Holocaust*, by Zygmunt Bauman.” *Sociology* 26 (3): 507–508.

van Krieken, Robert. 1999. “The Barbarism of Civilization: Cultural Genocide and the ‘Stolen Generations’.” *British Journal of Sociology* 50 (2): 297–315.

Vetlesen, Arne Johan. 2005. *Evil and Human Agency: Understanding Collective Evildoing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wagner, Peter. 1994. *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline*. London: Routledge.

Waxman, Zoë. 2009. “Thinking Against Evil? Hannah Arendt, Zygmunt Bauman, and the Writing of the Holocaust.” *History of European Ideas* 35 (1): 93–104.

Wistrich, Robert S. 2001. *Hitler and the Holocaust: How and Why the Holocaust Happened*. London: Phoenix Press.

Chapter Four

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN AND THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE IN SOCIAL THEORY

Stjepan G. Meštrović, Michael Ohsfeldt and Jacob Hardy

Introduction

We borrow the idea of "continental divide" from Seymour Martin Lipset's book, *Continental Divide* (1990), and Lipset borrowed it from a 1981 film with the same title starring John Belushi. In the film, the term referred to the real, geological divide caused by the Rocky Mountains in North America, and Lipset uses it as a metaphor to demonstrate profound cultural differences between Canada and the United States. Lipset uses massive amounts of empirical data to demonstrate what is not obvious, that despite sharing the same language, religions, historical origins, and continent, Canada is heir to the English colonies that decided not to break with the English empire and is far more European in its values, norms, and beliefs than the Americans who revolted and created the United States. Our use of the phrase, continental divide, is a metaphor that refers to the profound differences between the United States (quite apart from Canada, Mexico, and the rest of North America) and the continent of Europe in terms of

social theory. We locate Zygmunt Bauman's social theories and perspectives as being on the European part of this divide not just geographically but in terms of attitudes, origins, values, and even prejudices. Bauman, along with other European postmodernists, is disdainful of American sociologists such as Talcott Parsons, American philosophy such as pragmatism, the American penchant for empiricism, and American optimism and can-do attitude. He is firmly entrenched in the writings of Karl Marx, the critical theorists, and European existentialists and philosophers. He never mentions William James, the founder of pragmatism as a distinct American philosophy and grandfather of symbolic interactionism (he was George Herbert Mead's teacher). Bauman's dismissal of functionalism, structuralism, and empiricism is typical of scores of European social theorists, especially the postmodernists.

If one examines the trajectory of Zygmunt Bauman's many books from his earlier ones such as *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987), *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), *Intimations of Postmodernity* (1991b), and *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991a) to his later works such as *Liquid Modernity* (2000), it is clear that throughout his career he was pursuing the theme of liquification. The liquification of all that is solid in modernity is Bauman's version of postmodern deconstruction. In this regard, his theorizing is in line with that broad and influential body of theory known as postmodernism and theorists such as Anthony Giddens, Jean Baudrillard, and Jacques Derrida (Rosenau 1992). We shall not be distracted by the individual language games some of these theorists play with the term, postmodernism, such as Baudrillard's denial that he is a postmodernist or his attacks on Michel Foucault, Giddens's invention of the term "high modernity" in place of the word postmodernity, or Bauman's tiff with Giddens about terminology. Giddens's juggernaut of modernity, which crushes everything in its path but does not construct anything, is the rough equivalent of Bauman's process of liquification even if they use different terminology. What they all have in common is that: they are European theorists, deconstruction is a one-way street that does not allow for reconstruction, they trace their lineage to critical theory and Marxism, and are dismissive or critical of positivism and structural functionalism. But again, what is noteworthy to our analysis is that these targets of European criticism are primarily American: structural functionalism and empiricism, including

qualitative sociology, are the hallmarks of the social theories of Talcott Parsons, David Riesman, George Herbert Mead, and Robert E. Park and the Chicago School of sociology. And these American social theorists are all heirs to the pragmatism of William James.

In *What Use is Sociology* (2014), Bauman in conversation with Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Keith Tester is explicit in his dismissal of Talcott Parsons, who is widely regarded as having ruled academic sociology in the twentieth century in the United States. He throws out Durkheim with the bathwater of Parsonian functionalism primarily because Parsons fashioned Durkheim into a functionalist and introduced him to American audiences. Similarly, Parsons translated Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* into English. Bauman selectively draws upon Weber's interpretive sociology but ignores his concept of the Iron Cage, presumably for the same reason, that Parsons popularized Weber in the United States as a functionalist and proponent of what Parsons called action theory. It is telling that in his self-disclosure of intellectual and cultural influences upon his theorizing, Bauman discusses overwhelmingly European intellectuals and artists.

If one turns to the United States for theorists of equal stature as Bauman and some of the other postmodernists, in terms of either popularity or influence in academia, one should point exactly to James, Veblen, Riesman, Parsons, Ritzer, and Park's Chicago School of Sociology. David Riesman's book *The Lonely Crowd* (Riesman, Glazer and Denney [2002] 1950) is still "the best-selling book by a professional sociologist in American history" (Patterson 2002), followed closely by George Ritzer's *The McDonaldization of Society* (1992). Bauman does not even mention James or Veblen or Riesman. What they all have in common, despite confronting similar problems with modernity such as wars, economic crises, anomie, and the Iron Cage, is optimism about fixing the social problems that accompany modernity. Parsons (1937) became popular with his concepts of social equilibrium and society as a self-correcting system during the Great Depression and World War II. Ritzer addresses the issue of how to escape Weber's Iron Cage. Riesman offers suggestions on how to overcome the anomic and shallow existence of other-directed conformity to social media and peer groups. Veblen wrote about peaceable traits and societies as an antidote to the barbarism of leisure class mentality. The Chicago School

gave explicit recommendations on fostering the social bonds that stem from primary groups even as they documented the harmful effects of the secondary groups caused by modernity. William James (1994 [1910]) wrote about the conversion of "sick souls" to "healthy-minded" ones not just with regard to religion with a capital R but religious processes with a small r in therapy and social movements. There is an unmistakable chasm between European versus American sociology since its inception in terms of attitude, approach, and goals—what we call "the continental divide."

But what about the fact that the inception of sociology is widely regarded as being European in origin? One immediately thinks of Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel. With the exception of Marx, the founders of sociology were Americanized by theorists in the United States in radically different ways than they were interpreted in Europe. Marx was ignored or dismissed by Parsons and during Parsons's reign as the leading sociologist in twentieth century America. The Durkheim and Weber found in the works of Parsons—promulgators of social action, equilibrium, and homeostasis—are not the Durkheim and Weber found in works by European social theorists such as Giddens, Bauman, Baudrillard, and Pierre Bourdieu, for example. Some European theorists have argued that Durkheim's concept of "anomie" should be dropped from sociology's lexicon whereas Riesman and Parsons were both concerned with repairing anomie. Park and the Chicago School drew heavily on Simmel's (1971) concept of the blasé urbanite with the aim of repairing the blasé attitude whereas Bauman and others, such as David Frisby (1981), seem to delight in Simmel's alleged lack of systemization. As for Marx, it should be obvious that his theory was abhorrent to most American sociologists because of its connection to Communism whereas he is the staple of postmodern theorizing. Veblen and James are the two uniquely American contributors to sociology who were and still are virtually ignored by European intellectuals, including Bauman.

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore in any appreciable depth the import of the issues being raised here, it is worth mentioning that some aspects of the classical origins of sociology are still being misconstrued. For example, it is a truism to dismiss Durkheim as either a Comtean positivist or a Parsonian functionalist. But consider Durkheim's (1983) neglected book, *Pragmatism and Sociology*, which is based upon

regular lectures he gave on pragmatism at the Sorbonne. Durkheim was well aware of James, Charles Pierce, and John Dewey, and wrote that both sociology and pragmatism "are children of the same era" (Durkheim 1983, 1). Durkheim seems to have been influenced by James and tried to bridge the continental divide under discussion here. What if Durkheim was actually a Jamesian pragmatist of sorts with a sociological bent?

In this chapter, we seek to situate the overall contours of Zygmunt Bauman's theory, and especially his concept of liquid modernity, within the context of the continental divide in European versus American experience, theorizing, and attitudes. We shall explore the contrast in the collective experience of the twentieth century between the United States and Europe. Then, we will compare and contrast some of Bauman's central metaphors and concepts with those of Riesman. As the most popular American sociologist in American history, Riesman cannot be ignored, and the contrast between their theories illuminates the continental divide. We conclude with an overall assessment of the reasons why Bauman's reception in the United States and Europe has been very different.

The Contrast in the Experience of the Twentieth Century Between the United States and Europe

Consider the legacy of the Russian émigré to the United States, Pitirim Sorokin. Sorokin was almost executed during the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and was the first department chair in sociology at Harvard University. Sorokin hired Parsons, who at the time was an instructor in economics, and who went on to become the second department chair in sociology. While Sorokin is more ignored than Parsons, and the two are often depicted as not having much in common in their theorizing, they actually both shared an optimistic theme that resonated with American intellectuals. And the two of them served on the same doctoral committees that produced functionalists such as Robert K. Merton. Sorokin's (1985 [1937]) description of what he called sensate culture is remarkably similar to Bauman's description of liquid modernity—he even uses the same images of liquification that Bauman uses. For example, Sorokin writes:

> Everything is in a liquid state … The whole social life and the whole mentality are also in a liquid state, formless, shapeless, foggy, like a primeval protoplasm. One would look in vain in this fog of shadows for clear-cut boundary lines between the sinister and the benevolent, the good and the bad, the true and false, the beautiful and the ugly, the wholesome and harmful, true and false (Sorokin 1985 [1937], 320).

The difference between Sorokin and Bauman is that Sorokin theorized that on the ashes of sensate culture, a new idealistic culture would emerge. The social universe does not just collapse, but renews itself, along the lines of Durkheim's neglected line that "the former gods are growing old or dying, and others have not been born" (Durkheim 1995 [1912], 429).

The American experience of the World Wars was vastly different from their European counterparts, and this likely affected much of the mood in the generations since, including in pop culture and academia. For instance, historian Mark Meigs (1997) studied the accounts of American participants in World War I and found them characterized by a distinct optimism, in part due to how short their involvement was compared to the Europeans. Similarly, World War II has been mythologized in the United States, often because of news and entertainment media portrayals, not only as a necessary, justified war, but even as the Good War or the Best War Ever, with this framing of the war becoming vital in American culture and politics for generations (Adams 1993). However, the World Wars had left incredible scars throughout Europe, on its people, and on its land, devastations that would not easily be recovered from or reckoned with, such as the prolonged trench warfare or the Holocaust which so often captivated Bauman (1989). For Europeans, the World Wars marked the end of their empires and a revelation of the horrors that humans could wreak. As Bauman points out frequently, the Holocaust called into question the legacy of the Enlightenment. How could Germany, the land of Kant and Hegel and Beethoven and Enlightenment culture in general, have participated in the Holocaust?

In contrast, for Americans, the World Wars were the beginning of the American Century where the United States was the premier global force, culturally and politically (Lundestad 1999). America and Europe had starkly different experiences, and now different mindsets: while the former had been energized and discovered its boldness and strength, the latter had been

traumatized, which was made even more apparent as America tried to rebuild Europe after World War II with the Marshall Plan (Pells 1997).

Historically, there has long been tension within how the United States and Europe view each other, tinged with a mixture of disdain, fascination, and, at times, admiration (Pells 1997). Prior to the twentieth century, most Europeans regarded America as the land of philistines. Freud was disgusted when he visited the United States in 1915 to give a lecture at Clark University. Even Alexis de Tocqueville quipped that America had no geniuses in culture (somehow he overlooked Benjamin Franklin, Herman Melville, and other Americans who are regarded as geniuses today). Richard Pells (1997, 177) sums up much of the view of European intellectuals on the United States that "despite their optimism about the future, and their belief that with sufficient energy and ingenuity all problems could be solved, the Americans overlooked the presence of evil in human history. They did not have, like the Europeans, a tragic sensibility. … People in the United States were hopelessly utopian and pitifully innocent, [intellectuals] all insisted." Such a view is in line with how, as this chapter discusses elsewhere, American culture and academia, even when critical, are driven by the belief that the future can be better, that problems can be fixed, and progress can be made. Moreover, though Pells (1997) never mentions Bauman, it is worth noting how Bauman (1990, 132) argued that " 'progress' stands not for any quality of history, but for *the self-confidence of the present*. The deepest, perhaps the sole meaning of progress is made up of two closely interrelated beliefs—that "time is on our side," and that we are the ones who "make things happen.' " Furthermore, for those with such confidence, progress is axiomatic, while to those without it, progress is unimaginable. This is vital to Bauman's (1990, 133) diagnosis of his era that "if self-confidence—the reassuring feeling of 'keeping hold on the present'—is the sole foundation on which the trust in progress rests, no wonder that in our times trust must be unsteady and rickety." Yet, few have said that Americans are without a sense of confidence.

Similarly, recent successful presidential political campaigns like Barack Obama's "Change We Can Believe In" or Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" both capture the same sentiment, that we can change the country for the better, although those definitions of "better" may differ

wildly. Joe Biden's slogan "Build Back Better" similarly resonates with American collective sentiment. This preference for optimism in presidents was noted by famed psychologist Martin Seligman (1990) who found that in most American presidential elections throughout much of the twentieth century, American voters elected candidates with the more optimistic presentation.

Some of this hope in progress or change can be seen in popular culture. For instance, that Canadian-created icon of hopeful Americana, Superman, was known for the motto "Truth, Justice and the American Way," which was famously defended in *Action Comics* #775's "What's So Funny About Truth, Justice & the American Way?" (2001), a now classic repudiation of darker, more violent, pessimistic, and deconstructionist superhero stories and views. More recently, that motto has been adjusted in the interest of inclusivity to become "Truth, Justice and a Better Tomorrow" (McMillan 2021). That "the American Way" has been changed to "a Better Tomorrow" is striking: while Superman's motto loses some of its explicitly American Civil Religious (from Bellah 1967) tones, it still reflects a hope that change and progress are possible, that there remain ideals to strive for. The new motto also recalls one of Superman's nicknames, "The Man of Tomorrow." This is an example of the perseverance of optimism in the depictions of this iconic character in American popular culture.

Optimism has been seen elsewhere in American culture, even when applying postmodernism in the analysis. For instance, a postmodern analysis of American humor focused on how humor is used to comment on the postmodern world (rather than postmodern humor) to find *solutions*, arguing that "humor *can* [emphasis in original] be a positive agency in postmodern American culture … it reasserts value and reveals a degree of optimism" (McDonald 2010, 23). Indeed, Paul McDonald (2010) found that much of American humor is in relation to the American Dream and core values of equality, opportunity, and freedom, including the difference between ideal and reality. Similarly, Everett Carter (2018) examined the influence of the optimistic, hopeful, faith in progress that is "the American Idea" across centuries of American literature. Carter (2018) identifies that much of the American Idea combined the synthesis of primitivism (that human nature is inherently good) with progressivism (that new developments and technologies are good), which, while paradoxical to

outsiders, seems to be an almost necessary pairing for those who hold to that ideology. Consideration of such matters is vital, because Bauman advocates for attention to the insights into society provided by culture such as television, art, film, and literature (albeit he focuses primarily on European culture, as mentioned previously) (Bauman, Jacobsen and Tester 2014).

Moreover, the study of optimism has primarily been a concern in the United States, especially in psychology, with considerable interest in how to increase and spread optimism (Peterson 2000). Furthermore, due to that focus—wherein much of the research on optimism is done by Americans, on Americans, for Americans—the concepts of optimism utilized in academia often reflect that specific American cultural context, rather than other cultural contexts, given that optimism is a culturally relative social construct (Bennett 2011).

For instance, a recent study examined optimism about the American Dream among Hispanics/Latinos, its high strength as well as prevalence, and the ways that that optimism might be increased, to overcome the barriers to, specifically, an optimistic perspective about the American Dream (Cervantes et. al 2021). The reason for this focus on an optimistic perspective itself is that the perspective was framed as valuable because of its benefits to physical and mental health, relationships, educational attainment, and socioeconomic outcomes. Such research sees both optimism and the pursuit of the American Dream as good, for they provide something solid for people to latch on to. It is important to note that the key concepts by European founders of sociology (Weber, Simmel, Durkheim) were all pessimistic (Iron Cage, blasé attitude, anomie) and in line with Sigmund Freud's theme of civilization and its discontents. By contrast, Lewis Killian (1971) argues that American sociology was born out of optimism, and the founding American grand theorists were optimistic and focused on progress. Indeed, Killian (1971) finds that the sociology up to and including his era, whether conservative, reformist, or revolutionary, takes progress as an assumption and is unwilling to embrace pessimism, even to the detriment of restricting their sociological imaginations. Yet, even Killian's (1971) calls to allow for a realist pessimism within sociological analysis still ends with an anecdote from his World War II combat training, that even in hopeless

situations one can never discount the possibilities of luck or heroism, so still maintains some optimism.

Additionally, while Mark Dawson (2011) argues that readings of Bauman's work as bleak, miserably pessimistic, and lacking agency are erroneous, and that it is instead agency that provides the optimism within Bauman's work, it is vital to note that he remarks that these readings of Bauman as pessimistic are dominant. If it is the case that many read Bauman as starkly pessimistic, for good or bad, that may have a role in which cultures embrace Bauman more than others. Dawson's (2011) work is also relevant to this chapter in making the argument that there is a neglected optimism within Bauman's work, by turning to the American founder of symbolic interactionism and social psychology, George Herbert Mead, to aid in illuminating optimism. In such a cultural and academic landscape as the America outlined by this chapter, where there is still a striving for solidity and progress, these dynamics might reflect some crucial aspects of why Bauman has had comparatively far less recognition and influence in the United States than he has had in Europe.

Tracing the Continental Divide in the Approaches of Bauman Versus Riesman

It is practically a truism in philosophy that pragmatism is the one truly unique American contribution to philosophy, and that it stands in the sharpest contrast to so-called continental philosophy, exemplified by G. W. F. Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer (dubbed the philosopher of pessimism), Jacques Derrida, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Theodor W. Adorno and their followers in Europe. Again, because of the limitations of space, we shall not explore the origins of pragmatism beyond the American philosopher William James and will not delve into the infighting he had with Charles Pierce and others about this word or philosophy. For our purposes, the important points are that James, is credited with establishing pragmatism as a philosophical concept, that Mead was his student and babysitter to James's children, that Riesman is widely regarded as a pragmatist, and that most American sociologists can be regarded as

pragmatists in some fashion as opposed to being followers of any European philosopher. The essence of James's pragmatic attitude is that ideas are not inherently true or false, but that "truth happens to an idea" (James 2000 [1909], 132). Of course, this also implies that truth does not happen to some ideas, or happens to a lesser extent, to ideas that are regarded as truths in other contexts and cultures. The guiding theme here is the question: To what extent did truth happen to the ideas of Bauman and Riesman in their respective contexts of the continental divide in sociology?

In *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Bauman (1991a) attempts to move beyond Max Horkheimer and Adorno (1972 [1944]) in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Whereas Horkheimer and Adorno seek to purify and defend the so-called Enlightenment project despite the barbarism committed in post-Enlightenment Europe, Bauman's attitude toward the Enlightenment legacy is much more polemical. Bauman states bluntly: "The Nazi vision of a harmonious, orderly, deviation-free society drew its legitimacy and attractiveness from … the century and a half of post-Enlightenment history" (Bauman 1991a, 29). He introduces the metaphor of Nazis as "gardeners" who sought to create a perfectly orderly society such that "anything that spoils the order, the harmony, the design thus refuses purpose and meaning is Nature" (Bauman 1991a, 40). Jews and other victims of the Nazis became "weeds" to be plucked out of the orderly garden in Bauman's metaphorical interpretation of history.

One should note that most of the theorists who made up the Frankfurt School of critical theory fled to the United States because of the rise of Nazism. Is the United States not one of the fruits of the Enlightenment project? An interesting but neglected connection in this trans-Atlantic story of interpreting the legacies of the Enlightenment has to do with the role of Erich Fromm, who was a rabbi and a Marxist, and a psychoanalyst and critical theorist. He was also Riesman's therapist and close friend, and Riesman acknowledged Fromm's influence upon him. It is beyond the scope of this discussion to document the ways that Fromm's analyses of the Enlightenment legacies as well as Nazism and totalitarianism are radically different from Bauman's facile image of Nazis as gardeners seeking order. To get to the point, Riesman took from Fromm the theme of "mass society" with its proclivity toward conformity as the key feature of what he called "other-directed" society. Other-directedness does not imply interest in or

empathy toward others, but blindly following peers and media like sheep. Fromm and Riesman recast the problem addressed by Bauman not in terms of Hitler as a master gardener fulfilling the Enlightenment project but as questioning how it was that the European population failed to stop him and instead conformed to his evil designs. For Riesman and Fromm, there is nothing orderly about other-directedness: it is shallow, impulsive, chaotic, and above all, anomic. In contrast to Bauman's metaphor of the gardener, Riesman likens other-directed society to a psychiatric ward, or in his words, "the ambulatory ward of modern culture" (Riesman, Glazer, and Reuel 2002 [1950], 244). In other words, "mass society" and widespread conformity became issues on both sides of the Atlantic in the twentieth century but had different outcomes. For the pragmatist, it is not a question of whether the Enlightenment was true or false, good or evil, but what happened to it in different social contexts.

It is not well-known that Talcott Parsons (1993) wrote about Nazism, and like Riesman, interpreted it as the manifestation of an anomic society, not anything like an orderly society. Invoking Parsons's vocabulary of norms, values, sanctions, and beliefs, which are key aspects of four sub-systems that are part of every society viewed as a social system, Parsons could not and did not view Nazism as an exemplar of social order. On the contrary, its norms, values, sanctions, and beliefs were out of sync with those of ordinary Germans. And in the end, and despite Bauman's negative attitude toward Parsons as a theorist, one could argue in a Parsonian way that society did self-correct from the aberration of Nazism, and truth did not happen to the idea of Nazism in a permanent way. Finally, Parsons, along with Ruth Benedict, Erik Erikson, and other American academics, worked as consultants to the United States government to offer advice on how to defeat fascism.

Bauman regards assimilation as a modernist phenomenon: to assimilate is to absorb, incorporate, make everyone similar, and beneath it there lies intolerance. He observes that most of the founders of sociology were Jewish and covered up their Jewish heritage, adding, "the Jews were the first to sample the taste of postmodern existence" (Bauman 1991a, 158). He gives the example of Freud, who was Jewish, as someone who stressed interpretation, was a deconstructionist, and saw all of life as neurosis—in a phrase, Freud was "the first postmodernist" for Bauman (Bauman 1991a,

175). Again, the American counterargument to Bauman's interpretation is that Freud was much more popular in the United States than in Europe, and in America he was conceptualized as a sort of "doctor of the mind," not a deconstructionist. He is also seen as the originator of psychotherapy—even psychotherapies that reject Freud's strict tenets of psychoanalysis—whose goals are not to keep patients chained in neurosis but to help them overcome the most debilitating aspects of their neuroses. The truths that attached to Freud's ideas in America are vastly different from the truths attached to Freud's ideas in Europe or in Bauman's theories. But what about Durkheim? He was Jewish, but not a deconstructionist. One should also note that Riesman was an American Jewish sociologist, and his theoretical framework does not fit Bauman's vision of postmodernism. Jewish experience in the United States was vastly different from Jewish experience in Europe.

According to Bauman, postmodernity is living with ambivalence, as opposed to the allegedly rigid, "solid," and "legislative" legacy of modernity built upon the foundations of the Enlightenment. In Bauman's (1991a, 98) words:

> Postmodernity is modernity that has admitted the non-feasibility of its original project `… In the absence of the intent to dominate, the presence of mutually exclusive standards neither offends the desire of logical congruity nor triggers off a remedial action. Ideally speaking, in the plural and pluralistic world of postmodernity, every form of life is permitted on principle, or rather, no agreed principles are evident which may render any form of life impermissible.

Again, the contrast between Bauman's version of modernity versus postmodernity and Riesman's American version is striking. Consider Riesman's three types of social character: tradition-directed, inner-directed, and other-directed. The first two correspond to Bauman's "legislative" and "solid" modernity. For example, Riesman uses the metaphor of the gyroscope to describe the inner-directed type, whose norms, values, and beliefs last a lifetime and who is committed to the goals, spouses, and other decisions and choices that he or she made. The other-directed social type is more "interpretive" and "liquid," in Bauman's vocabulary. Riesman uses

the metaphor of the Milky Way Galaxy of choices that confronts the other-directed type when deciding on partners, friends, movies to watch on streaming services, toppings on pizza, and everything else in life. The result is indeed ambivalence, but it is a paralyzing ambivalence that precludes commitment to anything or anyone. This paralysis is also associated, for Riesman, with the nagging feeling that one will miss out on a better choice for every choice that one makes, and a characteristic anxiety about being judged by "the jury of one's peers" for one's exhibited opinions, tastes, and choices. Riesman's depiction of the consequences of ambivalence—even though Riesman never used the word, postmodernity—corresponds to the many opinion polls and studies of millennials and Generation Z's as insecure, anxious, socially awkward, and easily manipulated by social media and advertising. Bauman's depiction of a pluralistic, tolerant postmodern social world does not. Bauman overlooked the pressing problem today of holding the "right" kinds of "tolerant" opinions and the fear of being "canceled" by peers and social media for holding the "wrong" opinions—the latter are not tolerated in a supposedly tolerant society. The supposedly tolerant will not tolerate any mistakes made in the presentation of a tolerant self, but the standards and definitions of what is considered tolerance are in constant flux. For example, in just the past few years, the following things and phenomena have been labeled as racist, and are no longer tolerated by the tolerant: mathematics, grammar, Aunt Jemima pancakes, being punctual, films like *Gone with the Wind*, and so on.

Finally, Riesman does not call for a return to tradition or inner-directedness, nor does he judge the other-directed harshly. For him, it is not a matter of an either/or alternative between what Bauman calls modernity and postmodernity, solid versus liquid, legislative versus interpretive. Rather, for Riesman, much of the world was and still is tradition-directed and inner-directed with other-directedness concentrated in large urban centers like Los Angeles, London, and Shanghai. Even within the concentrated centers of other-directedness, there are ethnic and other enclaves of tradition and inner-directed immigrants. It is not a matter of replacing modernity with postmodernity, not even in the long run, but of managing the inevitable conflicts and misunderstandings among these types. The well-known divide in the United States between Red States (mostly conservative, Republican) and Blue States (liberal, Democrat)

illustrates Riesman's theory, but not Bauman's vision of postmodernity supplanting modernity.

In his book, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, Bauman (1991b) seems to merely substitute Communism for Nazism as part of his overall argument: this time, it is Communism that serves as the exemplar of modernity while the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union represents postmodernity. In Bauman's words, "Communism was modernity's most devout, vigorous and gallant champion—pious to the point of simplicity" (Bauman 1991b, 179). Conversely, the collapse of Communism was the triumph of postmodernity. An immediate problem with this simplistic assessment is that old-fashioned Communism still thrives in North Korea and Cuba, and China went on to transform itself into a new experimental hybrid of Communism, free-market capitalism, and democracy.

But the more serious problem with Bauman's argument is that the countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union were barely keeping up with modernity's development in Western Europe and had no elements of postmodernity with which to overthrow modernism and triumph over it. China's transformation into a global world power economically and in terms of influence is due to its assimilation (a modernist trait) of select aspects of Western, modernist culture, not outright rejection of it.

It is obviously beyond the scope of this analysis to assess the complexity of the issue being discussed here. The intent is to compare and contrast Bauman's interpretation with an exemplary American sociological interpretation, represented by Riesman. During the Cold War and long before the collapse of Communism could even be imagined, Riesman (1993) published an essay on "The Nylon War." He was referring to women's stockings, not industrial nylon used for other purposes. Riesman argued that along with other consumer products popular in the West, nylons were being smuggled into the Soviet Union and behind the Iron Curtain, and the effect was that ordinary citizens were exposed to objects of consumption completely unknown to them in their countries. What holds true for women's nylons also holds true for smuggled Beatles records, blue jeans, chocolate, Italian shoes, and other things that were considered luxuries behind the Iron Curtain. In a phrase, inner-directed culture in

Communist nations, which simply ignored consumerism, was slowly being eroded by Western, other-directed consumerism. But consumer goods are the fruit of modernity, not postmodernity. An excellent illustration of Riesman's argument is the case of formerly Communist Yugoslavia, which was never behind the Iron Curtain. Under the dictatorship of Josip Tito, Yugoslavs were allowed to travel to Italy and Austria to purchase consumables and did not have to rely on smuggling. The nation-states within Yugoslavia that were closest to Italy and Austria, namely Slovenia and Croatia, were the first to jump ship from Communist Yugoslavia, while Serbia—which is furthest from the West and closest to the Iron Curtain—was the last.

Bauman's summary statement in *Intimations of Postmodernity* relative to the discussion of the collapse of Communism and in general rings hollow:

> Postmodernity does not seek to substitute one truth for another, one standard of beauty for another, one life ideal for another. Instead it splits the truth, the standards and the ideal into already deconstructed and about to be deconstructed. It denies in advance the right of all and any revelation to slip into the place vacated by the deconstructed/discredited rules. It braces itself for a life without truths, standards, and ideals (Bauman 1991b, ix).

One does not have to succumb to the ideological narrative that America won the Cold War. The fact is that Western consumerism, not postmodernity, slipped into the place of deconstructed Communism. In China, the result was not collapse, but a hybrid experiment whose outcome remains unknown, but in no way is life in any nation one without truths, standards, and ideals. On the contrary, consumerism has expanded its empire from material goods to intangibles represented by images on social media and other instruments in screen culture. Truths, standards, and ideals are in constant flux according to the pragmatic attitude.

In *Liquid Modernity*, Bauman (2000) offers his clearest explanations as to why liquid society may never solidify again. He asks whether modernity was a process of liquification from the start. His reply includes a reference to Marx, who sought to replace the old regime of capitalism with a new and more solid regime of Communism following the liquification of capitalism. But, according to Bauman, "the task of constructing a new and better order

to replace the old and defective one is not presently on the agenda" (Bauman 2000, 5). Instead, the melting of solids has become a permanent feature of modernity and this process has taken new directions. It now melts the patterns of communication and coordination which would have been used to construct new solid institutions. Liquification becomes the equivalent of Weber's Iron Cage, minus Weber's somewhat hopeful quips that no one knows what the future holds, whether new charismatic prophets will arise, or humanity will start over once the last ton of fossilized fuel is spent. Bauman offers no hope for solidification whatsoever all the while he paints a horrifying picture of the liquification of everything, from friendships and marriage to communication and governments.

Conclusion

The reactions of our students in universities in Texas are probably representative of the typical American reaction to Zygmunt Bauman's pessimistic theories: our students agree with his descriptions of what their social worlds feel like, but they immediately ask: "How can we fix liquid modernity?" This "let's fix it" attitude has been and continues to be typical in American culture. On the other hand, Bauman's theories are very much in line with the works and theories of Anthony Giddens and his juggernaut of modernity, Jean Baudrillard and his vision of the implosion of meaning, and the general trend toward deconstruction found in European philosophy and sociology. There is a kind of fatalism in Bauman's work, and many other European works, that is simply incomprehensible to the American mind.

Bauman has been hailed in Europe as a leading social theorist and there seems to be no end to the publications about him and his theories in Europe. But he has simply not had the impact in the United States exemplified by David Riesman, Talcott Parsons, and George Ritzer. This can be attributed, at least in part, to Bauman's lack of optimism, lack of empirical grounding, and above all, lack of the pragmatic attitude. While we have been restrained in our analysis of the import of William James's pragmatism due to the limitations of space, we note that optimism and empirical grounding are integral to pragmatism. If truth happens to an idea, as William James insists,

then truth must be verified, not just in empirical albeit academic research, but in experience. In addition, if truth happens to an idea, then there is always the possibility of luck and chance, which leads to hope and optimism. So-called progress is open-ended for James: one cannot know what the future holds. Contrary to Bauman's assessment, it is possible that liquid modernity will crystallize into a new form of solid modernity, as predicted by Émile Durkheim and Pitirim Sorokin.

In keeping with the pragmatic—and uniquely American—approach we have taken in this chapter, we do not offer any judgments as to which version of culture, American versus European, or which version of Bauman as seen through the prisms of these two cultural vantage points is true or false. Rather, and again in keeping with the pragmatist attitude, we would recommend that admirers of Bauman in Europe reconsider some of the American theorists that he dismisses, particularly Talcott Parsons and the Parsonized Durkheim and Weber. Parsons was a liberal, and his depiction of social equilibrium is dynamic. Durkheim and Weber were both cultural theorists who offered interpretive sociologies of social change. Dismissing Durkheim as an alleged positivist is a disservice to the profession of sociology. Referring to Bauman's concept of liquification, perhaps some of the stereotypes in sociology of its origins and classical theorists should melt, though we would like to see a reconstruction of ideas based on new, solid insights and understanding.

References

Adams, Michael C. 1994. *The Best War Ever: America and World War II*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1987. *Legislators and Interpreters—On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1990. *Thinking Sociologically*. Oxford: Blackwell.

——— 1991a. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1991b. *Intimations of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Keith Tester. 2014. *What Use is Sociology?* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bellah, Robert N. 1967. "Civil Religion in America." *Daedalus* 96: 1–21.

Bennett, Oliver. 2011. "Cultures of Optimism." *Cultural Sociology* 5 (2): 301–320.

Carter, Everett. 2018. *The American Idea: The Literary Response to American Optimism*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Cervantes, Richard C. et al. 2021. "Optimism and the American Dream: Latino Perspectives on Opportunities and Challenges Toward Reaching Personal and Family Goals." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 43 (3): 135–154.

Dawson, Matt. 2012. "Optimism and Agency in the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman." *European Journal of Social Theory* 15 (4): 555–570.

Durkheim, Émile. 1983. *Pragmatism and Sociology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——— 1995 [1912]. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press.

Frisby, David. 1981. *Sociological Impressionism*. London: Routledge.

Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor W. Adorno. 1972 [1944]. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Herder and Herder.

James, William. 1994 [1910]. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Random House.

——— 2000 [1909]. *Pragmatism and Other Writings*. New York: Penguin Books.

Killian, Lewis M. 1971. "Optimism and Pessimism in Sociological Analysis." *The American Sociologist* 6 (4): 281–286.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1990. *Continental Divide*. London: Routledge.

Lundestad, Geir. 2002. "Empire by Invitation' in the American Century." *Diplomatic History* 23 (2): 189–217.

McDonald, Paul. 2010. *Laughing at the Darkness: Postmodernism and Optimism in American Humour.* Penrith: Humanities-Ebooks.

McMillan, Graeme. 2021. "How New Superman Slogan Finally Lets Him Be a Man of Tomorrow." *The Hollywood Reporter*, October 20. Available online at: https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/new-superman-slogan-motto-1235033234/.

Meigs, Mark. 1997. *Optimism at Armageddon: Voices of American Participants in the First World War*. London: Macmillan.

Parsons, Talcott. 1937. *The Structure of Social Action*. New York: The Free Press.

——— 1993. *Talcott Parsons on National Socialism*. London: Routledge.

Patterson, Orlando. 2002. "David Riesman: The Last Sociologist." *New York Times* May 19.

Pells, Richard. 1997. *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II*. New York: Basic Books.

Peterson, Christopher. 2000. "The Future of Optimism." *American Psychologist* 55 (1): 44–55.

Riesman, David. 1993. *Abundance for What?* New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

———, Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney. 2002 [1950]. *The Lonely Crowd*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Ritzer, George. 1992. *The McDonaldization of Society*. London: Sage Publications.

Rosenau, Pauline. 1992. *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Seligman, Martin E. P. 1990. *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*. New York: Vintage Books.

Simmel, Georg. 1971. *On Individuality and Its Social Forms*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sorokin, Pitirim. 1985 [1937]. *Social and Cultural Dynamics*. London: Routledge.

Chapter Five

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN ON THE WEST: RE-TREADING SOME FORKING PATHS OF BAUMAN'S SOCIOLOGY

Jack Palmer

Introduction

Much ink has been spilled on the problem of sociology's "Eurocentrism" in recent years. Whether understood as a cognitive myopia resultant from the universalization of the particularities of European social and political development, or as a tendency to narrate Western modernity in endogenous terms, shorn of the constitutive histories of colonial-imperialism and Transatlantic slavery, the critique of Eurocentrism has shed light on how the formation of sociology is a power-saturated process with ongoing historical effects that continue to frame the relations between "the West and the rest" (Hall 1992; Steinmetz 2013; Bhambra 2014; Meghji 2021).

In this chapter, I argue that Zygmunt Bauman's project can be read as an intervention into contemporary discussions about Eurocentrism in the discipline of sociology and the imperative to "decolonize" its canon and operative concepts, even if he did not explicitly frame it as such. In making this argument, I re-tread several paths in Bauman's sociological thinking

which, to varying degrees, have been elided in commentaries on and critical appraisals of his work. These are his reflections on colonialism and decolonization, the Jewish experience and interpretation of modernity, and the communist project in east-central Europe and its dissolution.

In my book *Zygmunt Bauman and the West: A Sociological of Intellectual Exile* (Palmer 2023), I track each of these paths across Bauman's thought as it develops from the late 1960s until his death in 2017. I emphasize the essayistic constitution of Bauman's sociology which, when not sufficiently appreciated, has tended to render his overall contribution to the critique of the West not immediately accessible. Bauman's reflections on colonialism and decolonization, for example, crisscross over the long duration of his work and are not contained in neatly-bound, self-contained tracts. His sociology as a whole constitutes a multiplicity of "forking paths," to borrow the expression from the Jorge Luis Borges (1964) short story which was hugely influential for Bauman.

Roland Barthes once wrote that "in the multiplicity of writing, everything is to be disentangled, not deciphered" (Barthes 1977, 147). The disentanglement that I attempt here isolates the forking paths in discrete phases of their unfolding. Over the course of the first and second sections, I outline Bauman's engagements with themes of colonialism and decolonization as developed in his work "before postmodernity," taken to stretch from the late 1960s into the 1970s, across the twin poles of his exile: Poland and Britain. In so doing, I engage with key strands of his sociology of culture: Marxist revisionism, semiotics, and hermeneutics. Next, I explore the "Jewish writings" (Cheyette 2020; Dawson 2020) which are folded into his wider "postmodern turn" from the late 1980s. After that, I interrogate the *eastern* context of Bauman's well-known writings on liquidity, situating Bauman as an early contributor to social-theoretical reflections on post-communism. In a concluding section, I assess what revisiting these paths means for the critique of Eurocentrism.

Culture and the Sociologies of Decolonization

Recent writings by the likes of Dariusz Brzeziński (2022) and the late Keith Tester (2017, 2018), as well as the biographical work of Izabela Wagner (2020), make very clear that Bauman's thought of the 1960s and 1970s, set within his exilic transition from Poland to Britain, via Israel, is of fundamental importance for the further development of his thought. Any consideration of the works which secured his global reputation without this context is impoverished, an affliction which effects the critique of Bauman for his purported failure to confront colonial-imperialism as a constitutive aspect of European modernity (see Gilroy 1993, 212–213; Mayblin 2017; Rattansi 2017).

Bauman's cultural sociology of the 1960s and 1970s was shaped—in a mostly implicit, though no less interesting, way—by a period of possibility wherein a multiplicity of trajectories for exiting European colonial empires were still in play (Cooper 2002; Steinmetz 2023). Sociologists both in decolonizing regions and in metropolitan centers were compelled to interpret the novel and unprecedented experience of independence of the colonial parts of the world, scarcely imaginable in the late nineteenth and earlier parts of the twentieth centuries when sociology emerged as an institutionalized discipline.

Bauman's sociological career coalesced with what Richard Hoggart termed the "operational world" of UNESCO, which "effectively came into being about 1960, with the appearance of so many new and formerly colonized nations, especially in Africa and Asia" (Hoggart 1978, 31). UNESCO was the rubric under which the various initiatives of the International Social Science Council were collected. Bauman participated in many of these international initiatives, an example being attending events in Paris coordinated by the *Recherches sémiotiques* group which included the likes of Julia Kristeva. The International Sociological Association (ISA) was shaped significantly by the emergence and self-assertion of the "third world" (Platt 1998, 15–16). The consequential ISA conference that Bauman attended at Evian in 1966—which he claimed to be a fundamental experience in the development of his sociological reading of Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of culture, understood as the practical process of reducing the indeterminacy of the world (Bauman 2018, 251)—was on the theme of the sociology of development. It included papers on conflicts in plural, postcolonial societies by the Nigerian sociologist Akinsola Akiwowo and

the South African Leo Kuper, on sociological interpretations of decolonization by the Togolese sociologist Ferdinand N'Sougan Agblemagnon, and a reflection on "Is Modernization Westernization?" by the Indian sociologist Santosh Kumar Nandy (International Sociological Association 1966).

Belied in Bauman's cultural sociology of the 1960s and 1970s is the presentist image of rigid boundaries between anthropology and sociology, whose disciplinary division is said to correspond to two differing images and types of social formation, *modern* and *traditional* societies (see Bhambra 2007, 875; Patel 2013, 47). References to the likes of Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and Mary Douglas are arguably more numerous than references to sociological theorists in his work of this time. Nowhere in his sociology is reflected the tendency of the social sciences, in general, to posit Europe or the West at the forefront of history as against other world regions, many of them colonized by Europe which languished behind them. Indeed, Bauman frequently problematized—from an early stage of his work—the *temporalization* of cultural differences that accompanied colonialism (Bauman 1978, 202–3, 1987a, 110–11, 1992a, 120).

Anthropologists also formed part of Bauman's intellectual networks. In 1966–1967 he was a visiting fellow at the Department of social anthropology at the University of Manchester, where he worked alongside Max Gluckman and Peter Worsley, themselves embarked on an anti-colonial iteration of the marriage between Lévi-Straussian structuralism and Marxist-humanism. Bauman's position within these figurations was inflected by his central involvement in the Polish iteration of the intellectual movement of Marxist-humanist revisionism (see Brzeziński 2017). Much anti-colonial theory and practice of the time—in Africa, for example, the likes of Fanon, Senghor, and Cabral—was set within this movement, broadly defined (Alderson and Spencer 2017). In Eastern Europe, where a form of Marxism was the dominant ideology of the Communist party, humanist revisionism constituted a serious critique of the ruling basis of legitimation following the death of Stalin, embodied by the Budapest School in Hungary and the Praxis Group in Yugoslavia, as well as more loosely constructed group of revisionist figures in Czechoslovakia and Poland (Satterwhite 1992; see Bauman 1976 for a narration of Polish sociology in these terms). Alongside the early Karl Marx, the writings of

Antonio Gramsci were particularly significant and inaugurated Bauman's self-confessed "cultural turn" in the early 1960s. Where before he had seen culture as an integrative mechanism that ensured the reproduction and equilibrium of social order, as in the internationally dominant sociological framework of Talcott Parsons, he now saw it as "a sharp edge pressed obstinately against what-already-is" (Bauman quoted in Jacobsen and Tester 2005, 147).

At the center of this conception of culture stood an "activistic image of man." This was consciously distinct from a "mechanistic image" that reduces the human to the status of a "reactive being … determined by outer forces or inner drives," an anthropology inextricably connected with a "managerial sociology," which frequently fuses the scientific ambition of prediction with the practical exigencies of control (Bauman 1967, 14, 1999 [1973], 115). The activistic image, by contrast, emphasizes human acts as "creations," and holds that human behavior is at best only partly predictable. Refuting the standard critique of Marx's purported economic determinism, Bauman sought to emphasize these themes as workable components of Marxism (Bauman 2001 [1967], 40–41). The humanistic sociology built upon this "activistic" philosophical anthropology was adhered to more or less consistently throughout the statements on sociology as an intellectual practice that Bauman made up until his death (Bauman, 1988a, 90, 1990a, 50; Bauman, Jacobsen and Tester 2014, 80).

Relatedly, Bauman outlines a critique of the "traditional" interpretation of the function of cultural phenomena, which he associates with Talcott Parsons and functionalist anthropology. Bauman distinguishes this from the *semiotic* approach to culture, wherein culture consists of the continual human process of "reducing the indeterminacy of the human world," the reduction of the probability of some events and the increase in the predictability of others (Bauman 2018, 71, 1973a, 68–69). Human history, he held, is a reservoir of possibilities that are instantiated processually, in cultural *praxis* (Bauman 1968, 29). "Nothing," he elaborated in *Culture as Praxis*, "but the formal universals of praxis, its 'generative rules', constitutes the tough, invariant core of human history" (Bauman 1999 [1973], 116). Culture is the universal propensity of humanity to impose structures on a structureless world in infinite permutations. Culture, therefore, is the sphere of human possibility:

> While encompassing the future in its unique quality of irreducibility to the past, the cultural stance admits a multiplicity of realities. The set of universes it explores in the way the positive sciences investigate the real, contains also the possible, the potential, the desirable, the hankered after, even if as yet improbable worlds (Bauman 1999 [1973], 139).

Revisiting Bauman's cultural sociology of the late 1960s—and this has been illuminated especially by the rediscovery of *Sketches in the Theory of Culture* (2018), thought lost in Bauman's expulsion in 1968 until it was found by Dariusz Brzeziński—reveals that Bauman's preoccupation with culture was framed within the context of the increasing untenability of the idea of a universal, proselytizing "Western" culture during an age of decolonization. Indeed, Bauman's theoretical elaboration is itself set within a conceptual history of culture that runs through European colonial-imperial history. Bauman argues that "culture" as an evaluative category becomes a particular obsession in "expanding civilizations" as they come into contact with otherness and diversity (Bauman 1968, 19–20, 2018, 9). An *axiological* concept of culture, he claims, was born of the "encounter between Europe and that part of the world which developed in relative isolation from Europe," at precisely the time when "the ideological basis of European economic and military supremacy was clearly formed" (Bauman 1968 22).

Bauman is clearly talking about colonial-imperialism here. Indeed, within the axiological concept, he makes a distinction between the "colonialist" and the "romantic" orientation. The colonialist-axiological concept of culture is hierarchizing and comparative and is the basis of distinctions between "superior" and "inferior" cultures. Because of the military and economic might of colonizing Europe, difference was perceived as a lack of culture, as primitiveness. This was exemplified, for Bauman, by the likes of William Strachey and John Wesley, intellectual figureheads of the English conquest of the Americas, who demonstrated how the concept of "barbarism" served the cause of *world conquest* as the obverse of culture, providing "the fig leaf hoped to hide the ugly and shameful atrocities of imperialism and colonialism" (Bauman 2021, 187). Summarizing, Bauman strikes a chord with many later definitions of Eurocentrism:

A statement that our cultural system—the industrial civilization—is superior means no more than that, so far, we have been stronger economically and militarily, that *we have been striking at the roots of other cultural systems*, and that, in one way or another, we have been remaking them—or have attempted to do so—in our own image (Bauman 1968, 22, emphasis added).

By contrast, the romantic-axiological orientation, represented best intellectually by Michel de Montaigne, was marked by an ethos of tenderness for the virtues of "savages," "tribes" and "natives." Like the colonialist-axiological orientation, it asserted that culture essentially refers to an enclosed system. This logic was taken up in Malinowskian anthropology, which defined culture as a genuine synchronic system, a holism in which each cultural element refers to the entire way of life of a particular human collective understood as a closed system (Bauman 1966a, 67). Although this was "a renunciation of the colonialist *Kulturkampf* waged by the European civilization which has dominated the world, and hence a belated recognition of the equality of peoples, the equity of their culture assets, and their right to a specific way of life," it nevertheless represented non-Western, "traditional" societies as if preserved in aspic (Bauman 1968, 24–25, 1978, 201, 2018, 9). This orientation provided its own justifications for colonial-imperialism, expressed in a turn to indirect rule animated by the romantic concern to preserve "native communities" from the tumultuous forces of modernization (Mantena 2010).

Hermeneutics, Decolonization, and Postmodernity

The conclusion of Bauman's "cultural turn"—his humanist revision of Marxism, his elaboration of a sociological semiotics, and his theory of culture as praxis—is that human beings make or structure their worlds, albeit in historically delimited circumstances, through culture. Culture is processual, instantiated in praxis, and the worlds that humans make are incorrigibly plural (Beilharz 2006). What exists in the here and now is but one possibility among manifold others. The societies which European powers colonized, a process in which recourse was made to axiological-

hierarchical understandings of culture, were not lesser forms forever catching up with the West or cultural totalities at risk of dissolution when they came into contact with colonial powers. Rather they stood for alternative possibilities, and in so doing revealed the essential groundlessness of Eurocentric claims to universal civilization, a groundlessness which became especially apparent in the moment of decolonization. This heralded, Bauman claimed in 1968, a "crisis of cultural anthropology" wherein "the European stopped believing in the obviousness" of their world; where colonized societies had seemed to the Western mind "frozen in earlier phases of the road leading to our own way of being," the imaginary of global history now increasingly took the "form [of] a mosaic of diverging paths" (Bauman 2018, 15–16).

A *hermeneutic* turn in Bauman's thought begins when he considers how cross-cultural and transhistorical understanding and dialogue is possible in these circumstances. Because the plurality of culture generates the problem of alternative and even conflicting meanings, there arises the question of how communication across cultures is possible. The culminating arguments of Bauman's *Hermeneutics and Social Science* (1978) can themselves be read as a response to the problem of Eurocentrism, which resides in the 'aristocratic cultural pattern' of axiology and hierarchy. Here, "in the era of the 'white man's mission', when Europe seemed to be gaining worldwide domination fast," economic and military dominance were confused for the achievement of superior cultural patterns, in the light of which "natives" appeared as infantile forms which European civilization passed and left behind at some stage of its development (Bauman 1978, 199). If the colonial-axiological conception of culture saw civilizing educational uplift or, at the other end of the scale, genocidal violence as its task, and its romantic counterpart saw its own as the preservation of temporally backward cultural totalities, the *task of understanding* was based on very different premises. Bauman held that understanding entails "sharing in a form of life … *about constructing a form of life of a 'higher order*'" rather than the positing of unassailable boundaries between forms of life in the plural; understanding of other forms of life comes not from dwelling in their particularity, and certainly not by disregarding and eliminating their otherness, but by "enlarging both the alien and one's own experience so as

to construct a larger system in which each 'makes sense' to the other" (Bauman 1978, 217–218; see also 1990a, 228–229).

These fundamental cognitive frames of Bauman's cultural sociology—-Marxist-humanism, semiotics, praxis, and hermeneutics—are carried forward into his writings on postmodernity. The end of *Memories of Class* (1982)—a curiously neglected hinge text in Bauman's oeuvre which bids farewell to class history whilst looking forward to the works which established his international reputation—contains an extraordinary passage that elaborates on the crisis of Western universalism which Bauman had diagnosed in detail over a decade earlier. It is well worth quoting at length:

> The pride of place among the new problems belongs to the self-assertion of the Third World. It is truly impossible to exaggerate the impact exerted by this by far the most seminal of the post-war developments upon the totality of Western mentality. It amounts to the general collapse of self-confidence and has manifold manifestations. On the intellectual level, the feverish search for the sources of Western uniqueness, defined as either an exclusive technological genius or incomparable scientific aptitude, alternates with gnawing uncertainty about the possible legitimation of its superiority. On the moral level, the mood vacillates between new paroxysms of national insularity and xenophobia and outbursts of remorse for the imperialist past and fits of inferiority complex. On the political level, cries and whispers to close ranks in defence of the "civilization as we know it" cohabit with the currying of favours from the up-and-coming world powers by, first and foremost, supplying them with the most sublime masterpieces of Western military inventiveness. The bewildering inconsistency of reactions on all levels is symptomatic of the situation of acute uncertainty and ambiguity (Bauman 1982, 172).

Decolonization, in other words, was one of the experiences which inaugurated the postmodern condition, a "condition of distress caused by the progressive dissolution of certainty once grounded in the 'evident' superiority of Western society" (Bauman 1987a, 144; more generally, see Susen 2015, 169–170). The task of hermeneutic understanding that Bauman outlined has a clear echo in the social type of the "interpreter," who mediates within and across historically and culturally situated forms of life, as against those who "legislate" in the name of the universal (Bauman 1987a). Bauman's substantive engagements with colonial-imperialism and the legacy of decolonization continue throughout the postmodern period of his writings and also the "liquid turn," notably in *Wasted Lives* (2004a).

Bauman opens that book with the admission that "there is more than one way in which the story of modernity (or any story for that matter) can be told" (Bauman 2004a, 1; see also 2004b). The history of colonial-imperialism and decolonization is a path that cuts through Bauman's multiplicitous story of modernity. Now, however, I turn to another of them: the Jewish experience and interpretation of modernity, which offers another perspective on his critique of the West.

Jewish Modernity and the Postmodern Turn

Bauman's account of the condition of modernity is elaborated in his "modern trilogy": *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987a), *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989a), and *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991a). Across these reputation-establishing works, Bauman built on the arguments developed in his formative cultural sociology and ascribed to modernity a compulsive preoccupation with order building and the eradication of ambivalence and indeterminacy. Bauman understands modernity as a time when the ordering of the world, human habitat, and the human subject—culture, in short—became a self-conscious practice (Bauman 1992b, 10). The practice of imposing order was likened to the job of gardening, the metaphor borrowed from Ernest Gellner (Gellner 1983). The modern nation-state operated with a gardening stance, cultivating its members into optimum producer-citizens who would realize the blueprints for a perfectly designed society, with a population split into "useful plants to be encouraged and tenderly propagated, and weeds—to be removed or rooted out" (Bauman 1991a, 20). Those cast as weeds required special treatment for the garden to flourish. Assimilation, spatial containment, and, at the most extreme end of the scale, extermination were modern order-building strategies (Bauman 1989a, 92, 1990a, 61).

As is well-known, Bauman's case study—the limit case of modernity, as it were—is the nineteenth and twentieth century experience of European Jewry. Less known, however, are those fragmentary essays that he published in journals like *Polin, Telos* and the *Jewish Quartery* which, prior to their refiguring in the sociological generalizations of *Modernity and*

Ambivalence (1991a), spoke more specifically to the experiences and memorialization of Jewish assimilation in central and eastern Europe (Bauman 1988c, 1988e, 1989c), the legacy of Nazi occupation in the context of Polish-Jewish relations (Bauman 1988d, 1989b, 1989d), and the subsuming of Jewish identity into the universalizing project of Soviet communism (Bauman 1988b). In these writings, destructive experience is accompanied by creative interpretation (Bauman 1990b). In the cultural activity of Jewish intellectuals, Bauman argued, could be glimpsed the nascent social condition that was later named *post* modernity.

Why were the 1980s the period of Bauman's "Jewish writings"? Others such as Bryan Cheyette (2020), Matt Dawson (2020), and Izabela Wagner (2020) have recently provided compelling answers to this question. The specific space-time configuration in which Janina and Zygmunt Bauman looked back towards their own biographical experiences of the Holocaust and its aftermath (J. Bauman 1986; Bauman 2023) is a theme that runs across the essays collected in *Revisiting Modernity and the Holocaust* (Palmer and Brzeziński 2022). To understand Bauman's Jewish turn, one must situate it within the ebb and flow of the cultural memory of the Holocaust, and its "boom" in the 1980s in particular, with the proliferation of museumization and Holocaust film such as Claude Lanzmann's landmark *Shoah* (1985), of great significance for the Bauman's. Just as important as the cultural horizons of Holocaust memory and Jewish testimony were the scholarly networks and publication channels that Bauman found himself entangled in as he approached retirement. Bauman's scholarly concerns were disseminated among a generation many of whose representatives experienced the war as children or young adults, or who were born into its immediate aftermath. The likes of S. N. Eisenstadt, Ernest Gellner, Ferenc Fehér, György and Maria Márkus, Agnes Heller, Gillian Rose and Kurt. H. Wolff were all correspondents of Bauman during this time, and many were readers and reviewers of his work, and vice versa.

The sociological analysis and diagnosis of the social condition of postmodernity that appears in Bauman's work is inextricable from what he termed "Jewish modernity" (Bauman 1988c, 46). Such an approach is continuous with a sociological tradition aptly sketched by Chad Alan Goldberg in his *Modernity and the Jews in Western Social Thought*. Jews, Goldberg asserts, have not only been among the most astute and critical

interpreters of modernity, but have also been objects of social theories of modernity. For the likes of Karl Marx, Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, Robert E. Park, and Louis Wirth, Jews served as "an intermediary through whom European and American social thinkers discerned in a roundabout fashion the nature, problems, and trajectory of their own societies" (Goldberg 2017, 1). Jews provided Western "moderns" with an Other against which their own identity could be constructed (Nirenberg 2013; Green and Sullam 2020). This internal Otherness has been cast aside in a Manichean image of social theorizing as binarized between "the West and the rest," apiece with a *totalizing* form of Eurocentrism which flattens the internal variation of European experience into a singular colonial-imperial Europe.

Underplayed in the admittedly impressive historical scope of Goldberg's account, given that his focus is on the classical origins of social theory, is how Jewish historical experience figured in the works of writers who, like Bauman, sketched the contours of *post*-modernity. The manifold paths of Bauman's sociology of postmodernity as Jewish experience and interpretation coalesce around the concept of estrangement. This is prefigured in his concept of "allosemitism," meaning "the practise of setting the Jews apart as people radically different from all the others, needing separate concepts to describe and comprehend them and special treatment in all or most social intercourse" (Bauman 1998b, 143). Both anti- and philo-Semitism are derived from the problem of the margins in cultural praxis, the phenomenon of "proteophobia" resultant from the "apprehension" and "vexation" provoked by something or someone that "does not fit the structure of the orderly world" (Bauman 1998b, 144). The Jew was thus the archetypal *stranger,* a notion deeply rooted in Christianity. Bauman intimates that the Jew historically symbolized the *liquidity* of the world: "in the world of melting solids, they made everything, including themselves, into a formless plasma in which any form could be born, only to dissolve again" (Bauman 1998b, 150). The conceptual Jew, he writes elsewhere, stood for the "universal 'viscosity' of the Western world" (Bauman 1989a, 40).

At the center of Bauman's narration of Jewish modernity is a discussion of German Jews amidst the cauldron of nationalisms, a "non-national nation" in a bordered world of Westphalian rigidity (Bauman 1989a, 52;

1991a, 108). German Jews occupied a pivotal position in that they were the most longstanding, settled, and culturally creative community in the diaspora. They moreover occupied a borderline position between the affluent Jewish communities in the West and the impoverished communities of Eastern Europe (Bauman 1990b, 71, 1991a, 121). Attentive to the social stratification of European Jewry and the phenomenon of estrangement within the collectivity of the already-estranged, Bauman argues that the *Ostjuden* were presented as the "inner demons" of *assimilation* (Bauman 1988c, 58, 1991a, 123). Assimilation was the liberal political strategy of combatting ambivalence, aimed at the conversion of problematic subjects—itinerant, traditional, rootless, and so on—from one form of life to another, superior form (Bauman 1987a, 49, 1991a, 105–106). But a "trap" inheres in the liberal strategy of managing ambivalence by assimilation. Liberal universality is accompanied by nationalist exclusion. Assimilation is declared an imperative to all ambiguous figures of foreignness, but belonging is all-too-often unattainable: "When finally it seems to be within their grasp, a dagger of racism appears from beneath the liberal cloak" (Bauman 1988e, 15).

Genocide is a potential of the totalitarian strategy of the management of ambivalence (Bauman 1989a, 111–112, 1990a, 61, 1991a, 51–52). It is categorical murder; it entails the eradication of ambivalence by means of eliminating the collective group defined as embodying it (Bauman 2008, 82). So it was with Jews in the Nazi worldview, according to Bauman. Such categorization was integral to the biopolitical administration of a population, purportedly assailed by pollutants. In a society seen as a garden, a population is split into healthy plants that the gardener wishes to nourish and encourage, and unproductive or harmful weeds that must be kept separate or even destroyed if necessary. The vector of such separation and splitting was scientific racism, which for Bauman offered a line of continuity between Nazi anti-Semitism and colonial racism (Bauman 1989a, 114). He also saw how the Holocaust was perpetrated in the context of pan-European imperialism, the eastern frontier having become Germany's "orient" following the collapse of the German overseas empire after Versailles (Bauman 1991a, 134).

It was precisely the social position into which Jews were forced that provided a vantage point from which the condition of postmodernity—

modernity shorn of its illusions—could be prefigured. Bauman looked to Jewish intellectuals in pursuit of his scholarly questions—Sigmund Freud, Franz Kafka, and Georg Simmel, but also Theodor W. Adorno, Karl Mannheim, Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, and more besides. Where such figures may have previously figured in his thought as references, here they were themselves case studies in the dialectical interplay between traumatic experience and creative interpretation. The social position that these figures occupied—the *exilic position* as I frame it in *Zygmunt Bauman and the West* (Palmer 2023)—generated an enhanced ability to see how the power-assisted universalization of the modern social arrangement harbored dark possibilities, and that Western claims to universality were groundless. As he reasoned: "*Universality of absence and the void is the only universality there is; Jewish singularity is the only universality there is; all universality is Jewish*" (Bauman 1991a, 191, emphasis added).

Liquidity and the Post-Communist Condition

There is a significant path that cuts through Bauman's oeuvre which constitutes a major contribution to the sociology of communism and post-communism, work for which he is seldom recognized today and which stems from and speaks to a missing "Global East" that does not figure in the binary division between a Global South and Global North that constitutes the contemporary global imaginary (Müller 2020). As Bauman wrote in an early essay on the relationship between state and society in the eastern-bloc, with specific reference to Poland, he understood "East-European experience … not [as] a relatively undeveloped version of a uniform 'modern society', but a social system in its own right, which requires its own and distinct ideal type to be intelligibly described and understood" (Bauman 1973b, 25). Bauman made this argument, it is worth noting, decades before Soviet communism was incorporated in the historical-sociological frame of "multiple modernities" (see Eisenstadt 1992; Arnason 2000).

This background informs Bauman's later, much more generalizing, theorization of modernity. Although Bauman's "liquid" writing, inaugurated in earnest with the publication of *Liquid Modernity* (2000), appears as an

extraterritorial sociology that in many senses mirrors the extraterritoriality it depicts, east European experience is where liquidity was first articulated. As Richard Kilminster perceptively notes, Bauman's liquid writings ought to be seen in the context of post-communism, the condition of liminality that pervaded the former Soviet Union and its satellite states, the sense of an old solid order having collapsed into uncertainty (Kilminster 2016, 214).

Some of Bauman's most interesting and neglected political-sociological works appear in the pages of the New York Journal, *Telos*, established as a publishing and networking outlet for the Western New Left. These pages contained his engagement with events in Poland throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, including *Solidarność* which he saw as a "maturation of socialism." With the trade union movement, there had been created a historical alternative to Western liberal capitalism and Soviet communism. *Solidarność* was "a socialist resistance to bureaucratic dictatorship" (Bauman 1981, 54), a response to the "postwar political colonization of Eastern Europe by the Soviet Union" (Bauman 1981, 52). He frames it as the culmination of a series of Polish events—the 1956 thaw, the intellectual dissent of the 1960s, the bloody workers' strikes of the winter of 1970, and so on—the aim of which was to reintroduce civil society in a social formation which had seen it historically as an obstacle to modernization.

In so doing, in a sense continuous with scholarship of the "new imperial history" (represented best by the journal *Ab Imperio*) which understands the post-communist space of the former Soviet Union as a post-*imperial* space, Bauman situated Poland on something like a trajectory of decolonization. The Soviet Union is configured in his writing of this period as "Soviet Empire" (Bauman 1989e, 50) and the experience of east-central European satellite states as an occupation. In the 1999 edition to *Culture as Praxis*, he suggested that the eastern regions of European are its "most post-colonial part" (Bauman 1999 [1973], xxxviii). Amidst the movement of *Solidarność* (*Solidarity*), Poland was "at the crossroads" (Bauman 1981, 54), looking ahead along a "Polish road to socialism" (Bauman 1989e, 47).

Bauman would come to temper his position on *Solidarność*, identifying his optimism as misplaced (Jacobsen and Tester, 2005, 97–98). In later *Telos* articles, the crushing of *Solidarity* was a product of the "Polonisation of communist rule" (Bauman 1989e: 48). If there were to be a Polish *glasnost*—an increased transparency and opening up of government

institutions and activities—then it consisted in a "devaluation of the word, the political disenfranchisement of opinion, and the separation between the political process and public debate," a diminishment of the prospect of a Polish *perestroika*, the restructuring of a stagnating economic and political system (Bauman 1989e, 49, 60).

A decade after *Solidarity*, in the wake of the 1989 revolution, Bauman famously wrote that we were "living without an alternative" (Bauman 1991b). What did he mean by this? Poland found itself in a "liminal" situation, Bauman's language at this point prefiguring the metaphor of liquidity, but this did not *ipso facto* entail the elimination of alternatives. "All post-communist regimes," he wrote, "find themselves in a predicament of liminality in which *everything may happen yet little can be done*" (Bauman 1992c, 130). Liminality, like liquidity, means *living with and in indeterminacy*: "The moment society is sunk in the liminal condition, there is no way of predicting the shape of things to come" (Bauman 1992c, 115).

The revolution of 1989 was not a *political* revolution, in which the illegitimate old rulers were cast aside for new rulers to preside over a system that remained legitimate, but a *systemic revolution*. Systemic revolutions see the system itself as an obstacle and thus demand a change of socio-economic structure itself (Bauman 1992b, 157, 1992c, 114). Bauman himself suggests that the contradiction of the systemic revolution inheres in the disparity between the social forces of revolution and those who ultimately benefit from it (Bauman 1993a, 5). In the dismantling of communism in Poland, the workers' unions behind the *Solidarność* movement were simultaneously the most significant social force behind the revolution in Poland and its biggest losers, in the form of acute insecurity, worsening living standards, and cruel austerity. With the end of communism, post-communist Europe faced the awesome task of large scale social engineering at a time when the very notion of engineering was the subject of protest. What sharply distinguished the anti-communist revolutions from the classical model established in the French, American, and Russian cases was the absence of a "Jacobin" vision, a totalistic and utopian projection of a new type of society (Eisenstadt 1992, 25). Bauman's ideal typical formulation for the object of revolutionary change is what he terms the "patronage state", representing a "coercively imposed trade-off between freedom and security" in which "freedom of individual choice in

all its dimensions was to be permanently and severely curtailed, yet in exchange, the less prepossessing aspects of freedom—like individual responsibility for personal survival, success, and failure—were to be spared" (Bauman 1993a, 10). The patronage state was an iron cage, but it was also felt as a shelter.

The collapse of communism is essential to Bauman's sociology of postmodernity. As the most faithful adherent to the cultural program of modernity, communism trundled on in the twilight of solid modernity (Bauman 2010, 27). It "could not and did not brace itself … to match the performance of the capitalist, market-centred society once that society abandoned its steel mills and coal mines and moved into the post-modern age" (Bauman 1993, 15). Consumption becomes key here, in Bauman's analysis. Ferenc Fehér, Agnes Heller, and György Márkus (1984) defined the Soviet-type state (the "patronage state" in Bauman's terms) as a "dictatorship over needs," in which the inner drives and social, economic, and cultural requirements of individuals are imposed and delimited by the state. The Soviet system, Bauman wrote in his contribution to a symposium on the Budapest School exiles' book, was "about control over bodies, control over souls. Control over the way in which men and women satisfy their needs. And control over what they feel there is to satisfy in the first place" (Bauman 1984, 173). It thus became particularly oppressive once held in the relief of consumer-oriented happiness being equated with the cultivation of the self and the acquisition of goods (Bauman 1993b, 139).

What is more, post-communist states faced the challenge of institutionalizing capitalist orientations and organizations in the absence of a capitalist ethic in Weber's sense (Bauman 1993a, 19). As Bauman had noted even in the 1960s in his reflections on the vagaries of "perfect planning" (Bauman 1966b), few were the Puritans; the dominant modality was not this-worldly asceticism but rather lavish consumption and self-enhancement. It was "the overwhelming desire to share (and to share immediately) in the delights of the post-modern world, that mobilized the massive dissent against communist oppression and inefficiency" (Bauman 1993a, 17). Liquid modern consumerism sounded the death-knell of solid modern communism (Bauman 2010, 36). Bauman argues that the major role in this search for capitalists with which to populate and propagate the new shoots of capitalism was played by intellectuals (Bauman 1993b, 144).

Particularly affected, however, were the very conditions of the intelligentsia bequeathed by the transition. Publishing organizations heavily subsidized by the patronage state ceased to exist when they had to become reoriented to commercial success. As in the West, intellectual and cultural freedom came to be haunted by the specters of triviality, banality, meaninglessness, detachment, and self-referentiality (Bauman 1992c, 121). Moreover, post-communist governments had little room for maneuvers in the context of strict structural adjustment regimes legislated and imposed by Western-led financial institutions, which ran roughshod over local initiatives with the express intention of making the liberated territories hospitable to capital (Bauman 1992c, 124). The West no longer had an alternative against which to define itself (Bauman 1992b, 183). This is, Bauman later argued, a defining expression of liquid modernity in Europe: "a spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of the absence of alternative" (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 13).

Across the manifold entanglements of his "liquid modern" turn, Bauman continued to problematize the West. Bauman argued that Europe, in the era of overseas colonial-imperialism, exported its proclivity to compulsive modernization and its by-product, "surplus population" (Bauman 2004a, 9–33, 2007, 27–54). Postcolonial states do not have the ability to export the waste born of their own modernization. This is the logic behind "tribal wars and massacres"—claustrophobic, Gemeinschaft genocides in the mode of "neighbourly imperialism," as he puts it elsewhere with reference to the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and the African Great Lakes region in the 1990s (Bauman 2008, 78–109). It is also the driver behind global refugee politics, as Europe turns inwards and closes borders except to cheap and exploitable labor, and to global wealth (Bauman 2005, 119–156). The "Western way of life" is no longer legitimated in the humanist terms of Enlightenment but in terms of the disciplinary power of the market and its attendant vocabulary of efficiency, flexibility, and marketization (Bauman 1998a, 59–60). Bauman terms this formation "empire" and claims that the making of this "new world disorder" exists by the design of US foreign policy makers. This iteration of empire is seemingly less interested in the acquisition of territories for colonization, than in the projection of the conditions of a "frontier-land" onto global space (Bauman 2004b, 68, 72). In the later years of his life, Bauman turned to "retrotopian" notions of

Western decline, and in a posthumously published set of musings with Aleksandra Kania, he harks back to the significance of decolonization that he confronted in real-time, throughout his works of cultural sociology in the 1960s and 1970s (Bauman and Kania 2018, 93).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have endeavored to provide a series of snapshots of the forking paths in Zygmunt Bauman's thinking that, I claim, collectively amount to a long-running and erudite problematization of the West. Bauman's reflections on colonial-imperialism and decolonization, his studies of the Jewish experience and interpretation of modernity, and his accounts of the communist project of modernity and the condition of post-communism, have much to offer both the more specialized critique of Eurocentrism in sociology and, more generally, that of developing more encompassing and inclusive accounts of global modernity in all its permutations.

Bauman was far more attentive to questions regarding the European heritage of colonial-imperialism than has been credited and, as Paul Gilroy has suggested, his thought is "eminently translatable" into the concerns of post- and de-colonial theorists even if he tended to remain, sometimes frustratingly, distant from these interlocutors (Gilroy 2000, 87). That this attentiveness is so apparent in the often-neglected studies of culture and hermeneutics published in the 1960s and 1970s serves as an important reminder that earlier ideas and forms of thought do not fall into oblivion in the historical process (Joas 2003, 2). Texts are answers to questions, as Quentin Skinner (1988, 234) put it, and the source of the questions is the context of social and political life which is fundamentally mutable. It follows, therefore, that the questions posed by social and political thinkers and the operative concepts with which they are articulated change, and those questions may once again come to be penetrating and generative if the conditions in which they are raised allow. Likewise, Bauman's "postmodern turn" impelled sociologists to excavate the processes by which European social and political thought had been shaped by the specific social

conditions of colonial-imperialism under which it had developed (see especially Bauman, 1987b). Like his postcolonial counterparts today, Bauman's thought attends to the disavowed positionality of intellectual statements which, in the colonial era, were passed off as objective and universal, in so doing disentangling the imbrications of knowledge and power.

The entangled paths of Bauman's sociological reflections on Jewish modernity and the East-Central European (post)-communism also serve as reminders that Eurocentrism can figure as a form of *immanent* critique in European intellectual history. This immanent critique is itself very often a product of the systemic marginalization of the peripheries within Europe itself (Arnason 2003, 349–350; see also Harrington 2016, 5), a marginality *lived* by Bauman as a Jew born in Poland, and twice a refugee. Bauman's "Jewish writings" converge in some fascinating - if largely implicit—ways with recent offerings that explicitly discuss the relationships between Judaism, (colonial) modernity, and social thought (Rothberg 2009; Slabodsky 2014). His critique of the parochial universalization of Western modernity (*ergo* Eurocentrism), his valorization of the Jewish hermeneutics of estrangement, his analyses of the racist undertones of assimilation discourse and the complicity of the modern state and scientific rationality in racial terror suffice to demonstrate that there are ample reasons not to dismiss his contribution to the decolonization of sociology and its operative concepts. Likewise, Bauman's writing on the twentieth century experience of east-central Europe, especially Poland, is itself an argument against totalizing and universalizing forms of Eurocentrism, which position Europe *in toto* as a colonial-imperial power. As Peter Beilharz (2002) has noted, at work in Bauman's sociology is a reckoning with Europe's "Other totalitarianism," Soviet communism, and thus his critical theory of modernity has an eastern basis. Moreover, his position is rooted in an awareness of the *imperial* dimensions of Soviet-communist modernity, its pretensions to rational mastery, and proselytizing tendencies. His extraterritorial "liquid" sociology was first formulated in the wake of the dissolution of "Soviet Empire" in "Postcolonial Poland."

All in all, the problematization of the West and critique of Eurocentrism that emerge from Bauman's sociology is highly significant for the question of what it means to "decolonize" knowledge. Moreover, recoverable and

usable in Bauman's sociology is an ethos consisting of an attempt to retain an orientation to the universal experience of the condition of modernity whilst recognizing the specificity of its multiplicitous groundings in time and space.

References

Alderson, David, and Robert Spencer. 2017. *For Humanism: Explorations in Theory and Politics*. London: Pluto.

Arnason, Johann. P. 2000. "Communism and Modernity." *Daedalus* 129 (1): 61–90.

——— 2003. *Civilizations in Dispute: Historical Questions and Theoretical Traditions*. Leiden: Brill.

Barthes, Roland. 1977. "Death of the Author." In *Image, Music, Text*, edited by Roland Barthes, 142–148. London: Fontana.

Bauman, Janina. 1986. *Winter in the Morning: A Young Girl's Life in the Warsaw Ghetto and Beyond, 1939–1945*. London: Virago.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1966a. "Two Notes on Mass Culture." *Polish Sociological Bulletin* 2: 58–74.

——— 1966b. "The Limitations of Perfect Planning." *Coexistence* 3 (2): 145–162.

——— 1967. "Image of Man in the Modern Sociology (Some Methodological Remarks." *Polish Sociological Bulletin* 15 (1): 12–21.

——— 1968. "Marx and the Contemporary Theory of Culture." *Social Science Information* 7 (3): 19–33.

——— 1973a. "The Structuralist Promise." *British Journal of Sociology* 24 (1): 67–83.

——— 1973b. "Between State and Society." *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* 10 (1): 9–25.

——— 1976. "East Europe and Soviet Social Science: A Case Study in Stimulus Diffusion." In *The Influence of East European and the Soviet West on the USSR*, edited by Roman Szporluk, 91–116. New York: Praeger.

——— 1978. *Hermeneutics and Social Science: Approaches to Understanding*. London: Hutchinson.

——— 1981. "On the Maturation of Socialism." *Telos* 47: 48–54.

——— 1982. *Memories of Class: The Pre-History and After-Life of Class*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

——— 1984. "Contribution to Symposium on *Dictatorship over Needs*." *Telos* 60: 173–178.

——— 1987a. *Legislators and Interpreters: Modernity, Postmodernity and Intellectuals*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1987b. "The Philosopher in the Age of Noise: A Reading of Richard J. Bernstein's 'Philosophical Profiles'." *Theory, Culture & Society* 4 (1): 157–165.

——— 1988a. *Freedom*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

——— 1988b. "The Twisted Road to Perestroika." *The Jewish Quarterly* 3: 9–15.

——— 1988c. "Exit Visas and Entry Tickets: Paradoxes of Jewish Assimilation." *Telos* 77: 45–77.

——— 1988d. "On Immoral Reason and Illogical Morality." *Polin* 3: 294–330.

——— 1988e. "Strangers: The Social Construction of Universality and Particularity." *Telos* 78: 7–42.

——— 1989a. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1989b. "Making Polish-Jewish History." *The Jewish Quarterly* 2: 26–31.

——— 1989c. "The Homecoming of Unwelcome Strangers." *The Jewish Quarterly* 3: 14–23.

——— 1989d. "The War Against Forgetfulness." *The Jewish Quarterly* 4: 44–47.

——— 1989e. "Poland: On Its Own." *Telos* 79: 47–68.

——— 1990a. *Thinking Sociologically*. Oxford: Blackwell.

——— 1990b. "Assimilation and Enlightenment." *Society* 6: 71–81.

——— 1991a. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1991b. "Living Without an Alternative." *Political Quarterly* 62 (1): 35–44.

——— 1992a. *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1992b. *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge.

——— 1992c. "The Polish Predicament: A Model in Search of Class Interests." *Telos* 92: 113–130.

——— 1993a. "A Postmodern Revolution?." In *From a One Party State to Democracy: Transitions in Eastern Europe*, edited by Janina Frentzel-Zagórska, 3–19. Amsterdam: Rodolpi.

——— 1993b. "Dismantling a Patronage State." In *From a One Party State to Democracy: Transitions in Eastern Europe*, edited by Janina Frentzel-Zagórska, 139–154. Amsterdam: Rodolpi.

——— 1998a. *Globalization: The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1998b. "Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern". In *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew',* edited by Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus, 143–156. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

——— 1999 [1973]. *Culture as Praxis* (Second Edition). London: Sage Publications.

——— 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2001 [1967]. "Modern Times, Modern Marxism." In *The Bauman Reader*, edited by Peter Beilharz, 40–51. Oxford: Blackwell.

——— 2004a. *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2004b. *Europe: An Unfinished Adventure*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2005. *Liquid Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2007. *Liquid Times*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2008. *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?* Harvard: Harvard University Press.

——— 2010. *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2018. *Sketches in the Theory of Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2021. *Culture and Art: Selected Writings, Volume 1*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2023. *My Life in Fragments*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, and Leonidas Donskis. 2016. *Liquid Evil*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, and Alexandra Kania. 2018. "That West Meant to be Declining." *Thesis Eleven* 149 (1): 91–99.

———, Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Keith Tester. 2014. *What Use is Sociology?* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beilharz, Peter, 2002. "Modernity and Communism: Zygmunt Bauman and the Other Totalitarianism." *Thesis Eleven* 70 (1): 88–99.

——— 2006. "The Worlds We Create." *Polish Sociological Review* 255 (3): 325–336.

Bhambra, Gurminder. 2007. "Sociology and Postcolonialism: Another 'Missing' Revolution?." *Sociology* 41 (5): 871–884.

——— 2014. *Connected Sociologies*. London: Bloomsbury.

Borges, Jorge Luis. 1964. "The Garden of Forking Paths." In *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, edited by Jorge Luis Borges, 44–54. London: Penguin Books.

Brzeziński, Dariusz. 2017. "Human Praxis, Alternative Thinking, And Heterogeneous Culture—Zygmunt Bauman's Revisionist Thought." *Hybris: Internetowy Magazyn Filozoficzny* 37: 61–80.

——— 2022. *Zygmunt Bauman and the Theory of Culture*. Montreal: McGill Queens University Press.

Cheyette, Bryan. 2020. "Zygmunt Bauman's Window: From Jews to Strangers and Back Again." *Thesis Eleven* 156 (1): 67–85.

Cooper, Frederick. 2002. "Decolonizing Situations: The Rise, Fall, and Rise of Colonial Studies, 1951–2001." *French Politics, Culture & Society* 20 (2): 47–76.

Dawson, Matt. 2020. "The War Against Forgetfulness: Sociological Lessons from Bauman's Writings on European Jewry." *Thesis Eleven* 156 (1): 86–101.

Eisenstadt, S. N. 1992. "The Breakdown of Communist Regimes and the Vicissitudes of Modernity." *Daedalus* 121 (2): 21–41.

Fehér, Ferenc, Agner Heller and György Markus. 1984. *Dictatorship over Needs: Analysis of Soviet Societies* Oxford: Blackwell.

Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Gilroy, Paul. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso.

——— 2000. *Between Camps: Nations, Culture and the Allure of Race*. London: Penguin Books.

Goldberg, Chad Alan. 2017. *Modernity and the Jews in Western Social Thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Green, Abigail, and Simon Levis Sullam, eds. 2020. *Jews, Liberalism, Anti-Semitism: A Global History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan.

Hall, Stuart. 1992. “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power.” In *Formations of Modernity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben, 275–332. Oxford: Blackwell.

Harrington, Austin. 2016. *German Cosmopolitan Social Thought and the Idea of the West: Voices from Weimar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hoggart, Richard. 1978. *An Idea and Its Servants: UNESCO from Within*. London: Chatto and Windus.

International Sociological Association. 1966. *Transactions of the 6th World Congress of Sociology, Evian 1966, Volume 3*. Available online at: https://www.isasociology.org/frontend/web/uploads/files/Transactions%20of%20the%20Sixth%20World%20Congress%20of%20Sociology.%20Evian_1966.%20Vol.%20III.pdf.

Jacobsen, Michael Hviid, and Keith Tester. 2005. *Bauman Before Postmodernity: Invitation, Conversations and Annotated Bibliography*, *1953–1989*. Aalborg: Aalborg University Press.

Joas, Hans. 2003. *War and Modernity: Studies in the History of Violence in the 20th Century*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kilminster, Richard. 2016. “Over-Critique and Ambiguity in Zygmunt Bauman’s Sociology: A Long-Term Perspective.” In *Beyond Bauman: Critical Engagements and Creative Excursions*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen 201–223. London: Routledge.

Mantena, Karuna. 2010. *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mayblin, Lucy. 2017. “Soil, Blood and Identity.” *The Sociological Review Blog*. Available online at: https://thesociologicalreview.org/collections/zygmunt-bauman/soil-blood-and-identity/.

Meghji, Ali. 2021. *Decolonizing Sociology: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Müller, Martin. 2020. “In Search of the Global East: Thinking between North and South.” *Geopolitics* 25 (3): 734–755.

Nirenberg, David. 2013. *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Palmer, Jack. 2023. *Zygmunt Bauman and the West: A Sociology of Intellectual Exile*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.

Palmer, Jack, and Dariusz Brzeziński. 2022. *Revisiting Modernity and the Holocaust: Heritage, Dilemmas, Extensions*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Patel, Sujata. 2013. “Are the Theories of Multiple Modernities Eurocentric? The Problem of Colonialism and Its Knowledge(s).” In *Worlds of Difference*, edited by Saïd Amir Arjomand and Elisa Reis, 28–45. London: Sage Publications.

Platt, Jennifer. 1998. *A Brief History of the USA: 1948–1997*. Amsterdam: International Sociological Association.

Rattansi, Ali. 2017. *Bauman and Contemporary Sociology: A Critical Analysis*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Rothberg, Michael. 2009. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Satterwhite, James. 1992. *Varieties of Marxist-Humanism: Philosophical Revision in Postwar Eastern Europe*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press.

Skinner, Quentin. 1988. "A Reply to My Critics." In *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, edited by James Tulley, 231–288. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 231–288.

Slabodsky, Santiago. 2014. *Decolonial Judaism: Triumphal Failures of Barbaric Thinking*. Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan.

Steinmetz, George, ed. 2013. *Sociology and Empire: The Imperial Entanglements of a Discipline*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Steinmetz, George. 2023. *The Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought: French Sociology and the Overseas Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Susen, Simon. 2015. *The Postmodern Turn in the Social Sciences*. Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan.

Tester, Keith. 2017. "Reflections on Reading Bauman." *Cultural Politics* 13 (3): 306–368.

——— 2018. "On Repetition in the Work of Zygmunt Bauman." *Thesis Eleven* 149 (1): 104–118.

Wagner, Izabela. 2020. *Bauman: A Biography.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Chapter Six

DEATH AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT: ZYGMUNT BAUMAN AND THE CHANGING MEANINGS OF MORTALITY

Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Nicklas Runge

Introduction

“Death.” What a frightening and horrific five-letter word! It is a word most of us would gladly go through life without ever needing to use or encounter, a word that without much regret should be deleted from any encyclopedia and language. It is a word that embodies everything we fear, a word summarizing all the pain and suffering as well as describes the deepest sense of despair that comes with being born a mortal being and being destined to die. It is also—without any comparison to most other unpleasant experiences—a word and a topic that is mostly found missing in mainstream sociology books. This is quite surprising. Death—for all practical intents and purposes such a most natural, normal, and common occurrence in human life—is mainly conspicuous by its absence from most sociological treaties and research reports. It is not a phenomenon or topic that the majority of sociologists find immediately relevant to their studies of a multitude of other seemingly more important research concerns. This

routine neglect of death is far from only a sociological folly—it is also found in many other places in social life.

Death is and remains a conundrum to humans, a great unknown inaccessible to experience—at least when it comes to experiencing one's own death. Death is the perpetual enemy of any human meaning-making. Despite so many attempts to define death in definitive terms or to explain it, it escapes definition and explanation—it is the ultimate void, the emptiness that cannot be described with the experience and language available to us. Death, at the same time, defies our reason, challenges our continuous meaning-making endeavors, frightens us, and invigorates us to live our all-too-mortal lives. Death challenges our reason, our mental faculties, and our rational minds. To humans, death is mostly an incomprehensible but inescapable part of life—death is anticipation, something that we constantly (often with some disbelief and resignation) await until it finally happens. As Svend Bjerg (1975) has once suggested, we cannot experience and therefore cannot comprehend "death itself" but we do have access to the "thoughts of death" that people—across different times and places—have entertained, expressed and reproduced in writings, paintings, belief systems, and rituals. These "thoughts of death"—whether religious, poetic, scientific, philosophical, spiritual, artistic, or mundane—provide us with insights into the different ways that people specifically are "doing death," as it were, how they think and feel about it and how they act upon these thoughts and emotions. It is probably safe to say that death is here to stay—and that it will forever remain. As such an irremovable part of human reality and of social life, death (and not least the gnawing knowledge of it) is something that we as humans, nevertheless, simply have to live with. But the specific way we decide to live with death is very telling of the time and society in which we live.

Throughout his writings spanning more than six decades, Zygmunt Bauman has shed light on many important aspects of life, probably most well-known is his work on the Holocaust, postmodernity, and liquid modernity. However, perhaps as a more unknown part of his writings, Bauman also dealt in some detail with death and its meaning to humans and societies alike, and his 1992-book *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* remains an important contribution to the sociological thinking on death and immortality. In this chapter, we will provide an overview of

Bauman's work on death and immortality and locate it in relation to the existing sociological literature on the topic. Moreover, we will critically discuss and assess Bauman's work in relation to other perspectives as well as highlight its particular relevance in connection to our contemporary culture of death.

Death in Society—Sociology and the Study of Death

As Norbert Elias (2001 [1985], 3) once remarked in his insightful book *The Loneliness of the Dying*, "death is the problem of the living," thus simultaneously stating the obvious that dead people have very few (if any) problems. The problem the living has with death is that the fact that they will all eventually have to die—themselves, the people they love and cherish as well as the rest of the world population. As history shows, no one escapes the sharp scythe of the Grim Reaper. This brutal "fact of life," as we sometimes call it, is one of the constitutive features of all living organisms—they are born, mature, deteriorate and die. This is obviously something that to most people is unpleasant to think about—for who really wants to die or who is able to imagine a world without themselves in it—but on the other hand it also generates a lot of activity that characterizes what we conventionally call "life" as the opposite of "death," activity aimed at annihilating the unpleasant and paralyzing impact of death. According to Ernest Becker in his Pulitzer-winning *The Denial of Death*, the fact of death can to a large degree be seen as one of the most important sources of human activity, ingenuity, and vitality—the desire and intention to live life. As he observed:

> The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is a mainspring of human activity—activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that this is the final destiny for man (Becker 1997 [1973], xvii).

Death is thus not only the great annihilator but also the great motivator. It is interesting (yet to many also somewhat futile) to ponder if life was at all

worth living if death was not a part of it? As Maurice Maeterlinck once provocatively proposed: "Death is the one event that counts in our life" (Maeterlinck 2015 [1911], 5). Death counts—and is important—to the individual, simply because it happens to him/her, and because there is really nothing much to do about it. "Death," as Mary Mothersill once succinctly put it, "is the deadline for all my assignments" (Mothersill quoted in Scarre 2007, 1). In a society like ours that finds it hard to come to terms with endings and closures and constantly searches for new beginnings and unexplored adventures, death is indeed a dull cousin. While it is true that society survives whereas the individual dies, also to society is death an important fact of life to deal with. All societies must, in one way or other, simultaneously accept and deny death (Dumont and Foss 1972). This is indeed not an easy task. They must accept it, simply because death is a solid fact that happens all the time whether we like it or not. Death is therefore difficult to hide completely or to "do away with." Societies must, however, also deny it in order to make its members capable of living purposeful and meaningful lives in the constant shadow of death and to be productive contributors to the continuation of society without being overwhelmed or paralyzed by death anxiety. Most societies dexterously and in almost unseen manner manage this dual task, and in this roundabout way death as much as life is constitutive of society. As Peter L. Berger once memorably suggested: "Every human society is, in the last resort, men banded together in the face of death" (Berger 1969, 51). Since sociology parades as the self-proclaimed "science of society," death, therefore, ought to occupy a central position in sociology's aspiration to study, analyze and interpret society as we know and encounter it.

However, despite its unquestionable and unchanging centrality in human and social life—being something that happens to *all* members of society indiscriminate of gender, class, educational level, and any other "background variable"—death, as mentioned above, has been curiously ignored in most sociology books. Therefore, the topic of death has conventionally not loomed large amongst sociologists in general, and in particular, among many high-profile scholars has the topic been conspicuous mainly by its absence. Despite its universality and omnipresence, death has not made its way into the discipline of sociology as a phenomenon deserving of the same attention as, for example,

inequality, social organization, social structure, social change, or other core matters of the discipline—despite the fact that death is ultimately a constitutive part of them all. In addition to this, the study of death has not been seen as a wise, career-promoting move—it has been much more opportune to abide by the old saying: every man to his own trade. The outcome has been that death has neither constituted a core concern nor a cornerstone in sociologists' interest in the study of social phenomena. Death has mostly been relegated to the margins of the discipline's attempt to understand modern society and its processes and problems. It somehow seems as if the vast majority of sociologists have found the topic of death either too trivial, too inexplicable, or too intangible to include in their thoughts and writings about society. Perhaps sociologists found the topic irrelevant for their studies of other areas of social life such as inequality, processes of rationalization, anomie, or capitalism? Perhaps they felt as uncomfortable with the topic of death as did the population they studied? Perhaps death was simply too difficult to theorize or empirically explore? No matter what the reason was, the self-reflexivity of the sociological imagination simply could not comprehend or embrace the theoretical, methodological, and empirical importance of studying death as an integral part of the study of social life. Alan Blum thus observed how "the topic of death … has rarely been treated as a signature of sociological theorizing" (Blum 2015, 24–25). For a long time, death thus remained located at best at the outskirts of sociology, as far away from the discipline's mainstream concerns as possible, or at worst, it was completely ignored and neglected (Faunce and Fulton 1958). Death was seemingly as much a scientific taboo as a cultural one.

Throughout its history since its early establishment during the latter part of the nineteenth century, the discipline of sociology has mostly been devoted to the study of social life. It is, as mentioned, the self-proclaimed "science of society." In such an effort, death has been seen as largely irrelevant and its importance has therefore for long time remained unacknowledged (Willmott 2000). Why study death when studying life is not only much easier but also more useful (and fun)? Moreover, sociology is sometimes described as a "child of modernity," because it grew up at the threshold of the modern age and took as its main concern the development of "modern society." But perhaps exactly for this reason should death be a

core concern for sociologists. Death in modern (but also late-modern/postmodern) society is a problem that needs to be dealt with. With the coming of modern society, death took on a new meaning—it changed from something belonging almost exclusively to the realm of religion to something belonging to the realm of science, and science is bent on explanation, prediction, and on "fixing things." Perhaps particularly in modern society with its modern science (think of modern medicine) has the phenomenon of death therefore become increasingly problematic, which has given rise to tabooing, denial, and silence. Obviously, our talking about death is never completely silenced, but *the way* we talk about it changes over time, and with the coming of modern society a religious terminology and understanding of death was gradually supplemented, challenged, and perhaps also increasingly substituted by a medical one (Armstrong 1987). There is little doubt that the much cited "taboo on death" throughout the twentieth century has also contributed to sociology routinely overlooking the topic. Particularly since the mid-twentieth century, social scientists from a range of disciplines—psychology, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and historical studies—observed that our modern Western society mostly dealt with death through tabooing, repression, denial, and distancing. Death was forbidden and shameful, something to be shunned, not to be talked about, and preferably kept behind closed doors (see, e.g., Ariès 1974, 1981; Farberow 1963; Feifel 1963; Gorer 1955, see also Kellehear 2007).

However, towards the end of the twentieth century—as mentioned a century in the research literature often described as an increasingly "death denying" and "death tabooing" time—something began to simmer and sociologists gradually discovered death and dying as topics deserving of attention (Vovelle 1981). The starting-point of this new interest in death and dying is often attributed to the rise of the so-called "death awareness movement" in the 1960s and 1970s, which was instrumental in drawing critical attention to the often dehumanized experiences of dying in modern institutions such as hospitals and nursing homes, and which also served as the foundation for the development of the hospice movement, "death education" initiatives and subsequently the establishment of palliative care (Doka 2008). The ideas of this "movement" (which was really never a very unified group of scholars and practitioners) later served as a source of inspiration for what is commonly referred to as "the sociology of death and

dying"—a sub-discipline devoted to the study of death and its related themes such as dying processes, grief, mourning rituals, beliefs in the afterlife and immortality as well as disposal and burial practices (see, e.g., Walter 2008). In these early years, within the discipline of sociology itself, death was mostly studied under the specialized sub-disciplinary headings of "the sociology of religion," "medical sociology," "the sociology of health and illness" or "the sociology of ageing." Each of these research areas or sub-disciplines tends to frame and approach death in a certain way relating to and relevant for their own special concerns such as religion/theology, healthcare/medicine, or old age/gerontology. However, as a research topic in its own right, as a topic deserving of its own limelight, death remained relatively unexplored within sociology for a considerable period of time. But for the sociologist who is studying the topic of death, death—and not least changes in the understandings, beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and practices relating to it—can, in fact, be very informative of the way social life, in general, is organized and the way people go about the business of living their lives: their dreams, hopes, and fears. In this way, death and what we do with it is an important topic to study in order to understand social life in general. Although each society may be "doing" death differently (Walter 2012)—and history is indeed full of examples of the bountiful variety of death-related ideas and practices across different historical epochs and coexisting cultures—*all* societies must deal with death as part of their reality. Death cannot be wished away—it occurs all the time, it is something very normal (Jacobsen 2022). For this reason alone, death should interest sociologists.

So after spending a considerable time in the deep freezer of the death taboo, towards the end of the twentieth century, death suddenly became something of a hot topic. During the late 1970s and 1980s, the interest in death grew exponentially within many different areas of research. Sometimes this interest was referred to simply as "death studies" or "thanatology" and later more specifically labeled as "the sociology of death" (sometimes also called "the sociology of death, dying and bereavement" or "the sociology of death, dying, disposal and bereavement" in order to cover all death-related bases). Moreover, a number of pioneering sociologists began to see a potential in the study of death—a potential for teasing out some important understandings of late-modern/postmodern

society at large and not only for understanding death in and by itself. Scholars critically began to ask: is death really (still) a taboo, and if so, then how, where, when, and why, and if no longer, why not so? (see, e.g., Walter 1991; Jacobsen 2021). Obviously, questions like these are indeed difficult to find any definitive answer to as they also to a large degree depend on terminological differences and confusion—but the fact that the ingrained "death taboo" thesis was increasingly challenged signaled that something new was happening. Instead of being described by notions of "taboo," "repression" and "denial," death was now according to some theories "rediscovered" (Vovelle 1981), it was undergoing a "revival" (Walter 1994), it was seemingly being "de-tabooed' (Berridge 2002; Noys 2005), "postmodernized" (Kovacs 2002; Simon, Haney and Buenteo 1993), something to be "culturally celebrated" (Khapaeva 2017), and last but not least it increasingly became "spectacular" (Jacobsen 2016, 2020). It was also during this time of "death revival" that Zygmunt Bauman began to take an interest in the topic of death.

Bauman and the Study of Death

If death, as suggested above, for a long time was routinely overlooked or deemed uninteresting by sociologists, this is nothing compared to the lack of interest in the topic of immortality that, if it was at all touched upon, almost remained the exclusive property of the sub-discipline of "the sociology of religion." Immortality was not regarded as a general theme that sociologists should concern themselves with, and even though scattered remarks about beliefs in the afterlife was sometimes made (in fact Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber or Georg Simmel all wrote more or less extensively about immortality), immortality as a topic in its own right —with some notable exceptions such as the important work of Peter L. Berger—mostly remained under-researched by sociologists (see, e.g., Jacobsen 2017a; Walter 1996). However, in his book *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* (1992a), itself somewhat overlooked, Zygmunt Bauman dealt with *both* death *and* with immortality in one and the same unfolded, original sociological argument. Obviously, Bauman was not the

first major sociologist to deal with or write about death (or immortality for that matter). Prior to him, the likes of Talcott Parsons, Peter L. Berger, Norbert Elias, and Anthony Giddens had also written about the topic and provided important insights into the way death informs society and how our forced confrontation with death significantly impacts social structure and social relationships (including that to ourselves and our "self-identities").

It was exactly in the wake of the aforementioned period of a "revival of death" from the late 1980s onwards that Bauman wrote *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* dedicated to understanding death and immortality as social constructs. The book thus inscribes itself in a line of some prominent sociologists who particularly during this time had begun to take the topic of death seriously in their work. For example, Norbert Elias had published his small book *The Loneliness of the Dying* (2001 [1985]), a critical commentary on the way the elderly and dying—often transferred to institutional care in the late stages of life—were being treated in contemporary "civilized" society. Relying partly on Elias's vocabulary, in *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991) Anthony Giddens also provided some reflections on how death, together with a number of other human experiences (such as mental illness or existential crisis), was increasingly being sequestrated and routinely made invisible in modern society—reflections later developed further by other sociologists (see, e.g., Mellor and Shilling, 1993). But Bauman's book was without comparison the most comprehensive attempt at trying to inscribe death (and immortality) as a core topic into the discipline of sociology.

The topic of death was in fact present already in Bauman's perhaps most cited book *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989). The book did not deal with death specifically, but since the Holocaust culminated in the killing of more than six million Jews and millions of other people, death is constantly there throughout the pages of the book but between the lines. Industrialized mass death in the concentration camp system (of which Bauman's wife Janina Bauman was a survivor) was the reason that the book needed to be written in the first place. But it was not until *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* that death in its own right became a topic of detailed interest in Bauman's work. But contrary to *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), and despite Bauman's widespread popularity, *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* is not a book that has attracted much attention but in fact, it

was his own personal favorite, almost an "unloved child," among his numerous published books (Beilharz 2000, 146).

Bauman started out *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* with a few important comments and reservations in order to qualify his contribution. First of all, he was careful not to present his book as a contribution to any sociological sub-discipline (such as "the sociology of death and dying") that was interested in the way people ritualize death or commemorate their deceased. Moreover, it was not a study of changing "visions" or "representations" of death or the afterlife—for example, as found in the famous work of French historian Philippe Ariès (1974, 1981). Bauman instead wanted his book to be read as a contribution to general social theory and as part of his comprehensive analysis of the transformation of modernity. Bauman thus regarded his book on death as a contribution to social theory and as an extension or spin-off from his earlier critical work on the transformation of modernity. As he insisted:

> The immodest intention of [the] book is to unpack, and open up to investigation, the presence of death (i.e. the conscious or repressed knowledge of mortality) in human institutions, rituals and beliefs, which, on the face of it, explicitly and self-consciously, serve tasks and functions altogether different, unrelated to the preoccupations normally scrutinized in studies dedicated to the "history of death and dying" (Bauman 1992a, 1–2).

Hereby Bauman was suggesting that his focus is different from that of the many historians, such as for example, most prominently Philippe Ariès (1981) or Michel Vovelle (1983), who were concerned with detailed studies of the mortuary practices, changing architectural symbolism, and religious iconography or belief systems that had characterized different phases of human history. Second, Bauman, in a more extended argument, also commented on the difficulties involved in defining the subject matter of his book—death. Death, as indicated above, is indeed difficult to define. At least it is difficult to define death unless the definition is a purely negative one, describing only absence, emptiness, and nothingness (Bauman 1992a, 2). Death is for all practical intents and purposes the great unknown to human beings—the threshold of experience that we cannot cross and then return to report from "the other side." Death is an aporia, a mystery, an

enigma, a puzzle, a conundrum. How can something that was only moments ago alive and kicking, speaking, seeing, and thinking suddenly disappear or stop "being"? Where is the line between being "alive" and being "dead"? What does it mean to be "dead"? How does it feel "being dead"? Death-related questions like these have haunted mankind ever since the beginning of time, with each new generation witnessing and contemplating the disappearance of their predecessors. Bauman, however, does not provide answers to these tricky questions in his book as they fall outside his area of interest, but he does suggest that death is ultimately meaningless and for this reason alone it is up to humans to make sense of it. According to Bauman, we thus need to understand that death is not simply a basic biological fact of life—something that we just live with, passively accept or leave to itself—it is instead something that we ceaselessly strive to make sense of and make meaningful.

According to Bauman, death is and remains incomprehensible and indefinable to humans, and he suggested that "death is the ultimate defeat of reason" (Bauman 1992a, 13), it is the scandal of reason and a mockery of the rational mind. We simply cannot wrap our heads around it or make sense of death and for that reason, it becomes a problem to be dealt with. Humans simply cannot leave death (and the inexplicable) alone—and in modern society with its urge to explain, control and organize all aspects of life, this becomes an even more urgent task (see Bauman 1989, 1991). Bauman repeats an insight known from other philosophers and poets as well, namely that we as humans not only know that we must die, but we also know that we know it. There is simply no way of unknowing that the mortal destiny awaiting us all. We may, however, try to postpone it, combat it and or deny it, but at the end of the day, the gnawing knowledge that we are nothing but food for worms cannot be unknown.

In *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*, death is therefore treated from a cultural or sociological perspective as something humans try to make sense of and deal with (see Jacobsen 2017b). In Bauman's understanding, our conception of, attitude towards, and relationship to death can, to a large degree, provide important information regarding society/culture as such. As he observed in the book:

> The fact of human mortality, and the necessity to live with the constant awareness of that fact, goes a long way toward accounting for many a crucial aspect of social and cultural organization of all known societies; and the most, perhaps all known cultures can be better understood (or at least understood differently, in a novel way) if conceived of as alternative ways in which that primary trait of human existence—*the fact of mortality and the knowledge of it*—is dealt with and processed, so that it may turn from the condition of impossibility of meaningful life into that major source of life's meaning. At the end of such process death, from a fact of nature, a biological phenomenon, re-emerges as a cultural artefact (Bauman 1992a, 9, original italics).

In this particular quotation, Bauman actually comes pretty close to insisting that our relationship towards death, and our sense-making efforts and ways of trying to learn to live with it, provides an important interpretative doorway to understanding and explaining many (perhaps even most) other facets of social and cultural life. Death, and our way of dealing with, managing, processing, and making it meaningful, works as a means of shedding light on life in general or serves as a mirror of the life we live. This is obviously not revolutionary knowledge—many religious scribes, philosophers, and poets throughout the centuries have claimed the same. However, as a *sociological insight* it is a pretty original and bold statement. Bauman's "take" on the topic of death in *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* is primarily socio-philosophical. It is mainly a theoretical treatise aimed at providing an interpretative framework for understanding death as a social and cultural phenomenon (or "construct"). Bauman captures his own way of working with the notion of "sociological hermeneutics"—a term used to describe how individual thoughts, actions, and life strategies always exist in a dialectical and reciprocal relationship to broader social figurations and changing cultural formations and acquire their meaning from this intimate relationship—and *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* is by him exactly regarded as an "exercise" in sociological hermeneutics (Bauman 1992a, 10; see also Blackshaw 2005). In Bauman's book on death there are only very scattered references to empirical studies of death, and he—in for him typical manner—has not collected any "data material" himself. The analysis solely rests on insights from other scholars as well as Bauman's own imaginative perspective and ingenious ideas.

As mentioned above, humans (and perhaps particularly humans of the modern age) never just passively accept death and the fact that they will and must die. They insist on trying to annul death, postpone it, deny it, deceive it, destroy it. The same goes for modern society that—on behalf of its members—wages an all-out war against death. Bauman's book is, therefore, a study of how we socialize and culturalize the natural and biological fact of death that can be summarized with the notion of "deconstruction"—humans/societies in different periods of history engage with death in different ways as a deconstruction of the inevitable, turning it into something with which we can somehow learn to live. Bauman applies the specific notion of "deconstruction" (albeit not in any particular Jacques Derrida way) to describe how society in different ways seek to turn death and immortality into manageable or acceptable pieces that can keep us occupied and engaged as a distraction from "death proper" (or what Bjerg above called "death itself"), which remains an unsolvable problem. In the following, we will in admittedly compact manner describe the two main "deconstruction" efforts, "life strategies," "formulae" or "policies" outlined by Bauman in *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* before subsequently discussing selected parts of his perspective.

The Modern Deconstruction of Death

In *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*, Bauman presented the fundamental framework of the two main forms of "deconstruction" that describes the ways in which our consciousness of death in different ways spurs on, interlinks with, and is guided by the developments of society and culture as a whole: "the modern deconstruction of mortality" and "the postmodern deconstruction of immortality."[1] This framework, or parts of its analytical content, is deployed further in some of his subsequent writings (e.g., Bauman 1996, 1997, 1998b, 1999) to understand concrete cultural processes and institutions as they pertain to death, and as death pertains to them, highlighting, in turn, the veracity of his claim that there are "cognitive profits" (Bauman 1992a, 10) to be gained from adopting the perspective of human mortality to general sociological theory and analysis.

The contents and dynamics of the "deconstruction" frameworks will be explicated here, starting with an outline of the modern deconstruction of mortality.

Taking as his point of departure the Enlightenment's break from premodern or traditional society, Bauman identifies a range of new social and cultural processes that bear the marks of a changing relationship to death and, in turn, reproduce this relationship in ever-developing forms. With the coming of modern society, a number of new institutions arose, and old ones were either adapted or abandoned, as managing death as a problem required new strategies that were in line with the social developments of the time. The life strategies or cultural formulae of yore would no longer do in the face of especially two major developments: the conceptualization of the individual as a self-contained and self-propelling entity expected to autonomously build an identity, and the "drive to mastery" (Bauman 1992a, p. 132), which Bauman uses as a descriptor for the *Zeitgeist* of the Enlightenment with its rationalizing efforts that should emancipate humans from any and all contingencies, be they natural or cultural. This "drive to mastery," which Bauman equates with modern society, was the beginning of a period where humans aspired to control both nature and the organizing of society so as to make them serve the ideals of rationality and democracy. Having been made a society of individuals, each and every individual in modern society now had their right to pursue the best conditions for themselves, and this also included making meaning of mortality. The quest for immortality was no longer in the hands of the social collective, and simultaneously the democratization of individuality ruled out individuality as a reliable pathway to immortality, because when *everyone* (and not just "the chosen ones")—at least in principle but perhaps not in practice—can aspire to become immortal (e.g., by obtaining celebrity status), *no one* actually does (Bauman 1997, 1999). Towards this pervasive drive to mastery over nature, death stood as the ultimate provocation and last vestige of a magical age in the face of which humans were, in the eyes of modernity, impotent and at the full mercy of nature. Moreover, with increasing secularization death was no longer seen as a bridge to the eternal bliss on "the other side," but was instead regarded as a most merciless and immovable roadblock. Death became "the Other" of modern life: something which was wholly opposite to the ruling ideas of self-determination of the

time, and it represented a sense of failure or embarrassment which had to be fought or at least covered up (Bauman 1992a, 131). Having been made able —through scientific, technical, and political advancements—to control many of the aspects of life which were previously resigned to an imagined fate or cosmic or godly order, death required new ways of being dealt with that were fitting for the new material and social advancements of modern society. Death had to be cured, but since this was practically and ultimately impossible, it had to be exiled, deferred, hidden away, and not thought of (Bauman 1992a, 134). This was the cultural backdrop against which society now had to structure its concrete practices towards (the avoidance of) death.

In Bauman's analysis in *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* together with elaborations elsewhere (e.g., Bauman 1992b, 1997, 1998b) the agency at the forefront of this exiling of death—now an affront to reason and to the integrity of the modern individual—was the science of medicine and the medical institutions in which this was practiced. From the new advancements in identifying and treating diseases and maintaining the body, a pervasive preoccupation arose as an answer to the inevitability of death; if the many causes of death could just be conquered one by one, and if each individual could remain occupied with optimizing their own bodily fitness, we would only have to think about these singular "causes of death" which were within our grasp, and never about the inevitability of "death proper." Here, Bauman (1992a, 139–140) draws on a particularly poignant simile by Helmut Thielicke, who likens the doctors of modernity to attorneys fighting their client's case in the court room. With death in modernity being a matter of its constituent and medically manageable causes, it is up to the individual doctor (as the patient's "attorney") to apply the latest knowledge to combat these causes. Losing a patient, then, becomes like losing a trial: it is the responsibility of the individual practitioner who was not adept enough, and not of the profession as a whole. The same tendency has been noted within psychiatry: individual psychiatrists are tasked with applying the latest and supposedly most accurate risk assessment methods to ascertain, or sniff out, any signs of suicidality. A failure in accuracy or perceptiveness with a resultant suicide attempt outside the psychiatric institution is the responsibility of the individual practitioner who did not apply the expert knowledge correctly or failed to identify the present and relevant risk factors (Marsh 2010). This

possibility of blaming the individual further consolidates the integrity of science as a whole, and the medical approach to death and mortality further ties into a general development in the production and distribution of knowledge in modernity (Bauman 1992b, 22–23). Here, knowledge has become atomized into small particles, each having the possibility of being causally tied to other particles *ad infinitum*, thereby ruling out the possibility of ever understanding, or even working towards understanding, anything in its totality, and thus rendering science mostly a matter of managing data. No longer was there knowledge of "death," only the possible "causes" of it, and the smaller and more particular these causes were, the more they were seen as profound and valuable (Bauman 1992b, 22). As Bauman succinctly remarked, although fighting "death," terrible and incomprehensible death, is utterly meaningless, fighting the numerous specific and individual "causes of death" turns into the very purpose and preoccupation of modern life (Bauman 1992b, 5–7).

The dynamic at play here, then, is indeed a deconstruction of mortality in the sense that this "Other" of modern life is perceived only in the constituent parts into which it was divided by medical science and rationality, thereby deferring any thoughts about "death proper" in favor of a preoccupation with all that *can* be cured or managed:

> Modern instrumentality has *deconstructed mortality*. Deconstruction does not abolish death. It has only left it unadorned, naked, stripped of significance. Death is nothing but waste in the production of life; a useless leftover, the total stranger in the semiotically rich, busy, confident world of adroit and ingenious actors. Death is *the Other* of modern life. True, death was always "the Other" of life. Being the Other of *modern* life is, however, a peculiar condition as modernity has its own and uniquely modern way of coping with the Other of itself (Bauman 1992a, 131, original italics).

With the words of John Carroll (1994), Bauman (1997, 155) likens this view to that of a "chronic invalid watching life from the window of the hospital." At every step, the modern individual is urged to choose or pursue that which prolongs his life: choosing the sugar-free, the lean meat (or better, no meat at all), the decaffeinated coffee, low cholesterol products, vaping instead of smoking, and so on. And at every faltering of human

fitness, self-care, or medicine, when people do inevitably get sick and die, a tangible and scientifically valid cause has to be assigned so as not to give into any of nature's contingencies at the cost of the knowledge system of data management and cause-and-effect propping up the drive to mastery of modern society. Adding to this gloomy vision of modernity, which Bauman reaches in his analysis, we see that the democratic aspirations of early modernity are to an ever-greater degree challenged by the social stratification of the cost of healthcare, with private healthcare being able to offer better, more comprehensive and more innovative prolongments of life only to the wealthy: the right to live a long life and counter the gradually intensifying processes of death are matters of the individual's worth, either in a monetary sense or in the sense of being inscribed into a social order with certain allotted privileges. One does not have to look for very long to see these processes still unfolding and expanding today.

The long, arduous, and ultimately futile quest of mankind's effort to control the contingencies of nature—Slavoj Žižek memorably termed mother nature a "crazy bitch" referring to its often ignored brutal contingency independent of human choices or actions (Else 2010, 28)—continues today, but times have certainly changed since the Enlightenment and modern society, and it is precisely the very structure of time and temporality which has instigated what Bauman regards as the second major development in our relationship to death: the postmodern deconstruction of immortality.

The Postmodern Deconstruction of Immortality

After in detail having analyzed how mortality was deconstructed through modernity's medico-technological battle against death as deviance or death as an "Other"—exiled from sight and mind and relegated instead to the hospital where medical professionals could apply their expert knowledge, and to the daily preoccupation with health where death was divided into an infinite set of individually manageable causes—Bauman in *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* then turns to immortality. It is Bauman's contention that immortality's presence has come to the fore in the

new "timescape" of postmodernity. Rather than being an expected culmination of life either awaiting in the heavenly bliss of the promised (but never always certain) afterlife or always lying at the horizon of imminent scientific progress, immortality has now become one of the main preoccupations and objects of the deconstruction of postmodern everyday life.

As with the modern deconstruction of mortality, Bauman identifies a range of unfolding social and cultural processes that shape immortality in postmodern society, here centering mainly on the increasingly digitalized, technological, and entertainment-oriented organization of society. Prominent among these processes are the daily "rehearsal of death" and the recasting of death as suspension, with both of these being grounded in changes in the dynamics of temporality—something which was to become a central theme throughout Bauman's later writings (see Campbell 2013).

Tracing the advent of these new processes situated within postmodernity, Bauman sources their origin in the collapse (in the original Latin meaning of "falling together") of modern, mainly medico-technological, and rational "projects" with identifiable beginnings and ends, and more or less demarcated paths between the two. Within postmodernity, the organization of action and activity is fundamentally different from the structure of the "projects" of modernity. Drawing on André Lervi-Gourhan's (1964) concept of "connexity," Bauman describes how each present moment is no longer connected to the foregoing or following moment by a continuous, unbroken path perfectly furnishing time so as to eliminate any empty spaces and allow for cumulative efforts where past, present and future actions all work in unison towards a higher goal. Instead, time has become an incessant series of "present moments" with each of these canceling itself in the process of being replaced by another "now." Bauman (2007) later described this as "pointillist time" with each "now" being only one point among many discontinuous points marked primarily by the ruptures between them. More radically than the referenced pointillist style of painting, however, the present moments that constitute postmodernity do not make up a single image or motif but exist more as "white noise" (perhaps echoing the flickering images of the entertainment industry propping up the vain intimations of immortality to which we shall return shortly) (see also Jacobsen and Runge 2020). In this way, cumulative effort

becomes an impossibility, and immortality can no longer be regarded as the goal of "eternity" waiting at the end of the long road of progress, but it is now deconstructed into being possibly present in every moment. In postmodernity, this takes the form of both a daily rehearsal of all those things which were previously permanent and lifelong as well as the recording of each individual into an expansive information system never to be erased completely. As Bauman concisely stated:

> Immortality is not a challenge to be taken up, a task to be performed, a reward to be earned. Neither is it a project that can give meaning to the being-in-the-world. In the world in which *disappearing* has replaced the dying, immortality dissolves in the melancholy of presence, in the monotony of endless repetition (Bauman 1992a, 175, original italics).

Being born into postmodernity means, then, being born into a revolving series of moments (sometimes by Bauman called "majestic moments") where death and immortality are constantly being rehearsed—nothing is final, everything is potentially possible within each single moment. The actions of today are exactly only *of today* and not tomorrow, and so too with skills, relationships, aspirations, jobs, love affairs, and so forth. By constantly replacing objects, which are still functioning, humans are now separating themselves from bonds previously only broken by death (or avoiding them completely by only participating in relationships "with no strings attached"), constantly adapting one's skills to the ever-changing demands of the markets (made possible today by a veritable explosion in free online courses), and so on, the only thing remaining durable is transience itself: transience, ephemerality, and evanescence repeated, with the public opinion casting stability and durability as boredom. Drawing once again on the ideas of Thielicke, this practice creates a "centrifugal tendency of a continually enhanced dissipation" (Bauman 1992a, 189), making the matters of death and immortality, as they were previously perceived as matters of durability and permanence, meaningless and innocuous:

> It is now immortality, not mortality which is deconstructed; but deconstructed in such a way as to show that permanence is nothing but the sequence of evanescences, time is

nothing but a succession of episodes without consequence, immortality is nothing but an ongoing sequence of mortal beings (Bauman 1992a, 190).

Thus, immortality is always all around us due to having been deconstructed into an incessant series of negations of all things previously permanent. This immortality was not the conquest of "nature" that was dreamt of in modernity, but a conquest (although far from a victorious one) of "time" itself, placing immortality in the "here and now" (or rather the many "heres and nows," each replacing the other) rather than sometime in the future. Immortality takes here the form of suspension in the circularity of the revolving series of present moments: nothing ever truly disappears but is only suspended until recalled and placed with renewed life into the public gaze (think here of the circular life of celebrities in contemporary culture as a constant rehearsal of disappearance and reappearance). As a person is born, they are cast into a comprehensive technological information system impossible to escape from, making birth rather than death the only true irreversible event. Everything is recorded, and each person leaves behind an extensive digital footprint. From when Bauman published his work in the early 1990s up to today, this development only seems to have been sped up with ever more personal data being collected and the rise of the micro-celebrities and influencers on social media.

This compact presentation of Bauman's thoughts and ideas on death and immortality, with its primary attention to his seminal work *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life-Strategies*, has mainly revolved around the fundamental social and cultural dynamics which he sees as central to the understanding of respectively the modern and the postmodern cultures of death, dying, survival and immortality. In later works, Bauman has with greater specificity expanded upon the "life strategies" culturally produced and deployed by individual agents in "liquid modernity" (a term used only later). Here, Masa Higo (2012) specifically traces the strategy or "formula" of pursuing the consumer sensation of bodily fitness in later works, which surpasses the efforts of deconstructing immortality as the seminal life strategy of our time (see also Bauman 1992b, 1999). While fitness and health were already a part of the modern deconstruction of mortality, they have now more specifically taken the form of a "consumer sensation,"

emphasizing the subjective aspects rather than the objective aspects of applying expert knowledge to the body. Now, it is a matter of being seduced by the cornucopia of consumer products promising us better, stronger, faster, and leaner bodies and sharper, quicker, and more enduring minds. Bauman (1999) makes a particularly compelling analysis of the practice of dieting, concluding wryly that while the elimination of body fat represents an ideal target for a wealth of products and strategies continually reinventing themselves to deal with different aspects of this symbol of mortality, "no diet saves its practitioners from dying" (Bauman 1999, 46). Thus, humans are in ever-evolving ways trying, however futile, to make sense of and invent new practices and strategies for dealing with the uniquely human conscience of death, for the alternative is surely worse, or rather, impossible: death cannot be grasped as such in its phenomenological negativity and entirety or be accepted outright (Bauman 1992a, 2). So while seemingly futile, the many socio-cultural practices directed against death come in many ways, as has been shown, to constitute our very way of being and our way of being with each other, which is, as such, hardly a futile endeavor. As Bauman, as a sort of moral salute, concluded in the postscript of *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*, death and our consciousness of it uniquely allow us to constitute our very personhood by living with a willingness and preparedness to ultimately embrace death by sacrificing ourselves for "the Other" (Bauman 1992a, 210).

Discussion: Potentials and Critiques of Bauman's Perspective

After this compact outline of Bauman's main argument in *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* (1992a), focusing primarily on the two modern and postmodern "deconstruction" strategies of death and immortality, we will now briefly reflect on and discuss some of the strengths and potential pitfalls or blind angles of Bauman's perspective. First of all, as we have already stressed, Bauman's work on death and immortality is incomparable in a sociological context, not least because it manages to make death and immortality—previously so marginalized topics

in most sociological work—central components in our understanding of the very constitution and workings of society and culture. But it is also a piece of work that raises a number of relevant issues for further discussion and exploration.

Bauman's book has rightly been called a "radical book" (Bocock 1993, 123). There are many reasons why the book is so radical. One of them is that the idea from Bauman that the cultural management of death anxieties in the form of "life strategies" or cultural "formulae" is the real driving force of social history, which in itself is quite a radical suggestion. In *In Search of Politics* (1999, 36–38), Bauman stated that life strategies and therefore the cultural formulae pertaining to coping with the knowledge and reality of death are also shaped by the societal conditions at any given time, for example, as seen in the case of nationhood and family becoming dominant life strategies instead of religion and later the individual beginning to take the center stage as the main concern of the prevalent life strategies. However, it remains to be shown *how* this development concretely takes place, because Bauman also, in his thoughts on capitalism, consumerism, and the material conditions of culture (see, e.g., Bauman 2007), seems to indicate that our coping with death is indeed culturally mediated, but the shape and therefore the nature of the mediation of culture is in the last instance affected by the social, material and technological conditions as they develop throughout history. It is therefore unclear if the "real" driving force behind social and cultural change is in fact the human consciousness of death itself or rather the social, material, and technological conditions that shape and perhaps determine the specific form and shape of this consciousness (see also Bauman 1992a, 4).

Another point that should be discussed is that Bauman is often criticized for not taking into account cultural variation and thus only is relying on and perpetuating an affluent Western and Christian interpretation (Higo 2012), which also influences his perspective on how death and immortality is understood and managed in "Western modernity." This, however, seems to be too general a criticism, and in all cases a too easily deployed one. In the case of Bauman, his affinity with the thought of Arthur Schopenhauer *in addition* to that of Sigmund Freud lends further complexity to the cultural context of his thought, as Schopenhauer's views on death and metaphysics in general were deeply influenced by Hindu and Buddhist philosophy. An

important, yet often overlooked, foundational link in Bauman's thoughts on death is therefore Schopenhauer. Bauman's expansion of Freud's (e.g., 1957 [1915]) ideas is often taken as the starting point for his more elaborate exploration of the cultural management of death, but Schopenhauer provides—together with the introductory phenomenological notions of the "otherness" and inexplicability of death—the very foundation from which Bauman derives his reason for examining the cultural management of death and social construction of life strategies. Therefore, the notion that culture—and we need to remember that in Bauman's work "culture" has always remained a most dynamic and praxis-oriented concept (see, e.g., Bauman 1973)—is a necessary means of coping with the inevitable death-anxieties arising as a consequence of our knowledge of death and our knowledge of death is not exclusively tied to Western culture, but rather has a much broader scope. Bauman is therefore indeed aware of the cultural variability of different cultural ways of dealing with death (see, e.g., Bauman 1992a, 8), although he in his work privileges a Western perspective. Where the criticism does seem to hold true, then, is in Bauman's analytical scope which seems to be predominantly focused on Western societal tendencies rather than more general ones. The question that arises, then, is whether this is a fundamental fallacy in his theorizing, or whether it is simply an indication of a starting point, where the foundation, as previously shown, actually allows for further, more general analyses of culture in a broader sense? Perhaps inadvertently, Bauman's (1998a) own thoughts on globalization do, however, call into question the continued relevance of culturally specific analyses. And in any case, such cultural specificity can often lead to atomistic and irrelevant knowledge—after all, we are all individuals, and we are all parts of society, and we all have to die. Therefore, Bauman's cultural theory of death and immortality needs *not* "to be read as just one of a potential number of insightful interpretations of how we survive death-anxieties specifically within the context of affluent, Western societies of consumers," as Higo (2012, p. 236) claims, but as a foundational work from which further elaboration can be made with regards to culturally specific life strategies.

Yet another point for discussion is that the focus on "bodily fitness" as seemingly the seminal life strategy of contemporary society—as suggested by Bauman (1992b)—perhaps seems somewhat less relevant than many of

the thoughts on temporality and possibilities of digital technology, which have become so much more ubiquitous today. By the time Bauman wrote *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*, the internet, personal computers, and social media were still either in their infancy or non-existing. The subsequent expansion of digital media and digital social interactions has important consequences for the potentials for living with death that Bauman outlines in the postscript of his book. This has recently been explored in an analysis of the (inter)faces of digital media by Sam Han (2019) who points out that the increased exposure of death through digital media has created an experience of mass death, where individuals increasingly become others only in the almost numerical sense that they are a homogenous mass of unidentifiable strangers, and never "Others" in the qualitative and ethical sense of Emmanuel Lévinas, where "the Other" calls on us to live-towards them with our willingness to sacrifice our one lives for them (Bauman 1992a, 210).

Moreover, how should we understand the succession of one "deconstruction" strategy by the next one, a modern by a postmodern? Here one might want to read some sort of unintended historicity into Bauman's work not unlike the consecutive stages of different "death mentalities" from the Middle Ages to the present as found in the work of Philippe Ariès (1974). However, this is *not* Bauman's perspective—according to him, the life strategies, like anything else, cannot be seen as either purely static or as successive phenomena. In his view, the "modern deconstruction of mortality" and the "postmodern deconstruction of immortality" significantly overlap and coexist, and the latter strategy has *not* completely replaced or eradicated the former. If anything, they seem to team up in the fight against death. As Bauman observed on the aspiration to delineate the two strategies in his book:

> Two types of strategies (which contemporary society, not without contradiction, tries to deploy simultaneously—the circumstance that makes even more futile the barren effort to draw, or to efface, the time-boundary between the "modern" and "postmodern" eras) come under a closer scrutiny (Bauman 1992a, 10).

Perhaps the two strategies should therefore rather be read as Weberian "ideal types" or even caricatures than as actual descriptions of reality—they are, after all, more intellectual constructs or idealizations than depictions of the messy and often internally incoherent character of lived reality (Bauman 1992a, 11). Understood as such an interpretative framework the separation between the "modern deconstruction of mortality" and the "postmodern deconstruction of immortality" works well, and the analytical separation is very useful for highlighting the way our efforts to deal with death has crystallized into different strategies. However, one can obviously question the empirical validity and universality (which is required for the theory to work) of the way the shift from modernity to postmodernity happened: Bauman says that it was due to having attained all there was to be attained from the medico-technological method, but he also poignantly analyses the inherently stratifying force of medicine: the fact that vast majority of people in the world do not experience the "postmodern deconstruction of immortality," for they have not even attained any of the benefits of the "modern deconstruction of death." There is certainly a way in which the two "phases" could coexist in a unified model, but their relations to and dynamics within concrete reality are by Bauman not expounded upon enough to secure such a unity.

Finally, towards the end of his magnum opus on our historically changing relationship towards death, the voluminous *The Hour of Our Death*—a book also mentioned by Bauman a few times in his own book on death—Ariès stated that modern society provided two interrelated answers to the continued existence of death that it sought so hard to annihilate. First, "a massive admission of defeat" that was paradoxically evident in the fact that we tend to "ignore the existence of a scandal we have been unable to prevent," thus acting as if death does not exist and shrouding the topic in silence. The second answer of modern society is to "reduce death to the insignificance of an ordinary event that is mentioned with feigned indifference," thus making death utterly unimportant. In addition to these two answers, Ariès also critically mentioned the response of the so-called "death awareness movement" aimed at "humanizing death" and reconciling "death with happiness" so that death becomes "the discrete but dignified exit of a peaceful person from a helpful society that is not torn, not even openly upset by the idea of a biological transition without significance,

without pain or suffering and ultimately without fear" (Ariès 1981, 613–614). Ariès was not convinced that any of these answers were either adequate or even desirable. But what about Bauman then? His view on society's responses to death is somewhat different from that of Ariès, although there are also certain overlaps. According to Bauman's argument, death is regarded as meaninglessness but *at the same time* fighting death on all fronts becomes the very meaning of modern—and postmodern—life. But is there really any possible escape from death then? Bauman ends the book—prior to the postscript—with the following cryptic statement:

> The paradoxical outcome of modernity's project [to deconstruct mortality] is that the work of modernity is being undone. Death is back—un-deconstructed, unreconstructed. Even immortality has now come under its spell and rule. The price of exorcising the spectre of mortality proved to be a collective incapacity to construct life as reality, to take life seriously (Bauman 1992a, 199).

But how do we—individually and collectively—take life seriously then, if not by accepting to live in the constant shadow of death whilst simultaneously doing our utmost to beat it and cheat it? Is the meaning of life then, as Franz Kafka would have it, only that it ends? Is the meaning of death, in the end, only its meaninglessness? Here it seems as if Bauman falls silent—although he does propose that living-for and even dying-for "the Other" may prove to be the best, or at least the only morally responsible, answer (Bauman 1992a, 210).

Conclusion

As this chapter started out by suggesting, death has not been and still is not a common concern among most sociologists. In fact, until quite recently sociologists routinely seemed to neglect the topic altogether or merely treat it as an epiphenomenon with which to explain other and seemingly more important things. However, something has happened during the past three-four decades that has made death a much more analytically opportune topic to explore. With the emergence of the sub-discipline of "the sociology of

death and dying" during the past decades of the twentieth century, death has been made a much more legitimate concern also among sociologists. This was also the time when Zygmunt Bauman began writing about death and published his book *Mortality, Immortality and Other life Strategies* (1992a). To him, the topic of death served as a sort of gateway into understanding not only transformations of social life in general from a "solid-modern" to a "postmodern" or "liquid-modern" phase, but also to understand a range of human emotions such as love and hatred (see, e.g., Jasińska-Kania 2016).

This chapter has explored Bauman's contribution to our sociological understanding of death. Although Bauman was himself certainly not a "sociologist of death and dying," his work nevertheless provided some important insights into the way death is an integral part of social life and social organization. In the chapter, we saw how Bauman analytically distinguished between modern society's "deconstruction of mortality" and postmodern society's "deconstruction of immortality." As we have shown in the chapter, these two "life strategies," "policies" or "formulae," as Bauman denoted them, each—but in different ways—aim at making a life with inevitable death livable and meaningful. In this way, Bauman actually also provided an existential report of some of the ways in which humans (and societies) try to tackle the perpetual problem of human mortality. As we also discussed above, it is important to stress that Bauman does not as such ascribe a strict historical chronology to these two main deconstruction strategies—although there is indeed a certain time dimension and succession related to them (modern and postmodern)—and he also insists that they in fact coexist to a considerable degree in contemporary society. This also means that we have far from given up on the aspiration to "kill off" death by means of modern medical science and technology, and the search for longevity and survival thus continues. But at the same time, we are still also constantly involved in what Bauman, as part of the postmodern deconstruction strategy, called the daily "rehearsals of death" in which we regard and live life as a multitude of unconnected "majestic moments" or "eternal nows" that somehow due to their seeming unconnectivity manage to hide the terrifying fact from us that death ("death proper") is still waiting at the end of the line.

The chapter has also intended to show that Bauman's contribution to the study of death and modern /postmodern society is quite unmatched by any

other within the field of sociology in the refinery of the theoretical perspective, the analytical sharpness, and not least in the sheer originality of its argument. Bauman's critical diagnosis of the times of the way we try to live with death provides important ideas equally for further theoretical elaboration as well as empirical exploration. Despite this, Bauman's contribution to our sociological understanding of and theorizing on death is often overlooked in the more mainstream-oriented appreciations and applications of his work, primarily focusing on his work on the Holocaust (Bauman 1989) and on liquid modernity (Bauman 2000). But Bauman's book on death—as well as his other writings on the topic—needs to be discovered and brought to use in general sociology as well as in more specialized subfields concerned with the study of death and dying.

Finally, it should be stressed that *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies* also—towards the end of the book—makes a strong case for how to live moral lives in the face of inevitable death. According to Bauman's perspective that he developed throughout the 1990s, morality must take precedence over survival and even death—in the end, the willingness to "die for the Other" becomes a testimony and a litmus test of one's moral capacity (Bauman 1992a, 210, 1993). True, we must learn to live with death—but in order to claim to live moral lives we should ultimately be willing to sacrifice our own lives in order to save those of others. This is admittedly not the stuff that sociology is normally all about.

Note

1 Culture, Bauman states, does of course have "its own momentum and like most other parts or aspects of culture 'develops because it develops'" (Bauman 1992a, 4), but without the consciousness of death there would be no culture, for the need for its abilities to provide answers and meaning would have never arisen. It is, specifically, in the shadow of the inherent meaninglessness of death that culture gains its *raison d'être*, and, in turn, provides us with ours.

References

Ariès, Philippe. 1974. *Western Attitudes Toward Death from the Middle Ages to the Present*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ariès, Philippe. 1981. *The Hour of Our Death*. London: Allen Lane.

Armstrong, David. 1987. "Silence and Truth in Death and Dying." *Social Science & Medicine* 24 (8): 651–657.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1973. *Culture as Praxis*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

——— 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1992a. *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1992b. "Survival as a Social Construct." *Theory, Culture & Society* 9 (1): 1–36

——— 1993. *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

——— 1996. "Postmodern Adventures of Life and Death." In *Modernity, Medicine and Health: Medical Sociology Towards 2000*, edited by Graham Scambler and Paul Higgis, 216–231. London: Routledge.

——— 1997. *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1998a. *Globalization—The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1998b. "On Art, Death and Postmodernity." In *Stopping the Process: Contemporary Views on Art and Exhibitions*, edited by Mika Hannula, 21–34. Helsinki: The Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art.

——— 1999. *In Search of Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2007. *Consuming Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Becker, Ernest. 1997 [1973]. *The Denial of Death*. New York: The Free Press.

Berger, Peter L. 1969. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Berridge, Kate. 2002. *Vigor Mortis: The End of the Death Taboo*. London: Profile Books.

Beilharz, Peter. 2000. *Zygmunt Bauman—Dialectic of Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.

Bjerg, Svend. 1975. *Døden [Death]*. Copenhagen: Berlingske Forlag.

Blackshaw, Tony. 2002. "Interview with Professor Zygmunt Bauman." *Network: Newsletter of the British Sociological Association* 83: 1–3.

Blum, Alan. 2014. "Death, Happiness and the Meaning of Life: The View from Sociology." *Journal of Classical Sociology* 15 (1): 24–38.

Bocock, Robert. 1993. "Review of *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*." *History of the Human Sciences* 6 (4): 117–123.

Campbell, Tom. 2013. "The Temporal Horizon of 'the Choice': Anxieties and Banalities in 'Time', Modern and Liquid Modern." *Thesis Eleven* 11 (1): 19–32.

Carroll, John. 1994. *Humanism: The Wreck of Western Culture*. London: Fontana.

Doka, Kenneth J. 2008. "The Death Awareness Movement: History and Analysis." In *Handbook of Death and Dying, Volume 1: The Presence of Death*, edited by Clifton D. Bryant, 50–56. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Dumont, Richard G., and Dennis C. Foss. 1972. *The American View of Death—Acceptance or Denial?* New York: Schenkman.

Elias, Norbert. 2001 [1985]. *The Loneliness of the Dying*. London: Continuum.

Else, Liz. 2010. "Wake Up and Smell the Apocalypse: Interview with Slavoj Žižek." *New Scientist* 207 (2775): 28–29.

Farberow, Norman L. 1963. *Taboo Topics*. New York: Atherton Press.

Faunce, William A., and Robert L. Fulton. 1958. "The Sociology of Death: A Neglected Area of Research." *Social Forces* 36 (3): 205–209.

Feifel, Herman. 1963. "The Taboo on Death." *American Behavioral Scientist* 6 (9): 66–67.

Freud, Sigmund. 1957 [1915]. "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death." In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (Volume 14)*, edited by James Strachey, 275–300. London: Hogarth Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gorer, Geoffrey. 1955. "The Pornography of Death." *Encounter*, October, pp. 49–52.

Han, Sam. 2019. *(Inter)Facing Death: Life in Global Uncertainty*. London: Routledge.

Higo, Masa. 2012. "Surviving Death-Anxieties in Liquid Modern Times: Examining Zygmunt Bauman's Cultural Theory of Death and Dying." *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying* 65 (3): 221–238.

Jacobsen, Michael Hviid. 2016. ' "Spectacular Death'—Proposing a New Fifth Phase to Philippe Ariès's Admirable History of Death." *Humanities* 5 (19): 1–20.

———, ed. 2017a. *Postmortal Society: Towards a Sociology of Immortality*. London: Routledge.

——— 2017b. "Individualised Immortality in Liquid-Modern Times: Teasing Out the Topic of Symbolic Immortality in the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman." In *Postmortal Society: Towards a Sociology of Immortality*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 57–78. London: Routledge.

———, ed. 2020. *The Age of Spectacular Death*. London: Routledge.

——— 2021. "The Transformation of Death Discourse: From 'Taboo' to 'Revival' at the Threshold of the New Millennium." In *The Routledge History of Death Since 1800*, edited by Peter N. Stearns, 152–174. London: Routledge.

——— 2022. "The Whole World Will Die—Trivial Reflections on the Normality and Deviance of Death and Dying." *Eastern and North European Journal of Death Studies* 1 (1): 78–109.

———, and Nicklas Runge. 2020. "Death in Don DeLillo's *White Noise*: A Literary Diagnosis of Contemporary Death Culture." In *Death in Contemporary Popular Culture*, edited by Adriana Teodorescu and Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 192–214. London: Routledge.

Jasińska-Kania, Aleksandra. 2016. "The Fluidity of Love and Hate: Zygmunt Bauman on Dearth, Love and Hatred." *Revue International de Philosophie* 3 (277): 327–345.

Kellehear, Allan. 2007. *The Social History of Dying*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Khapaeva, Dina. 2017. *The Celebration of Death in Contemporary Culture*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Kovacs, George. 2002. "Postmodern Reflections on Death." *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 25 (3): 203–213.

Lervi-Gourhan, André. 1964. *Le Geste et la parole*. Paris: Albin-Michel.

Maeterlinck, Maurice. 2015 [1911]. *Death*. New York: Jefferson Publications.

Marsh, Ian. 2010. *Suicide: Foucault, History and Truth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mellor, Philip, and Chris Shilling. 1993. "Modernity, Self-Identity and the Sequestration of Death." *Sociology* 27 (3): 411–431.

Noys, Benjamin. 2005. *The Culture of Death*. Oxford: Berg.

Scarre, Geoffrey. 2007. *Death*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Simon, William, C. Allen Haney and Russell Buenteo. 1993. "The Postmodernization of Death and Dying." *Symbolic Interaction* 16 (4): 411–426.

Vovelle, Michael. 1981. "Rediscovery of Death Since 1960." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 447: 89–99.

——— 1983. *La mort et l'Occident: De 1300 à nos jours*. Paris: Gallimard.

Walter, Tony. 1991. "Modern Death: Taboo or Not Taboo?." *Sociology* 25 (2): 293–310.

——— 1994. *The Revival of Death*. London: Routledge.

——— 1996. *The Eclipse of Eternity: A Sociology of the Afterlife*. London: Routledge.

——— 2008. "The Sociology of Death." *Sociology Compass* 2 (1): 317–336.

——— 2012. "Why Different Countries Manage Death Differently: A Comparative Analysis of Modern Urban Societies." *British Journal of Sociology* 63 (1): 123–145.

Willmott, Hugh. 2000. "Death. So What? Sociology, Sequestration and Emancipation." *The Sociological Review* 48 (4): 649–665.

Chapter Seven

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN AND THE "NOSTALGIC TURN"[1]

Dariusz Brzeziński

Introduction

In her book, *Cultural Turns: New Orientations in the Study of Culture*, Doris Bachmann-Medick (2016) argues that since the 1970s the development of the social sciences and humanities has been marked by a variety of "cultural turns." These denote transdisciplinary orientations that engage the attention of researchers and determine the direction of their inquiries. In Bachmann-Medick's view, to be described as a "cultural turn," a new research orientation must become "a tool and medium of knowledge itself" (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 16). This means that the object of inquiry in a given research field must have transformed into a broader analytical category that can be applied to study many unrelated phenomena. In her book, Bachmann-Medick identified and analyzed "the interpretive turn," "the performative turn," "the reflexive/literary turn," "the postcolonial turn," "the translational turn," "the spatial turn", and the "iconic/pictorial turn." At the same time, she admitted that her list was by no means complete, and that the emergence of new "cultural turns" was a hallmark of the contemporary social sciences and humanities.

Today, the catalog of "cultural turns" can certainly be expanded to include the "nostalgic turn" (see, e.g., Bonnett 2010, 2016; Cross 2015;

Jacobsen 2020a, 2022a; Lizardi 2015, 2019; Niemeyer 2014; Salmose 2019). In 2001, Svetlana Boym observed in her now-classic book *The Future of Nostalgia*: "The twentieth century began with a futuristic utopia and ended with nostalgia" (Boym 2001, xiv). Since then, the importance of "nostalgia" as a concept for describing and analyzing contemporary reality has been constantly increasing. This notion is used today to investigate diverse phenomena, such as the soaring popularity of populist parties (Bauman 2017b, 2017c; Gandini 2020), the vogue in music, film, and literature to draw on styles and genres of the past (Leggatt 2021; Reynolds 2010; Rudaitė 2018), the trend to use retro fashion in order to increase sales of services and products (Cervellon and Brown 2018; Cross 2015), and a range of other developments. Multidimensional, as it is, the "nostalgic turn" is analyzed by researchers from a variety of disciplines. Michael Hviid Jacobsen addressed this issue in his 2020 book: "Sociology, psychology, anthropology, historical science, political science, literary studies, business studies and so on have now discovered nostalgia as a potent and inexhaustible source of knowledge about individual behavior as well as about ongoing cultural changes" (Jacobsen 2020b, 2).

Zygmunt Bauman's vision of "retrotopia" is among the theoretical concepts that are most frequently referenced in the context of the "nostalgic turn." Presented in Bauman's likewise titled posthumously published book (Bauman 2017a), retrotopia depicts a multidimensional process of turning to the past as a reaction to the increasing uncertainty and unpredictability of our present conjuncture. Bauman's *Retrotopia* discusses several exemplifications of the eponymous phenomenon, both from an individual and from a socio-political perspective. In this chapter, I offer a critical and comparative analysis of this vision, and reflect on the contemporary nature and dimensions of nostalgia. My argument falls into three parts. In the first part, I will present the main ideas behind the concept of "retrotopia" in the broader context of Bauman's analyses of liquid modernity. Subsequently, I will scrutinize Bauman's negative assessment of the "nostalgic turn" through the dual lens of both the assumptions of his engaged sociology and the characteristic rhetoric of his writings. Finally, in the third section, I will compare Bauman's vision of retrotopia with other contemporary concepts and theories that problematize the "nostalgic turn."

When the Angel of History Turned His Face Around

One of the signature features of Bauman's sociology is his frequent recourse to metaphors as the means of conceptualizing, systematizing, and often also defamiliarizing social phenomena (Davis 2013; Jacobsen and Marshman 2008). His analysis of the "nostalgic turn" is no different in this respect. In *Retrotopia*, Bauman revisits Walter Benjamin's interpretation of Paul Klee's watercolor *Angelus Novus*. In his ninth thesis on history, Benjamin described the figure painted by Klee—which he renamed "The Angel of History"—as follows: "His face is turned towards the past. Where he perceives a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet" (Benjamin 1969, 249). Commenting on this interpretation, Bauman explains that "The Angel of History" personifies the horror of the tragic events in the first half of the twentieth century. The wind of history does not allow the Angel to fold his wings and pushes him into the future, which, as noted by Benjamin, we call "progress." Developing on this analysis, Bauman argues in *Retrotopia* that Klee's painting also perfectly illustrates the condition of the early twenty-first century. However, now, the Angel's fear results not from gazing back at the past, but from looking forward to the future. It is from the future, which is full of uncertainties, dangers, and threats, that the Angel is now distancing himself. Bauman writes: "Past and future, one may conclude, are in that drawing captured in the course of exchanging their respective virtues and vices, listed—as suggested by Benjamin—100 years ago by Klee. It is now the future, whose time to be pillorized seems to have arrived after being first decried for its untrustworthiness and unmanageability, that is booked on the debit side" (Bauman 2017a, 2). That is why the wind of history blowing in the Angel's wings is pushing him toward the past.

Bauman only undertook a detailed analysis of the nostalgic turn towards the end of his life, but the seeds of his thought on this issue are contained in many of his earlier publications. These reflections were part of his more general ponderings on the relationship between freedom and security (e.g., Bauman 1997, 2006). Bauman pointed to the opposing nature of these values on the one hand and their complementary properties on the other.

The metaphor he often used in this context was the pendulum which swung either toward freedom or toward security in different historical periods. In his view, the second half of the twentieth century was characterized by a significant appreciation for the former value. In *Sketches in the Theory of Culture*, prepared for publication in 1968, but only published half a century later (see Brzeziński 2018b), Bauman remarked:

> [W]e live in an age that seems, for the first time in human history, to acknowledge cultural multiplicity as an innate and fixed feature of the world, one which gives rise to new forms of identity that are at ease with plurality, like a fish in water; and even boasts of the fact that it not only discovered, but even accepted as a truly human state and mode of being both noble and dignified, this indeterminacy of the human condition as humanity's calling (Bauman 2018, 117).

Reflections on the expansion of human freedom at the expense of security were already the distinctive feature of Bauman's work in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., Bauman 1988, 1991, 2000).[2] However, at that time he also discerned the first symptoms of the pendulum shifting toward the security pole.

In *What Use Is Sociology?*, which is Bauman's conversation with Michal Hviid Jacobsen and Keith Tester, his interlocutors highlight the nostalgic undertones of his book *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*, which was published in 1997 (Bauman 1997; Bauman, Jacobsen and Tester 2014, 113–115). Bauman's reflections in this work pivot on an analysis of the negative consequences of the postmodern admiration for freedom. He elucidated: "The discontents of modernity arose from a kind of security which tolerated too little freedom in the pursuit of individual happiness. The discontents of postmodernity arise from a kind of freedom of pleasure-seeking which tolerates too little individual security" (Bauman 1997, 3). In this context, Bauman problematized the significant difficulties, both for individuals and for entire societies, that sprang from increasing uncertainty, progressive deregulation, and the disintegration of communities. At the time, however, he did not devote much attention yet to the tendency to return to old values, structures, and institutions. To carry on the metaphor of Klee's watercolor,

at the end of the twentieth century, the Angel of History was just beginning to turn his face around.

As the twenty-first century went on, Bauman became increasingly convinced that the contemporary condition, which he called liquid modern in 2000 (Bauman 2000), showed a considerable nostalgic potential, generated by the sense of ontological insecurity. The terrorist threat was one of the most significant factors he examined in this context. Bauman explored the social and cultural consequences of this development, starting from the events of September 11, 2001 (Bauman 2023), and ending with the terrorist attacks perpetrated in the last months of his life (Bauman 2016). Above all, he stressed that the fear aroused by these events and, as he claimed, additionally fueled by some political leaders in order to strengthen the legitimacy of their power, largely influenced a retreat from cultural pluralism towards the endorsement of xenophobic attitudes. In 2003, in *Liquid Love*, Bauman warned: "A spectre hovers over the planet: the spectre of xenophobia. Old and new, never extinguished and freshly defrosted and warmed up tribal suspicions and animosities have mixed and blended with the brand-new fear for safety distilled from the uncertainties and insecurities of liquid modern existence" (Bauman 2003, 119).

The global economic meltdown of the late 2000s was another factor that Bauman believed to have pushed the symbolic pendulum oscillating between freedom and security toward the latter. Bauman initially expressed his hopes that the crisis would help foster an entirely new—post-consumerist—attitude to the world (Bauman and Rovirosa-Madrazo 2009). However, it soon became clear that his hopes were misplaced. Instead, Bauman began to identify phenomena that today could be called "retrotopian" amidst the fallout from the global economic crisis. One pattern that he foregrounded in this context was a correlation between increased anxiety about living conditions and changes in attitudes to cultural "otherness". His examination of the evolution unfolding in France's immigration policy found that the idea of "equal opportunity" and the affirmation of cultural diversity were systematically being relinquished as its foundation (Bauman 2012, 186–192). This led him to a more general insight that: " 'Culture' becomes a synonym for a fortress under siege, and the inhabitants of the fortress under siege are expected to manifest their

loyalty daily, and give up, or at least radically curtail, any contacts with the outside world" (Bauman 2012, 190).

In a similar vein, Bauman soon focused on the migration crisis that erupted a few years later (Bauman 2016). These reflections were an extension of his prior long-standing analyses of the condition of refugees and forced migrants (e.g., Bauman 2004). However, in the texts he wrote shortly before his death, Bauman paid particular attention to the intentional tendency to associate migrants with ontological threat. He considered the words of Hungary's Prime Minister Victor Orbán, who said, after the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015, that "all terrorists are migrants" to be symptomatic of this trend. In a comment on this statement, he concluded: "To the ears of governments wishing to redeem, against all odds, their seriously lopsided and steadily sinking *raison d'être*, it must sound like the horn of a salvage-boat sailing out from the dense, impenetrable fog in which the horizon of their survival struggle has been enveloped" (Bauman 2016, 32). In Bauman's view, such a policy could, in fact, achieve its aims, as it enhanced the importance of national identity. Above all, however, he pointed out that it reinforced the mechanism of "adiaphorization,"[3] since it excluded immigrants not only from the sphere of moral obligations, but also from the space of human compassion.

All the lines of reasoning outlined above found their development and culmination in *Retrotopia*. In this book, Bauman approvingly cited Boym's claim that: "In counterpoint to our fascination with cyberspace and the virtual global village, there is a no less global epidemic of nostalgia, an affective yearning for a community with a collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world. Nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals" (Boym 2001, xiv). Drawing on Boym's account of the nostalgic turn, Bauman examined its four exemplifications. The first one, called "back to Hobbes," was the resurgence of violence as a response to a distrust of individuals and institutions. Another example, "back to tribes," was a renewed appreciation for the "tribal" forms of solidarity that countered universalist and cosmopolitan tendencies. The third one, "back to inequality," was a return to thinking about inequality as a natural logic of social life. Finally, the fourth one was the reaffirmation of the self-centered,

narcissistic subject, which Bauman called "back to the womb." What all these various phenomena have in common is a revived partiality for security over freedom, or rather an attempt to reconcile the two values (Bauman 2017a, 8, 9). It does not mean a simple effort to restore the past, but a tendency to turn to the past in the remodeling of the present to make it a more secure place to live.

To conclude, in Bauman's view, very significant changes have occurred in attitudes to both the future and the past in the twenty-first century. In contrast to the end of the previous century, the volatile and unpredictable future has lost much of its appeal in the new millennium. It has come to be more and more often associated with fear and anxiety, as perfectly portrayed in the face of Klee's *Angelus Novus*. At the same time, the past, which postmodernity regarded as a negative reference point, has been increasingly considered a model for individuals and societies in the twenty-first century. It is in returning to the past, rather than forging an entirely new future, that more and more people place their hope now (Bauman 2017a). However, Bauman did not believe that the nostalgic turn was a right solution to the accumulating problems of liquid modernity. On the contrary, he argued for the necessity of building a common future rather than returning to a mythologized past. I discuss this issue in the next part of this chapter.

Nostalgia as a Negative Force: Revisiting Bauman's Approach

In theorizing retrotopian tendencies, Bauman looked into the origin and transformations of utopian thought and practice. He propounded that:

> Five hundred years after Thomas More put the name of 'Utopia' on the millennia-long human dream of return to Paradise or establishing Heaven on Earth, one more Hegelian triad formed by a double negation is presently nearing the completion of its full circle … What I call "retrotopia", is a derivative of the … second degree of negation—negation of utopia's negation (Bauman 2017a, 4, 8).

Therefore, in order to fully understand the essence of retrotopia, one must grasp what Bauman meant by the "first negation of utopia." Given this, I will analyze his reflections on the nostalgic turn in conjunction with his vision of an "active utopia" (Bauman 1976). I will also highlight the reasons why he presented retrotopian tendencies in a very negative way and offer a critique of this analytical approach.

Bauman analyzed the "first degree of negation" of utopia in his writings from the early twenty-first century (e.g., Bauman 2002, 222–241, 2007b, 94–110; see Jacobsen 2006, 2008). In Bauman's view, utopia has lost its *topos* in liquid modernity, that is, it has ceased to be associated with an isolated place of perfect order. Unlike the classical utopian visions of Tommaso Campanella (1981 [1602]) and Francis Bacon (2010 1626]), utopia has become individualized and morphed into an ongoing process in our time. This means that, firstly, the contemporary visions of eudaimonia no longer have a social dimension to them and reflect individual aspirations, desires, and dreams. Secondly, the finalistic nature of classical utopias has been replaced with the idea of the continuous, endless pursuit of one's desired goals. With reference to his earlier thought on "wild" and "garden" cultures (Bauman 1987), Bauman called this kind of utopia a "hunter's" utopia. He wrote: "It is unorthodox mainly for having moved the land of solutions and cures from that 'far away' into 'here and now'. Instead of living *towards* utopia, hunters are offered a living *inside* a utopia" (Bauman 2007b, 108, 109).

"The second degree" of negation of utopia to an extent represents a reversal of the transformations outlined above. Fundamental to liquid modernity, the sense of fear has made a territorially sovereign *topos* again relevant in shaping visions of a better life. It is within the strictly defined political and cultural borders that prospects for achieving peace, security, and happiness are perceived today, as claimed by Bauman (Bauman 2017a, 49–85). Above, I have illumined how contemporary fears and anxieties, stemming from the terrorist threat, the economic crisis, the migration crisis, and related developments, have contributed to a revival of utopian thinking in terms of territoriality. Nonetheless, unlike classical utopia, retrotopia is not finalistic, but intrinsically processual, and it envisages a multiplicity of solutions it may be able to implement. In this context, Bauman wrote about "the replacement of the 'ultimate perfection' idea with the assumption of

the non-finality and endemic dynamism of the order it promotes" (Bauman 2017a, 8).

It is also worthwhile to compare the idea of "double negation of utopia" with Bauman's concept of the "active utopia." He presented the premises of the latter in his book on socialism from 1976 (Bauman 1976), but they were at the root of his vision of engaged sociology in all his later works (Jacobsen 2006, 2008). Bauman was convinced that utopian thinking belied its popular connotations with pipe dreams and actually exerted an enormous impact on the course of historical events (Bauman 1976, 9–17). In his view, this happened both by relativizing the *status quo* and by setting goals that provided a point of reference for individual and social action. Yet, for Bauman, utopia was by no means a blueprint for a perfect society. He devoted much of his work, including his most famous book, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Bauman 1989), to the critique of such projects. Following Ernst Bloch's concept of "not-yet-being" (Bloch 1986; see Aidnik and Jacobsen 2017), Bauman problematized utopian thinking as characterized by perpetual unfulfillment. In this context, his concept of the "active utopia" resembled the notion of "double negation of utopia." Bauman stressed, however, that at the core of utopian thinking was the development of new, alternative visions of the future. *Eo ipso*, his concept of utopia was inherently prospective rather than retrospective. In the closing passage of *Socialism: The Active Utopia*, Bauman asserted:

> Men climb, as it were, successive hills only to discover from their tops virgin territories which their never-appeased spirit of transcendence urges them to explore. Beyond each successive hill they hope to find peacefulness of the end. What they do find is the excitement of the beginning. Today as two thousand years ago, "hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?" (Paul to the Romans, 8.24) (Bauman 1976, 141).

The image of a mountain climb obviously has very different meanings to the metaphor of the Angel of History.

Integral to his vision of an active utopia was Bauman's characteristic relativization of social, political, and cultural phenomena by portraying them in one-sided, negative terms or by hyperbolizing their pernicious effects (Brzeziński 2022; Poder 2007; Sayers 2007). This approach is

epitomized by his analysis of globalization, which he depicted as an exclusively "negative" process (Bauman 1998, 2011; see Davis 2008). Bauman argued that economic power had become transnational in liquid modernity, and that it was in fact exercised by global corporations, with politics primarily remaining regional and enacted in nation-states. Bauman also relied on hyperbolization in his investigations of consumerist culture, which he portrayed as leading to a complete reification of individuals, social ties, and entire societies (Bauman 2007a; see Blackshaw 2008; Brzeziński 2018a). A very similar manner of relativization is noticeable in Bauman's analyses of the nostalgic turn, too. While today the nostalgic turn tends to be considered "bittersweet," as I will show below, Bauman exclusively focused on its "bitter" dimension. He pictured it as co-responsible for the aggravation of social tensions, the deepening of inequality, the endorsement of partisan attitudes and behavior, and the like effects. In fact, his prediction of the consequences of the further expansion of retrotopian tendencies was an excellent illustration of a Cassandrian warning. For example, he concluded *Retrotopia* with a cautionary premonition: "More than at any other time, we—human inhabitants of the Earth—are in the either/or situation: we face joining either hands, or common graves" (Bauman 2017a, 167).

Though Bauman might sound like a prophet of doom, his tendency to relativize the *status quo* was always intertwined with an emphasis on the need to develop alternative thinking (see Tester 2004). And just as his focus on the negative consequences of globalization was intended to highlight the urgency of removing the separation of power and politics (see Brzeziński 2020), and as his hyperbolization of the damaging upshots of consumer culture was designed to stress the need to create a "post-consumerist" society, so his dystopian portrayal of the nostalgic turn was meant as a prelude to preaching the imperative of developing cosmopolitan politics and global responsibility. In *Retrotopia*, Bauman insisted:

> [T]he present task of lifting human integration to the level of all humanity is likely to prove unprecedentedly arduous, onerous and troublesome to see through and complete. We need to brace ourselves for a long period marked by more questions than answers and more problems than solutions, as well as for acting in the shadow of finely balanced chances of success and defeat (Bauman 2017a, 167).

Bauman strongly emphasized that there were no alternatives to this transformation. It was in this context that he fiercely opposed the four dimensions of the nostalgic turn examined in the previous part of this text. The direction of his "active" utopian thinking not only ran counter to the "double negation of utopia," but was also meant to relativize it.

Bauman's aforementioned rhetoric was closely related to his methodological approach, derived from Max Weber's (1968) methodological framework of "ideal types" (Brzeziński 2022). Bauman's characteristic way of doing sociology involved constructing theoretical abstract models, which were by no means accurate representations of phenomena, but tools for studying them. In a methodological note to *Consuming Life*, Bauman wrote:

> As suggested by Weber, "ideal types" (if properly constructed) are useful, and also indispensable, cognitive tools even if (or perhaps *because*) they deliberately throw light on certain aspects of described social reality while leaving in the shade some other aspects considered to be of lesser or only random relevance to the essential, necessary traits of a particular form of life (Bauman 2007a, 27).

Bauman's use of the ideal type method in his analysis of the nostalgic turn is evidenced by the introduction to *Retrotopia*, where he professed: "My intention is to compose in the chapters that follow a preliminary inventory of the most spectacular, and perhaps also most seminal, departures linked to the advent of retrotopian sentiments and practices" (Bauman 2017a, 12). Thus, Bauman's vision of retrotopia was not meant as an all-encompassing, complete picture of the contemporary turn toward the past. Rather, it was crafted as a heuristic model for analyzing this complex, multidimensional phenomenon.

The question remains whether Bauman's one-sidedly negative portrayal of the nostalgic turn, related as much to his rhetoric as to his chosen methodology, can be considered effective for accomplishing the goals of his engaged sociology. In other words, does Bauman's concept of retrotopia actually stand a chance of contributing to the materialization of his vision of the active utopia? This is a debatable issue. One reason for this is that Bauman's emphasis on the negative ramifications of the nostalgic turn may

not so much inspire hope as rather trigger opposite, defeatist reactions. Moreover, while the processual, and therefore iconoclastic (Jacoby 2005), nature of Bauman's utopian thinking is an important safeguard against the dangers posed by blueprint utopias, it is itself not free of weaknesses either. The failure to offer any roadmap for remedying the separation of politics and power makes the achievement of this purpose questionable, to say the least. As Mikael Carleheden has observed: "Bauman speaks of the importance 'to lift institutions to the level of globality'. However, he says nothing about what this means in practice" (Carleheden 2008, 188–189). Valid though they are, these criticisms should by no means cast doubt on the ethical commitment of both Bauman's analyses of retrotopia and his attempts to relativize the contemporary condition.

A Comparative Reading of Bauman's Concept of Retrotopia

The word "nostalgia" is a combination of two Greek nouns: *nóstos*, which means "homecoming," and *álgos*, meaning "suffering." This term was first used by Johannes Hofer in the seventeenth century to describe the feelings of melancholy and sadness that arose among the Swiss mercenaries as a result of long-term separation from their homeland (Hofer 1934, 379–391). For a long time, "nostalgia" was used in a similar sense—as a sickness of the heart—and exclusively in medical and psychological contexts (Dodman 2018; Illbruck 2012; Jacobsen 2020b, 2022b). Starting in the later twentieth century, the semantic field of "nostalgia" gradually expanded and, in parallel, the term came to be applied in the study of cultural phenomena. It was used in this sense, for example, by Fred Davis (1979), Jean Baudrillard (1981), Fredric Jameson (1992), and Arjun Appadurai (1996), in their explorations of multiple social and cultural processes related to the increasing importance of the past in the contemporary condition. As stated in the introduction, this trend has continued, and, in the twenty-first century, there has been an upsurge of interest in nostalgia in the social sciences and humanities. Therefore, it is worthwhile to compare Bauman's concept of retrotopia with other authors' contributions to the nostalgic turn inquiry. My

argument below will center around two issues: the sources of nostalgia and its constitutive features.

Bauman's analysis of the origins of retrotopia is informed by the idea that nostalgia arises as a result of disappointment with the present or the fear of the future (Jacobsen 2020c, 2021). Two notable examples illustrate this research perspective. In 1988, Georg Stauth and Bryan S. Turner wrote an article titled "Nostalgia, Postmodernism and the Critique of Mass Culture" (Stauth and Turner 1988), in which they addressed the role and importance of yearning for the past in the criticism of mass culture, and also offered general considerations on the nature of nostalgia. Stauth and Turner identified four principal sources of nostalgia: the general sense of historical decline, the belief in the collapse of values that were previously perceived as providing moral stability, the feeling of loss of individual freedom and agency, and the sense of loss of personal authenticity and emotional spontaneity (Stauth and Turner 1988, 513). Similarly to Bauman, Stauth, and Turner associated the nostalgic attitude with a discontent with the existing reality and a desire to relativize and change it. Thirteen years later, Boym published *The Future of Nostalgia*, which, as I have shown, was one of Bauman's most important inspirations when writing *Retrotopia*. Boym distinguishes two types of nostalgia: restorative nostalgia involving the desire to reinstate the lost social order and reflective nostalgia founded on individual memories and experiences. She argued that there was a clear correlation between both forms of nostalgia and concern for the future. In *Retrotopia*, Bauman quoted Boym's claim that: "Nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals" (Boym 2001, xiv; Bauman 2017a, 3).

Emphatically, however, neither the fear of the future nor dissatisfaction with the current turn of events is the only source of contemporary nostalgic attitudes and behavior. It is often stressed today that nostalgia has become a very important component of popular culture (Cervellon and Brown 2018; Lizardi 2019; Sayers 2020). Evoking past times, styles, and fashions is one of the salient trends in contemporary film productions (Armbuster 2016; Legatt 2021), television and streaming series (Bevan 2019; Pallister 2019), and music (Garrido and Davidson 2019; Reynolds 2010). The popularity of nostalgic cultural productions should be examined in the context of more general transformations unfolding in culture since the end of the twentieth

century. In 1988, Kathleen Stewart observed: “Nostalgia rises to importance as a cultural practice as culture becomes more and more diffuse, more and more a ‘structure of feeling’ … as culture takes on the power of ‘distance’ that comes of displacing speakers—the power to flatten distinctions, to blur genres, to unname the practices of the social world so that they look like nature” (Stewart 1988, 227). It seems that since then, Stewart’s insights have not only lost none of their relevance, but also—with the progressive liquefaction of modern culture, analyzed by Bauman (Bauman 2005, 2011) and others—accrued explanatory power. Moreover, nostalgia has also become a very important driving force of consumer culture (Cross 2015). Vintage artifacts are gaining more and more value today. It is again fashionable, for example, to use such sound recording formats as vinyl records, cassette tapes, and CDs (Burns 2021; Bartmański and Woodward 2014). Furthermore, what propels the sale of goods and services today is very much the reference by producers and advertisers to past styles and fads (Kurlinkus 2018). Clearly, the range of nostalgia-inducing emotions is quite varied and comprises not only fear and dread, but also joy and excitement.

The issues considered above are related to differences in the conceptualizations of nostalgia. As already emphasized, Bauman’s focus in *Retrotopia* was exclusively on the negative dimension of longing for the past. He portrayed nostalgia as a regressive force that not only aroused and petrified populist, authoritarian, and partisan tendencies, but also distracted from the proper way of responding to the challenges of civilization. His assessment of nostalgia was fully representative of many contemporary critiques of nostalgic attitudes and aspirations, portraying them in dystopian terms. One of such criticisms was offered by Bill Reynolds in his article “The Nostalgic Turn and the Politics of Ressentiment” from 2004. In framing the turn to right wing politics as fueled by fears of the future, characteristic of the early twenty-first century, Reynolds pointed out: “We are living within a global conservative restoration, which has gained intensity since 9/11 and gained further solidification since the most recent elections” (Reynolds 2004, 1). As noted above, very similar observations were made by Bauman at the time (Bauman 2002). Both then and later, Bauman shared Reynolds’ belief that: “Nostalgia is most likely to become magnified when there are times of uncertainty, fragmentation and fear” (Reynolds 2004, 2). This conviction is also shared by Matthew Leggatt, the

author of *Cultural and Political Nostalgia in the Age of Terror* (2018), who uses the theory of the sublime (Kristeva 1982) to analyze the changes that have marked the beginning of the new millennium. Leggatt claims: "The encounters of the twenty-first-century sublime, held predominantly in the form of our response to the terror of our confrontation with the global, bring about a desire to relive the past" (Legatt 2018, 4). Somewhat similar to Bauman, Leggatt argues that both the post-9/11 events and the election victories of Brexiteers in the United Kingdom and of Donald Trump in the 2016 American presidential election can be interpreted in terms of the nostalgic turn prompted by fear and anxiety. Very recently, this line of reasoning has been embraced by Alessandro Gandini (2020), Grafton Tanner (2021), and other authors. Commenting on such theorizations of nostalgia, Michael Hviid Jacobsen wrote in 2021:

> There is undoubtedly something cooking and stirring in contemporary culture that justify defining our current times as "nostalgic" and perhaps even as "retrotopian". There is plenty of evidence to support that people when confronted with the experience of troubles and crisis—and perhaps exacerbated especially by the current Covid-19 situation—are seeking comfort and relief in the ideas and practices of the past. However, in his analysis of retrotopia, Bauman in many ways seems to be committing the same mistakes as many of those writing about "the culture of fear" (including his own contribution) (Jacobsen 2021, 112).

Jacobsen went on to emphasize that Bauman's unequivocally negative portrayal of nostalgia did not reflect the state of contemporary research on the nature and significance of nostalgia to both the individual and society (e.g., Routledge 2015; Sedikides et al. 2015; Wilson 2015). Indeed, nostalgia tends to be depicted as an ambivalent, "bittersweet" phenomenon. It combines longing for a lost, mythologized past and the joy that comes from focusing on those moments in the past that evoke positive associations. The inherent ambiguity of nostalgia is neatly encapsulated by Krystine I. Batcho: "Nostalgia poses the puzzle of how one can be happy and sad simultaneously" (Batcho 2020, 31). Moreover, at least since the publication of Fred Davis' book *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* in 1979, much attention has been paid in research on nostalgia to its positive effects on individuals and societies. For example, nostalgia has

been shown to help sustain the continuity of identity, provide stability during rapid change, and enhance agency (see, e.g., Batcho 2020; Routledge 2015).[4]

On the one hand, Bauman's concept of retrotopia invites criticism on the grounds that it only reflects one selected facet of the nostalgic turn. This is all the more surprising because, like in his other works, Bauman meticulously analyzed an array of issues uniquely important to nostalgia studies, including popular culture (Bauman 2005), consumer culture (Bauman 2007a), and the very nature of ambivalence (Bauman 1991). Bauman's inattention to several important aspects of nostalgia captured by other researchers is worth examining in the context of the constitutive features of his work. Through his selection of specific theoretical inspirations, methodologies, and rhetoric, Bauman consistently aimed to convey the dangers of the nostalgic turn, tried to warn against them, and reiterated the necessity of developing alternative modes of thinking. In this regard, his analyses of retrotopia fully resonated with his project of engaged sociology. Referring to the latter, Henning Bech has dismissed some of the objections to Bauman's vision as being off the mark: "I think that the critics make a mistake. They read Bauman's categories and analyses as if he intends to present a full, quasi-objective diagnosis of past and existing societies—whereas, rather, they are (or maybe read more fruitfully as) founded on ethical concerns" (Bech 2007, 374).

Conclusion

In her reflections on cultural turns, Doris Bachmann-Medick emphasizes that they are very different from Thomas S. Kuhn's concept of "paradigm shifts" (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 9–12; Kuhn 2012 [1962]). First, cultural turns do not arise within respective, isolated disciplines, but are essentially transdisciplinary. Second, they do not follow one another like successive "Copernican revolutions," but they develop simultaneously. Third, each of them espouses theoretical and methodological pluralism. "The transitional, less settled turns encourage an understanding of the study of culture that deliberately and methodically pluralizes its research positions," Bachmann-

Medick (2016, 11) explicates. This observation concerns the "interpretative," "reflexive," and "performative" turns described by Bachmann-Medick, but it also holds for the "nostalgic turn" discussed in this chapter. In all of them, sociological, philosophical, cultural, and psychological insights are closely intertwined, and the theoretical and methodological approaches developed in respective disciplines are seamlessly transferred to other research fields. The transdisciplinary nature of the nostalgic turn is perfectly exemplified by Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "retrotopia." In line with his idea of sociology as "the dialogue with the experience of free man and woman" (Bauman and Tester 2001, 156–158), he analyzed manifestations of nostalgia for the past in individual, social, and political life. At the same time, his theorizations of nostalgia have been a very important inspiration for many other intellectuals. They reverberate in the sociological (Jacobsen 2021), philosophical (Bovassi 2022), political (Gandini 2020), and other explorations of nostalgia.

Bauman's concept of retrotopia offers a very valuable analysis of the relationship between the fear of the future and the development and exacerbation of nostalgia. In this context, he thoroughly and meticulously examined such phenomena as reverting "back to Hobbes," "back to tribes," "back to inequality," and "back to the womb" (Bauman 2017a). At the time of writing *Retrotopia*, he could see the nostalgic turn instantiated in Donald Trump's presidential campaign led by the slogan "Make America Great Again," the British decision to exit the European Union, and the rise of populism and authoritarianism across the world (see Gandini 2020; Hochschild 2016; Legatt 2018; Norris and Inglehart 2019). A few years on, and we can witness many more examples of this dimension of the nostalgic turn. These include the rise of Soviet nostalgia in the Russian Federation ("back to tribes"; see Sullivan 2022) and its link to the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022 ("back to Hobbes"), the retrotopian tendencies triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic ("back to the womb"; see Xia, Wang and Santana 2021) or by global inflationary pressures ("back to inequality"), and the like developments. In this context, the relativist and alternativist dimensions of Bauman's utopian thought are all the more relevant.

However, the concept of retrotopia is by no means free of weaknesses. First, Bauman's exclusively negative view of contemporary nostalgia may as much spark alternative thinking as sow defeatism. Second, the active

utopianism proposed by Bauman to offset the nostalgic turn is too enigmatic to guarantee effective solutions to the challenges of contemporary civilization. Third, Bauman's unequivocal critique of contemporary longing for the past partly stems from his very selective perception of this phenomenon and the research on it. However, I have also shown that Bauman's analyses of retrotopia should be interpreted in the context of the constitutive features of his sociological work as a whole (e.g., Beilharz 2000; Brzeziński 2022; Davis 2008; Tester 2004). The rhetoric he employed, the methodology of "ideal types" borrowed from Max Weber, and the ethical commitment he embraced and championed should be taken into account in this context. Applying this perspective makes it possible not only to temper the criticisms of Zygmunt Bauman's concept of retrotopia, but also to fully reveal its utopian potential.

Notes

1 This research was funded by the National Science Centre in Poland from the SONATA grant (No DEC-2021/43/D/HS2/03321). I would like to thank Michael Hviid Jacobsen for his useful comments and insightful ideas on an earlier draft of the text.
2 Importantly, although Bauman analyzed the growing importance of freedom, he also argued that it could only be fully enjoyed by a privileged minority (Bauman 1988, 1998).
3 For Bauman, "adiaphorization" means exclusion from moral obligations (Bauman 1993).
4 Among the empirical research that has shown the positive impact of nostalgia, it is worth mentioning here a study conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic (Zhou et al. 2022) which found that nostalgia played an important role in coping with loneliness resulting from long-term isolation.

References

Aidnik, Martin, and Michael Hviid Jacobsen. 2017. "Not Yet: Probing the Potentials and Problems in the Utopian Understanding of Ernst Bloch and Zygmunt Bauman." In *Beyond Bauman: Critical Engagement and Creative Excursions*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 136–162. London: Routledge.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Armbuster, Stefanie. 2016. *Watching Nostalgia: An Analysis of Nostalgic Television Fiction and Its Reception*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.

Bachmann-Medick, Doris 2016. *Cultural Turns: New Orientations in the Study of Culture*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Bacon, Francis. 2010 [1626]. *The New Atlantis*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing.

Bartmański, Dominik, and Ian Woodward. 2014. *Vinyl: The Analogue Record in the Digital Age*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Batcho, Krystine I. 2020. "Nostalgia: The Paradoxical Bittersweet Emotion." In *Nostalgia Now: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on the Past in the Present*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 31–46. London: Routledge.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1981. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1976. *Socialism: The Active Utopia*. London: Allen & Unwin Ltd.

——— 1987. *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Postmodernity and Intellectuals*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1988. *Freedom*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

——— 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1993. *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

——— 1997. *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1998. *Globalization: The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2002. *Society Under Siege*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2003. *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2004. *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity.

——— 2005. *Liquid Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2006. *Liquid Fear*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2007a. *Consuming Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2007b. *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2011. *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2012. *This Is Not a Diary*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2016. *Strangers at Our Door*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2017a. *Retrotopia*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2017b. *A Chronicle of Crisis, 2011–16*. London: Social Europe Edition.

——— 2017c. "Some of the Foremost Challenges to the Status Quo." *Studia Socjologiczno-Polityczne*. *Seria Nowa* 2: 31–46.

——— 2018. *Sketches in the Theory of Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2023. “Names of Suffering, Names of Shame.” In Zygmunt Bauman: *History and Politics: Selected Writings, Volume 2*, edited by Mark Davis, Jack Palmer, Dariusz Brzeziński, and Tom Campbell, 154–162, Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Keith Tester. 2014. *What Use Is Sociology?* Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, and Citlali Rovirosa-Madrazo. 2009. *Living on Borrowed Time*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, and Keith Tester. 2001. *Conversations with Zygmunt Bauman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bech, Henning. 2007. “Bauman’s Call.” In *Bauman Beyond Postmodernity: Critical Appraisals, Conversations and Annotated Bibliography, 1989–2005*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, Sophia Marshman and Keith Tester, 369–374. Aalborg, Denmark: Aalborg University Press.

Beilharz, Peter. 2000. *Zygmunt Bauman: Dialectic of Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.

Benjamin, Walter. 1969. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. New York: Schocken Books.

Bevan, Alex. 2019. *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia TV: Production Design and the Boomer Era*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Blackshaw, Tony. 2008. “Bauman on Consumerism—Living the Market-Mediated Life.” In *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman: Challenges and Critique*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Poul Poder, 117–135. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

Bloch, Ernst. 1986. *The Principle of Hope* (Volume 1–3). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Bonnett, Alastair. 2010. *Left in the Past, Radicalism and the Politics of Nostalgia*. New York: Bloomsbury.

——— 2016. *The Geography of Nostalgia: Global and Local Perspectives on Modernity and Loss*. London: Routledge.

Bovassi Giulia. 2022. “Philosophy and Nostalgia: ‘Rooting’ within the Nostalgic Condition.” In *Intimations of Nostalgia: Multidisciplinary Explorations of an Enduring Emotion*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 31–51. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Boym, Svetlana. 2001. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.

Brzeziński, Dariusz. 2018a. “Consumerist Culture in Zygmunt Bauman’s Critical Sociology: A Comparative Analysis of His Polish and English Writings.” *Polish Sociological Review* 1: 77–94.

——— 2018b. “A Message in a Bottle: On the Recovered Work of Zygmunt Bauman.” In *Sketches in the Theory of Culture*, edited by Zygmunt Bauman, vii–xxv. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2020. “Culture of Dialogue in the Context of the Rise of Nationalism: On the Engaged Nature of Zygmunt Bauman’s Writings.” *Culture & Society* 2: 33–50.

——— 2022. *Zygmunt Bauman and the Theory of Culture*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.

Burns, Jehnie I. 2021. *Mixtape Nostalgia: Culture, Memory and Representation*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Campanella, Tommaso. 1981 [1602]. *The City of the Sun*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Carleheden, Mikael. 2008. "Bauman on Politics—Stillborn Democracy." In *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman: Challenges and Critique*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Poul Poder, 175–192. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

Cervellon, Marie-Cécile, and Stephen Brown. 2018. *Revolutionary Nostalgia: Retromania, Neo-Burlesque, and Consumer Culture*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited.

Cross, Gary. 2015. *Consumed Nostalgia: Memory in the Age of Fast Capitalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Davis, Fred. 1979. *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*. New York: Free Press.

Davis, Mark. 2008. *Freedom and Consumerism: A Critique of Zygmunt Bauman's Sociology*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

———, ed. 2013. *Liquid Sociology: Metaphor in Zygmunt Bauman's Analysis of Modernity*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

Dodman, Thomas. 2018. *What Nostalgia Was? War, Empire and the Time of a Deadly Emotion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gandini, Alessandro. 2020. *Zeitgeist Nostalgia: On Populism, Work and the 'Good Life'*. Winchester: Zero Books.

Garrido, Sandra, and Jane W. Davidson, eds. 2019. *Music, Nostalgia and Memory: Historical; and Psychological Perspectives*. Cham: Palgrave/Macmillan.

Hochschild, Arlie R. 2016. *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: New Press.

Hofer, Johannes. 1934. "Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 2: 376–391.

Illbruck, Helmut. 2012. *Nostalgia: Origins and Ends of an Unenlightened Disease*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Jacobsen, Michael Hviid. 2006. " 'The Activating Presence'—What Prospects of Utopia in Times of Uncertainty?." *Polish Sociological Review* 3: 337–55.

——— 2008. "Bauman on Utopia—Welcome to the Hunting Zone." In *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman: Challenges and Critique*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Poul Poder, 209–230. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

———, ed. 2020a. *Nostalgia Now: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on the Past in the Present*. London: Routledge.

——— 2020b. "Introduction: In Times of Nostalgia: The Brave New World of Grand Old Emotion." In *Nostalgia Now: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on the Past in the Present*. edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 1–28, London: Routledge.

——— 2020c. "Retrotopia Rising: The Topics of Utopia, Retrotopia and Nostalgia in the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman." In *Nostalgia Now: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*

on the Past in the Present, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 78–97. London: Routledge.

——— 2021. "Fear and Retrotopia—Critical Reflections on the Rise of Defensive Emotions in Liquid Modernity." *Zoon Politikon* 12: 94–124.

———, ed. 2022a. *Intimations of Nostalgia: Multidisciplinary Explorations of an Enduring Emotion*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

——— 2022b. "Introduction: The Many Different Faces of Nostalgia—Exploring a Multifaceted and Multidisciplinary Emotion." In *Intimations of Nostalgia: Multidisciplinary Explorations of an Enduring Emotion*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 1–31. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

———, and Sophia Marshman, 2006. "Metaphorically Speaking—Metaphors as Methodological and Moral Signifiers of the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman." *Polish Sociological Review* 3: 307–324.

Jacoby, Russell. 2005. *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Jameson, Fredric. 1992. *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kuhn, Thomas S. 2012 [1962]. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (50th Anniversary Edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kurlinkus, William C. 2018. *Nostalgic Design: Rhetoric, Memory, and Democratizing Technology*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Leggatt, Matthew. 2018. *Cultural and Political Nostalgia in the Age of Terror: The Melancholic Sublime*. London: Routledge.

———, ed. 2021. *Was Is Yesterday? Nostalgia in Contemporary Film and Television*. Albany, NJ: State University of New York Press.

Lizardi, Ryan. 2015. *Mediated Nostalgia: Individual Memory and Contemporary Mass Media*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

———, ed. 2019. *Subjective Experiences of Interactive Nostalgia*. New York: Peter Lang.

Niemeyer, Katharina, ed. 2014. *Media and Nostalgia: Yearning for the Past, Present and Future*. Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan.

Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. 2019. *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pallister, Kathryn, ed. 2019. *Netflix Nostalgia: Streaming the Past on Demand*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Poder, Poul. 2007. "Relatively Liquid Interpersonal Relationships in Flexible Work Life." In *The Contemporary Bauman*, edited by Anthony Elliott, 136–153. London: Routledge.

Reynolds, Bill. 2004. "The Nostalgic Turn and the Politics of Ressentiment." *Georgia Educational Researcher* 2 (1): 1–11.

Reynolds, Simon. 2010. *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Routledge, Clay. 2015. *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource*. London: Routledge.

Rudaitytė, Regina, ed. 2018. *History, Memory and Nostalgia in Literature and Culture*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Salmose, Niklas, ed. 2019. *Contemporary Nostalgia*. Basel: Mdpi AG.

Sayers, Janet. 2007. "Liquid Love: Psychoanalising Mania." In *The Contemporary Bauman*, edited by Anthony Elliott, 154–167. London: Routledge.

Sayers, Nicola. 2020. *The Promise of Nostalgia: Reminiscence, Longing and Hope in Contemporary American Culture*. London: Routledge.

Sedikides, Constantine, et al. 2015. "To Nostalgize: Mixing Memory with Affect and Desire." *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 52: 189–273.

Stauth, Georg, and Bryan S. Turner. 1988. "Nostalgia, Postmodernism and the Critique of Mass Culture." *Theory, Culture & Society* 5 (2/3): 509–526.

Stewart, Kathleen. 1988. "Nostalgia: A Polemic." *Cultural Anthropology* 3: 227–241.

Sullivan, Charles J. 2022. *Motherland: Soviet Nostalgia in the Russian Federation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan.

Tanner, Grafton. 2021. *The Hours Have Lost Their Clock: The Politics of Nostalgia*. London: Watkins Media Limited.

Tester, Keith. 2004. *The Social Thought of Zygmunt Bauman*. London: Palgrave/Macmillan.

Weber, Max. 1968. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology* (Volume 1–3) (Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich). New York: Bedminster Press.

Wilson, Janelle L. 2015. *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Publishing.

Xia, Lan, Joyce (Feng) Wang, and Shelle Santana. 2021. "Nostalgia: Triggers and Its Role on New Product Purchase Intentions." *Journal of Business Research* 3: 183–194.

Zhou, Xinyue, et al. 2022. "The Restorative Power of Nostalgia: Thwarting Loneliness by Raising Happiness during the Covid-19 Pandemic." *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 13 (4): 803–815.

Chapter Eight

BAUMAN ON BORDERS: THE ROLE OF *OUR* DOOR IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE STRANGER

Shaun Best

Introduction

All societies produce strangers argues Zygmunt Bauman (1997, 17). From the 1980s onwards, the stranger has figured prominently in Bauman's understanding of social exclusion, marginalization, and intolerance. The stranger is often viewed as slimy, a character who is polluted and contaminated and whose presence we find threatening. The stranger is a projection of our internalized fear of difference and fear of becoming psychologically invaded by Otherness. For Bauman people who are unable to adapt or fit in are seen to transgress boundaries and become strangers. Consequently, the stranger is ambivalence incarnated (Bauman and Tablet 2017, 139).

This chapter presents an account of Bauman's complex understanding of how the stranger as a distinctive analytical, social, and cultural category comes into being. Underpinning Bauman's analysis of the stranger in its various forms: the poor, later cast as the flawed consumer, the abstract Jew,

and the unwanted foreigner, refugee, and forced migrant; is Georg Simmel's understanding of people as boundary creating and boundary maintaining agents. From the exclusion of the abstract Jew in *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) to his analysis of estrangement rooted in nationalism, his post-nationalist critique of the "nostalgic turn" and support for Pope Francis's critique of the European Union's stance on refugees and forced migrants (Bauman 2013, 2017). The chapter will explore Bauman's (2016a) "bridging" and "bonding" assumptions; that people are social but also boundary-creating and boundary-maintaining. Borders assist people in arranging objects, including people into assemblages or categories, and are central in the processes of estrangement. The chapter explains how Bauman's definition and redefinition of borders and boundaries come to generate adiaphoric moral indifference in relation to people who find themselves on the other side of *our* door.

A stranger is regarded as "strange" and their presence can be discomforting, even if they are not behaving aggressively. According to Bauman barbarians was the name given by the Ancient Greeks to people who did not inhabit Greece and did not speak Greek, consequently, because these people could not easily be communicated with, the Greeks were unsure of their motives and intentions. The barbarians were strangers, different but not inferior. However, the presence of the stranger could generate a vague, unspecific, and unfocused fear. The presence of the stranger demonstrated that there were other ways to organize life, prompting the Greeks to engage in self-justification and self-scrutiny.

The experience of estrangement in Bauman's solid, post, and liquid modernity is one of endemic precariousness. In solid modernity, Bauman discusses the stranger in relation to the gardening state. Solid modernity was a condition of compulsive, planning, designing, and boundary building. Strangers spoil the harmony of the garden design; they are out of place. The garden state will attempt to correct, repair, or assimilate the stranger. However, if this is not possible the stranger will be excluded from the garden, placed outside the boundary, and, as in the case of the Holocaust, if judged to be no better than vermin or bacteria may be physically destroyed.

In postmodernity, the stranger is not necessarily viewed as an anomaly to be corrected. The ability to create and recreate our identities is celebrated within the postmodern condition and difference is treated with playful

unconcern. However, if individuals lose the ability to consume the resources to construct and reconstruct their chosen identity, if they lose control over their lives, and lose the ability to exercise consumer choice, they more likely are to be viewed as "flawed consumers," "slimy" and resented by both self and others and estranged.

In liquid modernity, the poor remain cast as flawed consumers and continue to be excluded and continue to be regarded as "slimy," resented, and estranged. However, post 9/11, paperless migrants, individuals forced to leave their homes in search of safety elsewhere find themselves "othered and estranged," stripped of all aspects of their former identities, subjected to bio-segregation, not offered the protection of the law, and are estranged as "human waste." Forced migrants and refugees are often presented as a threat. As Bauman explained in an interview with Brad Evans, liquidity, and the liquidity of fear "creates a sort of affinity between the strangers at our doors and the mysterious, seemingly omnipotent global forces that pushed them there" (Bauman and Evans 2016).

Simmel on Space and Borders

According to Georg Simmel (1950), a stranger is a person who expresses both "near" and "far" qualities at the same time. Not a tourist but a wanderer who arrives today and stays tomorrow; a refugee, "economic" migrant, "forced" migrant, or cosmopolitan. Social action takes place in space. Drawing on the example of the formation of Flanders as a city, Simmel explains that the social formation of medieval cities often had three bases: the "natural commons," by which Simmel meant the unity of people who share the protection of the same "rampart and ditch"; the "city magistracy" that provides people with a common legal personality and the church parish. These three bases may be different but they each influence the same group of persons within the same environment and bring about a sense of togetherness. In the same way that light and sound waves flow through the same space, the effect of the bases generates a feeling of "collective composition." Bauman was later to examine such bases as forms of social capital. Space for Simmel is then an activity of the psyche: "the

human way of binding unbounded sensory affections into integrated outlooks, is specifically reflected in the need for psychological functions for the individual historical forms of space" (Simmel 2009 [1908], 544).

Space can be divided by the imposition of a boundary and the concept of boundary is important for social order and conflicts. A boundary is a line that simultaneously unites and includes those on one side of the boundary and separates and excludes those on the other side. Simmel does not argue for an essential spatial determinism; bounded space is a context for social action and not its underpinning cause. In the social world, people take for granted their ability to connect and separate objects and events. People have a bordering predisposition that underpins their ability to abstractly and practically connect and separate; we are according to Simmel connecting creatures who connect but cannot connect without separating. However, we can only identify an association between things if we assume that they can exist on their own, independently, and at the same time, we can only separate things if it is assumed that they can be connected. This view is more fully explored in his essay "Bridge and Door" (Simmel 1994 [1909]). Drawing on the example of the picture frame, the frame provides a boundary that identifies and defines the perimeters or contour lines of an object, identifying what belongs to the object, and what does not. In the social world, framing is the process of constructing social boundaries that allow people to establish proximity between "us," and those within the frame and impose distance on the "external world" and those outside of the frame. The frame is then a boundary that has centripetal and centrifugal outcomes, reinforcing proximity through shared norms among those within the perimeter and emphasizing the distance from that outside. Frames emphasize proximity and closeness between members of an in-group, and the frame has the function of allowing for the closure of all bridges and doors through which the "external world" could break into the picture.

Bauman's book *Strangers at Our Door* (2016a) takes its starting point from Simmel's account of bridge and door. The metaphor of the door is central to Bauman's understanding of the migrant as a stranger in liquid modernity. Our reasoning ability to connect things that were previously unconnected underpins human's ability to construct paths and bridges. Humans engage in path-building and bridge-building to make connectivity possible. The bridge identifies fixed points and connects them, however, the

direction of travel along the bridge does not have influence in terms of the meaning of the act. In contrast, the door forms a link between the inside and outside. The door transcends inner and outer, representing both separation and connection; the door provides isolation and represents a boundary. Whereas the bridge provides direction between a finite place and another finite place; the door provides security but not direction. Unlike the window which has much less significance in terms of transcending inner and outer, life flows in any direction from the open door. Doors symbolize the movement of life from inside to outside and from outside to inside.

Beyond the boundary is the nowhere-land of the *homini sacri* the strange nonperson with no value. Bauman (2016a) makes use of Simmel's metaphors of bridge and door to develop his distinctive understanding of the "limit" or the social threshold and his reworking of Robert Putnam's (2000) concepts of "bridging" and "bonding." The boundary reflects the socio-spatially constructed differences between cultures and categories of persons. The ontology of borders reflects our understanding of what borders are, whilst the epistemology of borders is the study of what and how people come to know what borders are. Bauman (2016a) explains that as the migrants remain on the other side of our door and away from the proximity of face-to-face contact, we feel no pangs of conscience about their plight. People on the inside of the door experience the agentic state whilst people on the outside of the door are subjected to the processes of adiaphorization (Bauman's term for the emptying of moral responsibility for actions).

Borders invite a shared perception of any category and in the case of people, a communitarian sense of belonging and shared identity as opposed to the worthless nonvoluntary travelers and others, whose rightful place is on the other side of the border such as the abstract Jew (Bauman 1989), vagabond (Bauman 1998), or refugee (Bauman 2016a). Even when we are unaware of the existence of a boundary, our lives are experienced as being objectively bounded. Boundaries provide arrangements for interaction and making sense of experience. Social inclusion and social exclusion are coexistent, codependent, and "anthropophagic" for Bauman: "vomiting the strangers, banishing them from the limits of the orderly world and barring them from all communication with those inside" (Bauman 1993, 201). At the heart of communitarianism is the concept of the "warm circle of community" (Bauman 2001), a vision of an orderly world in which

everyone has a place, and every place is secure. To be inclusive, some categories of individuals must remain excluded from "the warm circle of the community" and regarded as "strange."

Adiaphorization

Bauman explained that because we share the world, so we affect each other's lives; what we chose to do or chose not to do will impact the lives of others. Consequently, "circumstance has already made us responsible for each other and by the same token it has already made us ethical beings. But we may or may not take up responsibility for that responsibility" (Bauman 2000a, 84).

Although we each have an inborn moral impulse our moral selves are influenced by the way society is structured and the ways borders, and boundaries are defined and come to generate adiaphoric moral indifference in relation to people who find themselves on the other side of the boundary. Drawing on Ulrich Beck's (1998, 34) observation that individualization "is collective fate, not an individual one," Bauman states that the liquid modern individual finds themselves in: "the curious, paradoxical plight of being utterly, unqualifiedly 'responsible for yourself' and at the same time 'dependent on conditions which completely elude your grasp' " (Bauman 2000a, 89). Writing in 2000 Bauman explains the emergence of adiaphorization in relation to the stranger under conditions of liquid modernity. Under conditions of liquid modernity adiaphorization is a product of the processes of individualization.

In solid modernity, the gardening state policed social life looking for categories of persons that did not fit the garden design, the poor, the Jew, the foreigner, and any other category of a person deemed to be a stranger and outside of the garden design. Adiaphorization was an act of "overt exclusion from the universe of moral obligations, but more often than not it boils down to the tacit, even surreptitious and pre-reflexive rather than sub-conscious 'effacing the face': staving off the very possibility of a certain category of others appearing as targets of ethically meaningful action" (Bauman 2000a, 95).

Categories of a stranger would be subject to exclusion, routine coercion with moral indifference. In contrast, in liquid modernity with the relentless waning of the social state, individuals tend to be self-centered, self-engrossed, morally blind, and ethically uninvolved. The freedom of the liquid modern individual is reflected in a desire to focus on their own business, to face their difficulties alone, and deal with them alone by drawing on their skills and abilities. In such circumstances: "the others turn into strangers—and of the strangers, as every mother keeps telling her child, one should beware; and best of all keep one's distance and not talk to them at all" (Bauman 2000a, 87).

There is an absence of ethicality in liquid modernity that Bauman describes as a stifling of the "soul" reflected in the responsibility for the other being "neglected, abandoned, or refused to be taken" (Bauman 2000a, 92). Liquid moderns treat the other with indifference. However, "indifference" is not simply inactivity concerning the other, rather indifference "stands for an active rejection of engagement, for ethical unconcern. Indifference is the attitude taken towards the objects, also (above all) such as happen to be human subjects, which have been first banished from the universe of moral obligation" (Bauman 2000a, 92). The Other did not commit a mortal sin, rather the Others are seen to have put themselves outside the realm of the ethical because they have not taken up responsibility for their responsibility. The sin or crime of the Other in liquid modernity is to be seen to require help in a world where giving such help is not forthcoming: "I and the Other are similarly individuals—we are both self-sustained entities, or at least holding self-sufficiency up as the ideal pattern of life, simultaneously its aim and condition—and so mutual dependency would be degrading and demeaning for the Other as much as it is for me … Refusing responsibility for the Other is a wise and noble thing to do; and I should be grateful to all the others who reciprocate in the same manner"; this indifference to the stranger is celebrated in liquid modernity as a "huge leap forward in the progress of freedom" (Bauman 2000a, 95).

In his last works, Bauman focused on the origin and effects of the migration crisis. In an interview with Citali Rovirosa-Madrazo (2009), Bauman reflected on what has become known as the "nostalgic turn." Bauman explains that one of the consequences of the 2008 financial crisis was a process of closing social systems, a fear of the "otherness" of

strangers at our door, growing nationalism, a rejection of cultural differences, and a consequent change in attitudes toward migrants, including the closing and strengthening of physical and cultural borders (Bauman 2016a, 2017). The security discourse fueled panic around the issue of forced migration and further legitimated the exclusion of migrants from the sphere of moral obligations, placing the plight of refugees outside the sphere of human compassion.

Pope Francis: The "Globalization of Indifference"

Drawing on Pope Francis's observation that a "globalization of indifference" has emerged central to which is a securitization of migration, rooted in a "back to tribes" form of governance that reflects a deeper and darker understanding of a division of the human and the inhuman. Bauman explored this form of politics in *Retrotopia* (2017) in which he looked at the way people reject a future-oriented utopia and desire an idealized past. This is reflected in the nostalgic rhetoric of political slogans such as Nigel Farage's "Take Back Control of Our Borders" and Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again." To be legitimately inside the boundary is to be seen as a valued person.

Bauman adapted Simmel's work on the connection between space and social interaction in the context of his understanding of the stranger in relation to current debates concerning the "territorial imaginary", sovereignty, boundaries, refugees, forced migration, and the reification of the state as a fixed unit of sovereign space. Nationalism has featured in Bauman's understanding of estrangement since the late 1980s. Bauman suggests that nationalism is a search for a uniform world without contingency. Nationalist movements assume that the nation is rooted in a gift of blood and soil. A person can move from one place to another, but a person cannot take their soil with them, and a person cannot make another person's soil their own. Nationalists assume that the nation is formed out of already formed unities and common group interests such as the "commonality" of land, language, and tradition. However, for Bauman (1992, 667) the nation is "always an artefact of boundary drawing activity:

always contentious and contested, glossing over some (potentially disruptive) differentiations and representing some other (objectively minor) differences as powerful and decisive separating factors."

Bauman identifies two aspects of identity: identity with itself over time and setting oneself apart from "the other." Bauman argues that "ethnic categories" depend exclusively on the maintenance of a boundary, irrespective of the cultural factors that are selected as the border posts. Nationalism is viewed by Bauman as "we-talk"; a form of discourse that divides the world into friends and enemies, in which identities and counter-identities are created and maintained: "The 'we-ness' of friends owes its materiality to the 'they-ness' of the enemies." In these circumstances identity stands or falls "by the security of its borders, and the borders are ineffective unless guarded" (Bauman 1992, 678–679). Modernity makes both the nation and national identity contingent. Identity is no longer treated as a given but is viewed as a task: "an objective of self-reflexive activity, an object of, simultaneously, individual concern and specialized institutional service" (Bauman 1992, 680). For Bauman, making national identity conditional was one of the most notable features of solid modernity.

Nationalism is a program of unification and homogeneity. However, within every form of nationalism, there is always an interplay of inclusive and exclusive feelings and dispositions. The nationalistic promotion of homogeneity had to be accompanied by the effort to label, separate, and evict the "aliens." Nationalists are constantly engaged in an unwinnable war against their inner ambivalence. On grounds of self-defense, nationalists are focused on locating, segregating, disarming, and banishing strangers rather than enemies: "those aliens in their midst who are the crystallizations of their zealously, but ineffectively, suppressed ambivalence" (Bauman 1992, 687). Bauman continues: "nations are called to be vigilant against the strangers in their midst—the false pretenders who claim the soil and the blood that are not their own, outspoken detractors of the sanctity of national symbols or (worse still) deceitful flatterers drowning their alienness in the mendacity of praise" (Bauman 1992, 687). In the last analysis, Bauman argues that:

> Rejection of strangers may shy away from expressing itself in racial terms, but it cannot afford admitting its arbitrariness lest it should abandon all hope of success; it verbalizes itself therefore in terms of incompatibility or unmixability of cultures, or of self-defence of the traditionally shaped form of life. Horror of ambivalence sediments in consciousness as the value of communal cohesion and consensus that only shared understanding can bring. Arguments that wish it to be as firm and solid as those once anchored in the images of soil and blood now have to dress themselves in the rhetoric of culture and its values (Bauman 1992, 697).

Lucy Mayblin (2017) argues that in the 1992 article, Bauman offers an inadequate and inaccurate historical account of how national identities in Europe developed. Notably, Bauman disregards the significance of European colonialism in the making of national identities. However, for me, the critique does not apply to Bauman's later work, most notably *Strangers at Our Door* (2016a) which contains the same approach to boundary-making and estrangement but focuses on forms of social inclusion and exclusion based on the inferred identity of the individual as Other. Although Bauman could have more clearly emphasized the legacies of colonialism in the processes of identity formation, it is possible to identify that such legacies are present.

Following the Libyan civil war, the Syrian civil war, and the 2014–2017 war in Iraq, a substantial number of people found themselves in particularly challenging circumstances and the summer of 2015 came to be known as the Summer of Migration. In response to the significant increase in the number of displaced persons, the European Union formed agreements with Turkey and Tunisia to circumvent the principle of non-refoulment. For Bauman and Pope Francis, such EU agreements are part of a mechanism of exclusion and harm. Non-refoulement is the obligation of nation states to not engage in coercing forced migrants, or asylum seekers to return to a country where it can be expected that they will be subjected to persecution. Non-refoulement is incorporated in the 1951 UN Convention on Human Rights. However, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) established in 2004, is used by the EU to prevent forced migrants from attempting to make their way across the Mediterranean to Europe and keep them firmly on the other side of our door (European Border and Coast Guard Agency 2020).

Taking his starting point from Immanuel Kant's understanding of "the moral law inside me," for Bauman—in his conversations with Stanisław Obirek—the "consciousness of responsibility is what makes us human" (Bauman and Obirek 2015b, 1). Bauman continues by explaining: "My personal responsibility for joint/shared welfare needs to stay always one step ahead of others' responsibility for my own—with an incessant awareness that this is how things are and how they ought to be" (Bauman and Obirek 2015b, 22). Moreover, Bauman states that "there is no greater evil perpetrated by one human being against another than that of denying him or her their human dignity, or of depriving him or her of the chance to acquire it; and as, second, mutually recognized personal dignity is not only a prerequisite of that 'cohesive life' that you so value and promote, but also perhaps the noblest of all consequences of such a cohesion" (Bauman and Obirek 2015b, 16).

All human beings should be afforded "honor," "empathy" and "dignity" because they are human: "No other supporting particulars—adjectives or qualifiers assigning this or that attribute—are required of the bearer, simply by virtue of his or her humanity" (Bauman and Obirek 2015b, 17). There is nothing that a person needs to do to deserve dignity. However, as Bauman observes: "most of us, for most of the time, do not love our neighbors as we love ourselves, and we do not do unto others as we would wish them do unto us? This is the question which troubles me most deeply and painfully" (Bauman and Obirek 2015b, 32). Adiaphora underpins the "blissful sleep of irresponsibility" (Bauman and Obirek, 2015b, 35) and our refusal to allow the moral self to accept responsibility. We ignore our responsibility for the well-being and dignity of the Other because "it has nothing to do with me." A view that has become common at all levels of interpersonal relationships in liquid modernity, from the actions of the EU and other interstate or international relations to personal relationships.

However, it is important to note before we continue that there are potential ethical problems with Bauman's understanding of responsibility (Best 2016). Drawing upon Knud E. Løgstrup's (1971 [1956]) understanding of "the ethical demand," Bauman explains that to be inclusive one must be both *with* the Other and *for* the Other, this means listening to the Other's unspoken command; as the command is unspoken, it is Bauman who gives voice to the Other, and Bauman assumes unlimited

responsibility over the Other based on his interpretation of the needs of Other. As Bauman makes clear:

> It is I who must give voice to that command … if I want to make sure that my responsibility has been exercised in full, that nothing has been left undone, overlooked or neglected, I will feel obliged to include in my responsibility also the duty to overcome what I can see as nothing else but her ignorance, or misinterpretation, of "her own best interest" … I must force the Other to submit to what I, in my best conscience, interpret as "her own good" (Bauman 1993, 90–91).

Bauman makes clear what the commitment to the Other's welfare involves in practical terms:

> My responsibility for the Other … [i]ncludes also my responsibility for determining what needs to be done to exercise that responsibility. Which means in turn that I am responsible for defining the needs of the Other; what is good, and what is evil for the Other. If I love her and thus desire her happiness, it is my responsibility to decide what would make her truly happy (Bauman 1995, 64–65).

For Bauman, the "refugee crisis" is a symptom of the state of "interregnum" the customary ways of acting have worn out and are not working but new ways, more adapted to the changed conditions are not in place: "On a planet crisscrossed tightly by trade routes and information highways, we (including our political elites), we guide our thought and actions by the precepts inherited from the era of territorial sovereignties, moats, drawbridges, stockades, barbed wires, ad hoc coalitions, and walls" (Bauman 2018, 2). In July 2013 Pope Francis, following in the footsteps of the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in 2011 but with a hugely different message visited the island of Lampedusa, the southernmost tip of the European Union and a place where many undocumented migrants attempt to land. Fanning the flames of racism and xenophobia, Berlusconi's message was focused on the criminalization of migrants, the perception of them as potential recruits for terrorist organizations, and the perceived threat they pose to people's jobs. Pope Francis in stark contrast referred to Pontius Pilate washing his hands of problems and called for greater

dialogue, challenged the "sin of indifference," and called on people "to remove the part of Herod that lurks in our hearts" concerning the migration crisis and the urgent need to tackle rising social inequality. For Pope Francis peace has no borders, and he added that if we seek to find the good in people and the world, it would be foolish to close spaces and fight against each other. Bauman (2017, 2018) commenting on the speech described the Pope as one of the few public figures with global authority who is sufficiently courageous and single-minded to raise these important questions. Bauman's secular ideas on the exclusion of forced migrants and refugees and the Christian view of the world presented by Pope Francis have much in common.

Francis during his time as Pope embraced secular arguments that attempt to bring about ends that a Christian could embrace, consequently, the attitude and behaviors towards the excluded Other are the same for Bauman and Francis; to love the neighbor is morally absolute and unconditional. The two men met shortly before Bauman's death in 2017 and Bauman quoted Pope Francis in his last works. Even though Bauman adopts a secular view of Emmanuel Lévinas and Løgstrup's positions on inclusion as rooted in being *with* the Other and *for* the Other, Pope Francis adopts the same position but unlike Bauman accepts the vital role of God. Both men, hold the view that all humans are inherently of equal moral worth, and that we should understand and feel morally obligated to assist the individual who travels because of fear of genocide, tyranny, famine, and lack of hope generated by aggression and intolerance. It is for this reason that Bauman places such emphasis on Pope Francis's observation that a "globalization of indifference" has emerged central to which is a securitization of migration, rooted in a "back to tribes" form of governance.

In Bauman's view, under the leadership of Pope Francis, the Church might become, a leading branch of humanity: "no one could say of Pope Francis that he did not take advantage of the opportunity of getting to grips with a challenge indispensable for the salvation of the world and its inhabitants" (Bauman and Obirek 2015b, 97–98). Francis's comments on the outsider should raise issues for the moral content of the insiders' view of "the stranger" and their obligations concerning the stranger's welfare. Francis's observations make people question the position described by Bauman that the stranger is someone of whom one knows little and desires

to know even less. In moral space, the stranger is someone of whom one cares little and is prompted to care even less and disrupts the binaries of friend/enemy, order/chaos, inside/outside." In addition, insiders should reconsider their symbolic boundaries, feel a greater sense of obligation to the Other whoever they are or wherever they come from, and ask the question: What justifies the use of force against such people?

Controlling the Stranger

Elsewhere in his writings, Bauman (2021 [2008]) explains that Claude Lévi-Strauss identified two essential strategies that had been adopted towards the stranger over time; one he described as "anthropophagic" and involved the cultural assimilation of the stranger so that their identity matched the locals, and the other strategy is described as "anthropoemic" which is the forcing the strangers to leave. Unlike in Ancient Greece, in both cases, the stranger became seen to be both different, inferior, and treated as less than human. The behaviors of the strangers, from the food they ate to their sexual practices, demonstrated their "barbaric" nature. Consequently, local ways of living needed to be protected this allowed the locals to take the moral high ground and the stranger and the stranger's ways of living became subject to legitimate coercion. Taking his lead from comments by Barry Goldwater in the 1960s, Bauman describes the perception of the stranger:

> [B]ecause they were described as unable or unwilling to follow the rules of civilized life, because they were flawed humans, subhuman, not really human in "your and mine understanding of the world". Each civilized order surrounds itself with a sort of frontier-land "cordon sanitaire" and uses rich repertory of barbaric expedients to keep that cordon impassable (Bauman 2021 [2008], 190).

For Bauman (1993), strangers are the product of the mechanism of social spacing in the lifeworld; we live with others and through our use of the "natural attitude," our background knowledge of taken for granted assumptions that we take as true and rarely have reason to question, we

have an awareness of the others we live with- we know them, and they know us. In social space, people derive their identities from the categories or classes to which they are assigned. We cannot directly experience physical space; our comprehension of physical space is the product of our intellectually mapping of the diverse relations with other humans. Boundaries are drawn to create a marked structure of differences between one place and the shapeless mass of space. The role of boundary is to divide and the more effective the border is the less face-to-face contact there is between people on either side of the border and the more alien and unfamiliar the stranger becomes. Borders offer confidence if they are clearly marked. However, the border can become a site of tension and hostilities as the spatial order provided by the border can be used to divide humans into "desirables" and potential "undesirables." However, borders form an interface connecting places that are apart. Social space is a product of the multilayered interaction of several overlapping, but distinct processes that are focused on generating ideas of proximity and distance: cognitive spacing by which space is intellectually constructed by the ownership, control, and distribution of knowledge; aesthetic spacing which is driven by our curiosity and by which space is charted affectively and finally, moral spacings by which space is constructed through the unequal distribution of felt or assumed responsibility.

Social spacing provides us with an understanding of social proximity/intimacy or distance/anonymity with the other. It is possible for the other to be outside or beyond social space and as such we have no firsthand knowledge of them, they are outside our "biographical experience." This is not to say that we cannot approximate an awareness of them, as Bauman makes clear: "These humans we do not know; we know of them … as Schutz would say, through the processes of typification—as types, not persons. The world of contemporaries, says Schutz, 'is stratified according to levels of anonymity' " (Bauman 1993, 149).

The construction of classes or types comes with expectations of how the others will conduct themselves. Social space is then habitable because it is rule-governed. The stranger, the other is perceived the less likely we are to know how to classify them or align them to a known type. We do not know what to expect of strangers or how to respond to them. As such the presence of the stranger generates anxiety and uneasiness.

Bauman observes that for much of human history, the physical neighborhood was understood to be a distinct bounded social space that was free of strangers and subject to normative regulation. He argues that: "Modernity has been born under the stars of acceleration and space conquest" consequently, with modernity comes the: "shortening distances, depriving 'remoteness' of its meaning" (Bauman 2000b, 173). In solid modernity, "one could say that the difference between the strong and the weak is that between the territory shaped out in the image of the map, closely guarded and tightly controlled, and territory open to intrusion" (Bauman 2000b, 174). For the solid moderns, space could only be viewed as truly possessed when it was controlled. With liquid modernity, there is an undoing of the resistance of space. However, for many, the desire for securely fixed places underpins the current "age of nostalgia" identified by Bauman in *Retrotopia* (2017).

The world of the "biologically human" was divided into two firmly distinct sectors, that of the neighbors who were regarded as human and that of the aliens who were not. If the alien entered our physical proximity, they would be judged as an enemy to be fought and expelled; a temporary guest kept under strict surveillance, or treated as a potential neighbor to be. Strangers came from beyond the neighborhood boundary, a non-place assumed to be a lawless, wilderness inhabited by faceless people. Such people are the ultimate source of pollution, they reflect the inner demons that we have about ourselves.

Traditionally, solid modernity was unwelcoming to difference/otherness (Bauman 1991, 104); this is what Bauman terms the "heterophobia thesis." The construction of boundaries and the role they play in dividing spheres of social life was a central factor in transforming "the migrant" from a living, breathing, individual human being into a morally indifferent category; a process that was facilitated by the emergence of an adiaphoric state that engulfs the individual, neutralizes their agency and generates moral irrelevance and dehumanization of the other. For Bauman, this process is a product of three interrelated strategies: the "denial of proximity"; the "effacement of the face"; and the "reduction to traits." However, boundaries can never be impenetrable and when the coordination between the physical, social, and cognitive proximity is broken, strangers appear inside the bounded social space. Bauman argues that the transition from solid to liquid

modernity has seen a shift from: “entrenching and fortifying the principle of territorial, exclusive and indivisible sovereignty and surrounding the sovereign territories with impermeable borders” to “fuzzy and eminently permeable borderlines, the unstoppable (even if bewailed, resented and resisted) devaluation of spatial distances and defensive capacities of the territories” (Bauman 2016b, 24).

In addition, the inhabitants of every country are nowadays a collection of diasporas: “hybrid constructions of multiple identity groups.” Consequently, people must live near variety and differences and the pattern of migration makes people question the once solid connection between identity and citizenship, individual and place, and neighborhood and belonging (Bauman 2016b, 25). In addition, Bauman comments: “Whether we like it or not, we the urban dwellers find ourselves in a situation requiring the development and appropriation of the skills of living with difference daily, and in all probability permanently. After a couple of centuries spent on dreams of cultural assimilation (unilateral) or convergence (bilateral), and on ensuing practices, we begin to face up—even if in many a case reluctantly, and often with unmitigated resistance—to the prospect of the mixture of interaction and friction among a multiplicity of irreducibly diverse identities of neighboring and/or intermixed cultural diasporas” (Bauman 2018, 2). Bauman’s last representation of a stranger was the *Stranger at Our Door* (2016a), which is used by Bauman as an abstract concept that represents all individuals and groups who are refused legal and rightful access to society. In Simmel’s work writing before the period of rapid global flows, local neighborhood groups attempted to exclude strangers to preserve group boundaries and maintain their distinct identity, but today the copresence of the stranger is commonplace and locals must develop ways of living their daily lives with others who are different. The tensions that Simmel identified between distance and closeness are something that must be lived with. For Bauman, strangers are regarded as socially distant but physically close. When locals share a space with strangers who may be uninvited and unwelcome, it can generate mixophobia and a desire to build “islands of similarity and sameness amid the sea of variety and difference” (Bauman 2010, 158). The assumption is that such islands will provide togetherness and spiritual comfort for the locals, without having to compromise, negotiate or understand the stranger. The strangers may refuse to return to

the other side of the boundary but still appear to be free of obligations to follow local rules and customs and thus remain as strangers. These people are not openly enemies but not neighbors either, making any secure or stable classification of them impossible. Strangers are not engaged as neighbors but are treated with civil inattention, a form of indifference that reduces eye contact to a minimum, and with the stranger treated as a faceless individual. The maintenance of this social distancing by blurring the face of the stranger and attempting to limit their rights and mobility is regarded by neighbors as a defense against the potential dangers of living amongst strangers.

With the significant numbers of strangers moving into neighborhood living spaces, living with strangerhood has become a permanent condition. Although the premodern mechanisms for social spacing have become largely ineffective and outdated this does not mean that attempts to control the social space have ended. The issue has become not how to eliminate strangers but how to control them and to live alongside them; a condition that Bauman describes as a "condition of cognitive paucity, in determination and uncertainty" (Bauman 1993, 159).

Present-day states still draw upon the traditional approach to controlling the stranger which Lévi-Strauss, as we saw above, had described as "anthropophagic", to incorporate and assimilate the stranger in order to incorporate their powerful forces into us. However, the strategy that is most adopted towards the stranger is "anthropoemic," this is described by Bauman as a strategy in which we attempt to exile the stranger and exclude them in areas where they can be safely incarcerated and controlled. When used together the two strategies, one inclusive and the other exclusive, become an indispensable mechanism for cognitive spacing. Consequently, strangers are being assimilated and stigmatized at the same time.

In his conversation with Stanisław Obirek (2015a), Bauman explains how strangers come to be assimilated and stigmatized at the same time by drawing upon the concept of social capital; a universal building block of social organization that defines the robustness of social ties and common trust between people. Social capital describes the material which individuals use in the act of group formation: "the yarn used by human individuals in weaving and padding what we might call their 'social nests', with the quality of that yarn determining both the density and the durability of the

social fabric" (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 26). For Bauman, processes of inclusion and the processes of exclusion are central to the maintenance of any social formation.

Bauman differentiates between two ways of utilizing social capital, which he, inspired by Robert Putnam (2000) terms "bridging" and "bonding." "Bridging" can be viewed in terms of our efforts to achieve social advancement, whilst the lack of bridging can be seen as a factor underpinning social degradation. "Bonding" is the use of social capital to support groups and for the individual to establish themselves in a recognized social position. For this process to be successful the individual must be successful in: "limiting outsiders' access to the group, excluding intruders or limiting the right to free choice accorded to the group's members" (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 26). Social capital is a resource that we draw on to both include and exclude the Other. It is, suggests Bauman, "just as crucial for throwing the gates open as it is for digging moats … it is used for both goals." Moreover, all social groups "derive their capacity of survival from a dialectic of integration and separation … inclusion and exclusion … neither of the two processes can be entirely eliminated." Bridging and bonding, inclusion and exclusion are, then, what Bauman and Obirek describe as two sides of the same coin: "they cannot get by without each other"; underpinning inclusion is the 'urge to convert' the Other, whilst exclusion is the urge to leave out, reject or ignore. Bauman explains that the urge to convert and/or to exclude are: "inevitable and inescapable ingredients of our human way of being-in-the-world" (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 26–27). Strangers become polarized as either neighbors or aliens, with no middle ground, "locals" feel anxiety, confused, and disempowered. This makes it impossible for Bauman to adopt a "no borders" or general abolition of boundaries position.

In the case of migration, boundary crossing takes place, but this does not mean that the boundary is broken or that people on the inside of the boundary regard it as irrelevant. In these circumstances, strangers become the objects for cognitive spacing, we live *with* the stranger but not *for* the stranger. The stranger may be physically present but not resident in our moral space, we know little about them and have no desire to know more, they are not objects of our moral concern or responsibility. People outside of our moral space are a dehumanized category of person:

> The currently common practice of living daily in a (cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic) diaspora amidst other (cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic) diaspora has for the first time forced on the intellectual agenda the issue of the "art of living with difference"; an issue that may appear on the agenda only once the difference is no longer perceived as merely temporary (Bauman 2021 [2008], 197).

There are often places to be found within the city where strangers feel a degree of security and where their perceived transgressions are assumed to be unimportant and playful. In a well-controlled and well-policed space such as the city where the spectators are in control, the stranger can become the subject of "aesthetic control," a source of photophilic, curiosity, amusement, and entertainment. To be enjoyed without anxiety, guilty conscience, or embarrassment. Aesthetic control can be playful but remains in control of the stranger and the space they inhabit using enforced rules of cohabitation: "The idea of 'human rights' does not translate today as the right to live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light" (Bauman 2021 [2008], 197).

In contemporary society where life is often messy and constantly under pressure from irrational and uncoordinated forces Bauman (1993, 179) explains that there has been an erosion of social space by aesthetic space and the replacement of the mechanisms of the social spacing by the mechanism of aesthetic spacing, with the accompanying emotional appeal of nationalism and societally endorsed callous unconcern, apathetic indifference, and moral blindness, or in Bauman's terms adiaphorization. In these circumstances, telicity becomes the perfect aesthetic space. Strangers can be gazed upon openly like animals in the zoo, sanitized, safe, and without threat or fear. TV crime series and video games allow us to view the stranger as an object of enjoyment, close as objects but remote as subjects of action. Telicity sets the standards for life in aesthetic space, the only legitimate right for the stranger to exist in aesthetic space is dependent on their ability to amuse.

Conclusion

Zygmunt Bauman's work has been at the forefront of debates about estrangement and identity since the 1980s. Bauman explains that to "love thy neighbor as thyself" is one of the fundamental precepts of civilized life. However, in the contemporary world such a view is most likely to be met with the response: "why should I do it? What good will it do to me?" (Bauman 2003, 77).

Bauman's analyses of the stranger are important because he raises key questions concerning the nature of social and cultural borders, the nature of boundary building, and the role of boundaries in generating exclusionary practices and adiaphoric moral indifference. Boundaries separate and define; they are central to both social inclusion and social exclusion. To have a "warm circle of community" of included individuals someone must be outside of the circle, on the other side of the boundary, estranged and excluded. Inclusion and exclusion are two sides of the same coin and consequently, all social formations generate strangers. In his last works, Bauman's approach to forced migrants is one of post-nationalism and rooted in a critique of the "nostalgic turn" of Nigel Farage and Donald Trump.

With the emergence of modern sovereign states, there was consequently the emergence of "stateless persons," the *sans papiers* or undocumented migrants. In the last analysis, sovereignty remains the power to define the limits of humanity. The clean-cut territorial division between the "inside" and the "outside"; marks the distinction between the inside and the outside of the sovereign realm and the distinction between citizens and paperless migrants, is viewed as the distinction between human and inhuman. Those outside of the boundary are assumed to be leading a "life unworthy of living."

For Bauman, paperless migrants are treated with suspicion and resentment and are disowned by all nation-states and consequently become rightless; they are not equal before the law because no law applies to them, and no nation-state offers them protection. Being human does not confer any specific rights except for the rights provided by the nation-state. In an interview with Brad Evans (2016), Bauman discusses how politicians undermine protection frameworks for migrants. Bauman repeats the argument that human rights are equated solely with state citizenship, consequently, refugees are left "world less" and without rights. The

situation is further compounded by the fact that countries are increasingly unwilling to offer shelter and human dignity to displaced persons. Bauman explains that the desire to maintain borders and keep the displaced person on the other side of our door is because

> they reveal these insecurities to us, refugees are easily demonized. By stopping them on the other side of our properly fortified borders, it is implied that we'll manage to stop those global forces that brought them to our doors … the refugee, who embodies in the clearest way the liquidity of fear in the contemporary moment. Right now, at least, that liquidity creates a sort of affinity between the strangers at our doors and the mysterious, seemingly omnipotent global forces that pushed them there (Bauman and Evans 2016).

Writing in 1784, Immanuel Kant observed that the planet we live on is a sphere, and when people who are not wanted are moved on from a place, the place they move to becomes the new frontier land, with a new boundary or border that needs to be policed and protected. Consequently, the *sans papier* migrants who are expelled by force or frightened into escaping their home countries, find themselves refused entry to any other space and lose their legitimate place on earth. With no road back and no road forward, these people can find themselves constantly moved on in a constantly in shifting frontier land. Kant argued the only way forward is to embrace reciprocal hospitality and accept the displaced persons who otherwise would be deprived of a place of their own.

Georg Simmel's work raises the questions that Bauman takes up: for whom are borders constructed? By whom? And to what ends? However, life remains bounded and boundary construction practices continue to allow people to make sense of the world and the things within it. Boundaries continue to constitute the attempt to create a firm ground and define meaning. For Simmel, the existence of a boundary is the precondition for social or cultural activity. Bounded horizons provide form, the basis of meaning and interpretation, location, and direction. Boundaries are separate from the activity that constitutes them and have a taken for granted feel. However, because of its constitutive condition, no boundary is unconditional, and all boundaries can be stepped over. As Keith Tester explains: "Boundaries are only restraints from the perspective informed and

established by one attitude within the culture of reflective discourse; boundaries are not necessarily understood as a restraint from every social and cultural site" (1993, 27).

Pope Francis endorses the arguments found in Bauman and Simmel that borders are socially constructed. This raises the question of why Europeans are producing, reproducing, and policing borders in the ways that they do. And what are the human costs and moral consequences of such bordering, Othering, and fixing of territorial identities? And can such a cost be justified? Europeans need to unlearn to see borders as given.

References

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1992. "Soil, Blood and Identity." *The Sociological Review* 40 (4): 675–701.

——— 1993. *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

——— 1995. *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality*. Oxford: Blackwell.

——— 1997. *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1998. *Globalization—The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2000a. "Ethics of Individuals." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 25 (1): 83–96.

——— 2000b. "Time and Space Reunited." *Time and Society* 9 (2/3): 171–185.

——— 2001. *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2003. *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2010. *44 Letters from the Liquid Modern World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2013. "With Francis the Church and Humanity Have a Chance." Interview in *La Stampa*, available online at: https://www.lastampa.it/vatican-insider/en/2013/10/20/news/bauman-with-francis-the-church-and-humanity-have-a-chance-1.35969924.

——— 2016a. *Strangers at Our Door*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2016b. "Living in an Age of Migration and Diasporas." In *Dislocations of Civic Cultural Borderlines*, edited by Pirkkoliisa Ahponen, Päivi Harinen, and Ville-Samuli Haverinen, 21–32. Cham: Springer.

——— 2017. *Retrotopia*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2018. "Between Separation and Integration: Strategies of Cohabitation in the Era of Diasporization and Internet." *Popular Communication* 16 (1): 1–3.

——— 2021 [2008]. "The Spectre of Barbarism—Then and Now." In *Culture and Art: Selected Writings, Volume 1*, edited by Dariusz Brzeziński, Mark Davis, Jack Palmer

and Tom Campbell, 183–206. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, and Citali Rovirosa-Madrazo. 2009. *Living on Borrowed Time*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, and Stanisław Obirek. 2015a. *Of God and Man*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, and Stanisław Obirek. 2015b. *On the World and Ourselves*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, and Brad Evans. 2016. "The Refugee Crisis is Humanity's Crisis." *The New York Times*, May 28. Available online at: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/02/opinion/the-refugee-crisis-is-humanitys-crisis.html.

———, and Simon Tablet. 2017. "Interview with Zygmunt Bauman: From the Modern Project to the Liquid World." *Theory, Culture, Society* 34 (7/8): 109–129.

Beck, Ulrich. 1998. *Democracy Without Enemies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Best, Shaun. 2016. "Zygmunt Bauman: On What It Means to be Included." *Power and Education* 8 (2): 124–139.

European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). 2020. Available online at: https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/institutions-and-bodies-profiles/frontex_en.

Løgstrup, Kund E. 1971 [1956]. *The Ethical Demand*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Mayblin, Lucy. 2017. "Soil, Blood and Identity." *The Sociological Review Magazine*, March 13. Available online at: https://thesociologicalreview.org/collections/zygmunt-bauman/soil-blood-and-identity/.

Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Simmel, Georg, 1994 [1909]. "Bridge and Door." *Theory Culture, Society* 11 (1): 5–10.

——— 1950. "The Stranger." In *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff, 401–408. Glenco: The Free Press.

——— 2009 [1908]. "Space and Spatial Ordering of Society." In *Sociology: Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms,* edited by Anthony J. Blas, Anton K. Jacobs and Mathew Kanjirathinkal 543–550, Leiden: Brill.

Tester, Keith. 1993. *The Life and Times of Post-modernity*. London: Routledge.

Chapter Nine

SEEKING WINDOWS IN A WORLD OF MIRRORS: ZYGMUNT BAUMAN'S DIFFICULT ART OF CONVERSATION

Mark Davis and Elena Álvarez-Álvarez

Introduction

In this chapter, we explore the main themes and ideas emerging from the final six books to be published during Zygmunt Bauman's lifetime: *Practices of Selfhood* (Bauman and Raud 2015), *Of God and Man* (Bauman and Obirek 2015a), *On the World and Ourselves* (Bauman and Obirek 2015b), *Liquid Evil* (Bauman and Donskis 2016), *Babel* (Bauman and Mauro 2016) and *Strangers at Our Door* (Bauman 2016).[1] What is immediately striking about these lesser-known books is that five of them follow the format of a conversation. In adopting this format, Bauman is following a form of sociological practice inspired by a method of hermeneutics (Dawson 2015, 2017; Davis 2013, 2020), evident since his earliest works in both Polish and English (Bauman 1962, 1965; Brzeziński 2017), as part of a sustained commitment to open and inclusive dialogue as the best solution to society's most urgent problems.

Throughout his long vocation as a sociologist, Bauman chased new ways of unmasking various forms of fundamentalist thinking in order to open up spaces for true dialogue between people who do not begin from a position of agreement. Bauman's thoughts in these later books are not always "new." Presented in a more accessible style, they are written to engage an educated and curious audience "out there" in civil society, rather than "in here" amongst the Academy. Yet for the rich variety of different topics covered in these books, they remain firmly rooted in his best-known academic insights. First, that today the enduring social ills of rampant individualism and growing social division must be confronted head-on to save democracy and its principle of collective provision against individual misfortune. And second, that the best remedy against these ills remains the pursuit of "true dialogue" by embracing the difficult art of conversation. After all, why privilege the "new" when both the problem and its solution may require repetition rather than novelty? (Tester 2018).

In attempting to understand the richness and complexity of Bauman's writing across more than six decades, it is important to grasp both the breadth of that material and the methodological core that provides it with its sense of coherence. Following the Gadamerian idea of a "fusion of horizons," *Hermeneutics and Social Science* (Bauman 1978) is the third installment in an argument about sociological method that also includes *Culture as Praxis* (1973) and *Towards a Critical Sociology* (1976b). It is these books that provide the foundations upon which all of his better-known insights are subsequently built (Campbell, Davis and Palmer 2018; Davis 2020; Davis et al. 2023).

One of Bauman's core ideas from this period, sustained throughout his writing and so also one of the keys to unlocking the entirety of his sociological project, is that of the "hermeneutic circle" (Bauman 1978, 17). Simply put, the hermeneutic circle implies that human understanding is not —as scientism might prefer—a linear progression from vulnerable to less vulnerable forms of knowledge. Instead, human understanding is meandering, circuitous, frequently (re)discovering that which previous generations held to be obvious, but that was quickly forgotten by those who followed. Steeped in the *verstehen* tradition of *Geisteswissenschaften* (i.e., the human sciences, embraced as different ways of interpreting the human condition; see Outhwaite 1986), for Bauman understanding consisted of an

endless discussion of existing modes of thought in joint pursuit of collective enlightenment. The art of conversation is difficult because one has to enter it knowing that any conclusions reached can only be temporary, and so open to other interpretations and future scrutiny. Nothing is ever finally decided upon and agreed. The point is to keep the conversation going, to understand each other better than before. For example, while his interest in religion is long-standing, not least in his cultural analyses of Judaism (Cheyette 2020), Bauman strengthens his interest in Catholicism by seeing Pope Francis as a leading authority on social issues (Polhuijs 2022).[2] As we will show throughout what follows, at the core of Bauman's sociology is a concept of moral responsibility towards the self and the wider world that begins (and never ends) with conversation.

In what follows, then, we do not address each of these final six books in turn, since Bauman stresses and returns time and again to similar issues and concerns. To be helpful to the reader, we have preferred instead to select and review the main themes and ideas emanating from their pages, establishing points of contact with Bauman's better-known work as we proceed. The first theme to address, as the context for all six books, is the ongoing problem of modernity.

Melting Modernity?

In discussing the inadequacy of the term "postmodernity," Bauman's concern was with the prefix "post" (Gane 2004, 17–46). If language means anything, he stressed, then "post-X" surely had to imply that whatever was being taken to represent "X" had now ceased to exist. Yet, as we will see, so many aspects of the project of modernity remain firmly with us. Bauman concluded, therefore, that "postmodern theory" was misleading and thus unhelpful as a framework for understanding the tyrannies of the present moment, too uncritical in its tolerance of consumerist playfulness and market-led solutions (Bauman, Cantell and Pedersen 1992, 135). Likewise, Bauman held similar reservations towards proposals for other prefixes intended to capture what was happening with modernity, as "second" (Beck 1992; Beck and Grande, 2010), "reflexive" (Beck, Bonß and Lau 2003;

Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994) and especially "late" modernities were roundly dismissed. As he explained in an interview with *Los Angeles Review of Books*:

> I had (and still have) serious reservations towards alternative names suggested for our contemporaneity. "Late modernity"? How would we know that it is "late"? The word "late", if legitimately used, assumes closure, the last stage. (Indeed—what else one would expect to come after "late"? Very late? Post-late?) A responsible answer to such questions may be given only once the period in question is already definitely over—as in the concepts of "late Antiquity" or "late Middle Ages"—and so it suggests much bigger mental powers than we (as sociologists, who unlike the soothsayers and clairvoyants have no tools to predict the future and must limit ourselves to taking inventories of the current trends) can responsibly claim. (Bauman, Kristal and de Boever 2014).

Bauman's serious reservations were what led him to develop his preferred alternative, "liquid modernity" (Bauman 2000). With this concept he intended to convey that, though the once solid structures of modernity may still be with us, they had started to melt, setting free (cutting adrift?) individuals to survive upon their own wit and muscle in the turbulent new century.

This metaphor of liquidity was deployed to capture a sense of movement, a characteristic feature of a modernity that swings between freedom and security: "We move, pendulum-style, from yearning for more freedom to yearning for more security. But we cannot get both of them in sufficient quantity" (Bauman and Mauro 2016, 9). Like a pendulum, the modern impulse of secure societies is to swing towards greater autonomy, and of free societies towards greater security. Yet, once it reaches amplitude at the outer edge of each swing, instead of a graceful equilibrium, societies tend to find more agonistic extremes. For Bauman, liquid society is the amplitude point of the desire for greater autonomy and freedom for the individual (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 35–36). Now, as far away from security as it is possible to reach, this form of individual freedom feels remarkably like a pendulum bob suspended precariously before it descends at an accelerating speed (Bauman and Mauro 2016, 8–9).

Common to each movement of the pendulum is power. Power is understood as the capacity to manipulate the probabilities of other people's

choices, so that "people may be *compelled* to do what they would rather abstain from doing" (Bauman and Mauro 2016, 76, original emphasis). The "hard" power of solid modernity operated by *repression*, manifest in the monopoly of violence by the State (*qua* Max Weber 1946 [1918]) and directed towards those people at the margins of society. Today's "soft" power instead operates mainly by *seduction*, stimulating the individual's appetite for consumerist pleasure via market forces and now directed at the whole of society (Bauman and Mauro 2016, 16, 77; Bauman and Donskis 2016, 69–70). Solid modern "hard" power promised security via deriving what counted as "good" or "evil" from the specific values and needs of those ruling society. Liquid modern "soft" power fulfills that same function, but now in an individualized and dispersed form via market forces rather than the State (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 32–34).

The conditions of "soft" power, with all its uncertainty and instability, are therefore also the conditions under which individual selves are today composed, reproduced, or abandoned. This is the main theme of Bauman's conversation with Rein Raud in *Practices of Selfhood* (2015). We learn that the history of modernity, melting from solid to liquid, is also a history of a certain type of "self," which following Martin Heidegger is recast from a given (*Zuhanden*) into a task (*Vorhanden*). In liquid modernity, the self becomes something that is no longer given (ascribed) but that has to be constantly worked upon (achieved). It is thus an idealized form to be relentlessly pursued, yet never actually realized in practice:

> Self-realization, presumed to be a DIY job and an inalienable task of the "self's owner", is, however, much too complex an affair for people trained in the "nowist" culture (that is, afflicted by a steady shrinking of their attention-span, by shallowing of memory and by fast-growing impatience) to resist the temptation to settle for performances of self-realization instead of the real thing (Bauman and Raud 2015, 69).

Failure to achieve full self-realization is socially necessary, however, since such a "completed" individual could never be a truly moral self. Unshaken self-confidence, impervious to criticism, and armed against doubt, can only lead to "moral blindness" (Bauman and Donskis 2013). As such, Bauman states that "the fate of the moral self is to remain in a state of uncertainty,

and that the ambiguity of problems as well as of the ambivalence of their solutions make for the most fertile soil for the moral self to grow and mature" (Bauman and Obirek 2015b, 165).

Bauman's point could not be clearer: uncertainty is *a necessary precondition for the moral self to exist*. Seeking moral certainty outside of the self—from State or market authorities, from charismatic personalities—is the abnegation of that responsibility, not its embrace. The trouble is, as we know from Bauman's (1989; 1991; 1993) better-known writings elsewhere, that uncertainty is also an "un-drying font of our misery" (Bauman and Raud 2015, viii), an unbearable condition that human beings wish to expunge from their daily lives with increasing fervor. In seeking to avoid uncertainty, we thus lose sight of ourselves and each other—becoming a stranger to both.

Strangers to Ourselves (and Each Other)

Within solid modernity there inhered a rapacious "will-to-order" (Bauman 1989, 1991, Beilharz 2002; Davis 2008), understood as the urge to classify all the rich variety and differences of human life and creativity into neat little boxes marked with clearly drawn and impervious edges. Anyone who didn't fit into these modern boxes—typically marked "nation," "ethnicity," "religion," "gender," and so on—was thrown out by the urgency of a classifying effort striving to remove ambivalence and so uncertainty from the human-made world. As we will see, this is the origin of what Bauman calls "monologue" or "monotheism" and it gives rise to an exclusionary and divisive form of fundamentalism.

In *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Bauman (1991) extrapolates the Jewish experience in modern European history to all those who now find themselves marginalized, excluded, or persecuted as a result of modernity's classification of the world into boxes marked "us" and "them." The concept of the "stranger" becomes central here, since strangers are not simply people currently in transition between categories of "us" and "them," but rather are held as being *incapable* of transition. They are not just unclassified; they are *unclassifiable*:

> Strangers tend to cause anxiety precisely because of being "strange"—and so, fearsomely unpredictable, unlike the people with whom we interact daily and from whom we believe we know what to expect; for all we know, the massive influx of strangers might have destroyed the things we cherished—and intend to maim or wipe out our consolingly familiar way of life (Bauman and Obirek 2015b, 8).

The stranger is a constant threat to the order and harmony of any local community, nation, or other identity-group, because they cannot but reveal the lie at the center of the modern urge to classify. They expose the brutal truth that any individual's status as part of "us" is until further notice, hopelessly contingent on the whims of those responsible for discharging the duties of the classification effort. Their ambivalence causes uncertainty, which in turn forces individuals to reflect upon their own moral responsibility as being a choice of how to act towards unknown "Others," instead of assuming that somebody else must hold technical responsibility for their care and management, and thus for eradicating such uncertainty from our midst. As Bauman explains:

> What is, however, principally avoidable (and so, from the ethical point of view, needs to be by all means averted and eschewed) is the common tendency for human societies to set limits also on the aggregate of human creatures to whose treatment moral responsibilities must be applied: in other words, the exemption of certain categories of other humans from the realm of moral obligation … To put it bluntly: what is wholly and unconditionally alien to the quality of "being moral", and what militates against it, is the tendency to halt and renounce moral responsibility for others at the border drawn between "us" and "them" (Bauman 2016, 82–83).

The greater mobility of people moving around the world today—either voluntarily for economic reward or enforced by political catastrophe—has led to an abundance of strangers and the "so-called problem of migration," the focus of *Strangers at Our Door* (Bauman 2016). Few politicians in office, or aspiring to an office, can resist the temptation of capitalizing upon the uncertainty generated by this sudden influx of strangers, whom they are quick to dehumanize and classify in any terms other than somehow being "our" moral responsibility:

> Dehumanization paves the way for their exclusion from the category of legitimate human rights-holders and leads, with dire consequences, to the shifting of the migration issue from the sphere of ethics to that of threats to security, crime prevention and punishment, criminality, defence of order, and, all in all, the state of emergency usually associated with the threat of military aggression and hostilities (Bauman 2016, 86).

For Bauman, migrants are the most dramatic face of human suffering. Their classification as "migrants," instead of simply human beings, enables their criminalization and thus a political capitalization upon their suffering. This dehumanization is all-too-modern, using the "hard" power of the State to classify and control populations of people who do not neatly fit into a box marked "us." Yet, as we have seen, this not the only form of power operating in liquid modern societies, and so it is not the only form of evil either.

Liquid Evil and Its Victims

Having laid bare these hard realities for State-managed populations, Bauman is quick to point out that the rest of society also needs to be wary. A new form of "liquid evil" now operates via the market, through the seductive pleasures of consumerism, infiltrating human being-in-the-world (Bauman and Donskis 2016). Liquid evil does not proceed through open and violent repression. It is instead sinisterly disguised as freedom itself (Bauman 1988; Davis 2008):

> Evil is built into our common mode of being-in-the-world, the world which we inhabit and share. Elimination of evil, if at all conceivable, requires no less than a thorough rethinking and radical overhaul of this mode (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 51).

Liquid evil is more difficult to identify and to resist, therefore, when compared to its previously solid forms (Bauman and Donskis 2016, viii-ix, 38). But its pernicious effects are revealed daily in public attitudes towards its victims, variously named as the "new poor" (Bauman 1998) and those condemned to live "wasted lives" (Bauman 2004). One such effect is

adiaphorization, understood as the cancellation or denial of the moral impulse through mounting indifference towards the fate of those who suffer from misery (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 50). A further, consequential effect is the loss of collective solidarity. For all the horrors of solid modernity's version of "hard power," it was nevertheless a world "hospitable to solidarity," indeed "a factory of solidarity" (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 30). In that context, individual fears and suffering were seen as the responsibility of all, to be resolved through collective provision against individual misfortune. For this reason, "fears were to be recycled into hopes, and hopes into adventurous experiments destined to ossify into the institution of the modern state" (Bauman and Mauro 2016, 15).

In the hyper-individualized world of liquid modernity, however, there is little room for solidarity. The privileged are isolated from each other through an inward turn to the self and a focus upon identity building, navigated through consumption. As a result of their ongoing exclusion, the "new poor" may (not unreasonably) conclude that they are forever beyond the moral obligation of such privileged others (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 60–61; Bauman and Mauro 2016, 49). Where public reactions against this increase in human misery do erupt—from peaceful demonstrations to radical explosions of violence, seeking vengeance—Bauman considers them to be "protest moments." He thus deliberately stops short of labeling them as "movements," stressing that the instantaneity of the eruption is matched only by their equally swift dissolution (Bauman 1993, 237–238). The problem with these moments is that they are reactive, expressing only a *refusal*, with little sense of wanting to embark upon the difficult art of conversation in order collectively to find and build an alternative (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 41, 88). Since they do not express a "common cause," they cannot be considered genuine expressions of solidarity. To extend Bauman's own terminology, therefore we propose that these moments are better described as expressions of *liquidarity*.

The loss of solidarity—or, the rise of fleeting protest moments of liquidiarity—is in part the result of a widespread and enduring TINA syndrome (this being, "There-Is-No-Alternative"), which prevents individuals from recognizing that human made things can be made differently. Unlike the solid modern utopias of Marxism, Liberalism, and the like, the TINA syndrome entails a form of Manicheism, according to

which there is believed to be only one solution to the problems of the world (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 149–151). The habit of seeking refuge from the uncertainty of moral responsibility leads individuals desperately seeking certainty to submit to forms of authority, now sought in the market and its experts as much as in charismatic personalities (Bauman and Mauro 2016, 78). The TINA syndrome, in Bauman's view, is nothing more than an excuse for avoiding the task of assuming moral responsibility, towards the self, towards victims of injustice, and towards nature and the wider world. And yet, he writes:

> I believe that the chance of salvation for democracy as a preventive medicine for abandonment, alienation, vulnerability, and related social ills depends on our ability and resolve to look, think and act above the boundaries of territorial states. Here, alas, there are no short-cuts and instant solutions. We are at the start of a long and tortuous process, neither shorter nor less tortuous than the passage from local communities to the "imagined community" of the modern nation-states (Bauman and Mauro 2016, 20).

In the amplitude of modernity's pendulum swing, liquid modernity is the stage of "too much freedom" (more precisely, too much uncertainty over making choices). This has led to an increasing demand for greater security, and the certainty it promises, which has emerged around the world in a revival of fundamentalist thinking (Davis 2020). Perhaps we should not be surprised. Steve Bruce (2000), Grace Davie (2013) and Pankaj Mishra (2017) have each shown that fundamentalism returns with greater vitality whenever the traditional norms, values, and beliefs of a community are held to be under threat from strangers. In response, communities cut themselves off, into both offline and online spaces, in order to establish clear and unambiguous "islands of certainty" within which the once unquestioned ways of thinking and being can be preserved at all costs.

And here we come to the principal problem of the liquid modern world, against which Bauman offers the solution of true dialogue. Shorn up against the turbulent waters beyond, today individuals cease searching for windows through which they can see out onto the world and prefer to find themselves comforted by living inside various halls of mirrors. Instead of looking out at the wider world in order to understand it better, and one's own place within

it, today individuals prefer to see only themselves, reflecting only inwards. Such a move is temporarily reassuring, because mirrors mean never needing to confront anything or anyone strange and unfamiliar. But halls of mirrors are notorious for producing a confusing distortion, whereby it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between truth and illusion and between competing versions of reality about the wider world "out there." Such an experience is further intensified by now encountering that reality primarily online (Armstrong 2001; Almond, Appleby and Sivan 2003), which risks extinguishing any flickering curiosity about other ways of seeing, being, and acting, and so all but eliminating any latent willingness to engage strangers in dialogue. The role of the internet and smart technologies in intensifying these processes is another recurrent theme across all six books.

Listening in a World of Noise

At the level of human interaction, new communications technologies played a fundamental role in the shift from solid to liquid modernity. Constantly "surfing" the internet has contributed to the sense that everything today flows, changes, nothing remaining still long enough to be grasped before it disappears again below the waves. Long before the arrival of the internet and linked smart devices, modernity's grand narratives had already been called into question. But those technologies dramatically increased the quantity of narratives available, each one, in turn, being contradictory and incompatible with the last. In Bauman's (1987) view, too much communication risks leading to "a world of noise." Today, it is extremely difficult for any individual—especially an ontologically uncertain modern self (Giddens 2001 [1991])—to assess the value of each piece of available evidence, and to synthesize what they have learned into a singular coherent narrative of the world. Cognitive dissonance—the capacity to hold in one's own mind a set of contradictory values, attitudes, and perspectives about the same thing, all at the same time—is thus a common experience of liquid modern individuals.

In *Babel*, Bauman and Ezio Mauro (2016, 105) discuss how this situation provokes a decline in the art of critical thinking, a vital attribute for all

citizens tasked with sustaining democracy. Today, we live an "electronics/dependent existence in a time in which communication has supplanted—mutilated, knocked out—understanding" (Bauman and Mauro 2016, 106) and which threatens that careful practice of truly listening to each other:

> Humanity is in crisis—and there is no exit from that crisis other than solidarity of humans. The first obstacle on the road to the exit from mutual alienation is the refusal of dialogue: the silence born of—while simultaneously bolstering—self-alienation, aloofness, inattention, disregard and, all in all, indifference (Bauman 2016, 19).

And so, social media is a trap (Bauman and de Querol 2016). In promising greater connectivity and communication, it has greatly numbed our desire for the difficult art of conversation by encouraging its individual users to group together into "networks." For Bauman, networks are different from communities because they form connections rather than bonds. Connections are neither given nor fixed, simply built and rebuilt time and again according to individual preference. Networks are thus far easier to build than communities, but within them, it is also far more difficult to develop shared understanding and true dialogue because it is too easy to hit "delete" and remove anyone that expresses disagreement (Bauman and Mauro 2016, 89–90). As Bauman explains elsewhere:

> The difference between a community and a network is that you belong to a community, but a network belongs to you. You feel in control. You can add friends if you wish, you can delete them if you wish … But it is so easy to add or remove friends on the internet that people fail to learn the real social skills that you need when you go to the street, when you go to your workplace, where you find lots of people who you need to enter into sensible interaction with (Bauman and de Querol 2016).

In dividing the world into its online and offline variants, smart technology appeals because of the apparent comfort and convenience of being able to choose the audiences with whom one interacts. It promises to reduce (if not fully to eliminate) the frictions and frustrations that come from encountering in close physical proximity the stranger who does not look

alike, sound alike, or believe the same things about the world. Neighborliness was once a vital social skill made to the measure of a solid modern world where employment was likely to be locally fixed, and so public spaces shared with those living in close proximity. But in a diffuse and mobile liquid modern world, individuals may shun the practice of neighborliness, "freeing" themselves of such tiresome offline encounters by experiencing the world in its fully mediated form and accessed through screens. The result is that networks represent a "City of Loners," full "of solitary, self-referential beings let loose by fading and wilting, eminently revocable and disposable, inter-human bonds" (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 36) and leading many to experience "isolation in a crowd of solitary people" (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 80).

According to Bauman, then, the vast *quantity* of online communication made possible by advances in smart technology has nevertheless eroded the *quality* of that communication in a world of noise. In so doing, it has greatly reduced the number of encounters one has with people who see the world differently. While appearing to broaden the encounter with the world, instead online life has paradoxically resulted in a separation of horizons as we turn away from those whose values, lifestyles, and beliefs we hold in contempt. Precisely because others can be "deleted" from online spaces, today individuals seek out only the sound of their own voice and the reflection of their own face amongst the millions of encounters now ostensibly available to them. Living in echo chambers is a thoroughly liquid modern experience.

At this point, it is helpful to recall the powerful imagery Bauman (1989) chose to deploy in his Preface to *Modernity and the Holocaust*. There, he praises the writings of his first wife Janina Bauman (1986, 1988) for awakening him to the relative paucity of sociological commentary on that particular solid modern atrocity by stating "the Holocaust was a window, rather than a picture on the wall" (Bauman 1989, viii). Brought up to date for the liquid modern world, Bauman suggests that online life today leads to an intensified form of moral blindness precisely because instead of seeking windows through which to see the wider world anew, today we seek only mirrors to reflect upon who we already are as individuals. To retain a hope that we may yet avoid the same dehumanizing consequences about which

Janina had written so evocatively, Bauman argues that we must rehumanize all the strangers at our door by engaging them in dialogue.

Hope in Dialogue: Towards a Fusion of Horizons

In his conversation with Stanisław Obirek in *Of God and Man*, Bauman stated:

> As to the question of hope: if I did not have it, I would most probably not write books or give lectures. … What humans can do, humans can undo … If there is any hope for humanity, it resides in hope itself. While hope is still alive, writing obituaries for humanity is sorely premature. And I am unable to rid myself of the belief that hope is immortal (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 44–45).

For Bauman (1976a), hope is intimately related to the concept of utopia as understood in Gramscian terms (Aidnik and Jacobsen 2019; Davis 2011; Jacobsen 2020). Utopia is the name given to an optimism of will capable of driving out a pessimism of intellect in order to invest still more effort in a given struggle, "seeing the task's difficulty [as] the beginning of our work, not the end" (Bauman and Mauro 2016, 61–62). The space for hope in our divided and individualized world resides precisely in the uncertainty of our human condition. What need is there for hope in a world of total certainties? It must also reside therefore in the carriers of that uncertainty, in the increasing mobility of people, in their different ideas and values. This difference may provoke a physical and spiritual distancing leading to mutual suspicion (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 141, 148), but it offers also a chance to learn to live with difference by talking with and so learning from each other (Bauman and Mauro 2016, 150–151). To this end, Bauman points to the limits he sees in various theories of multiculturalism, advocating instead for a spirit of positive multiculturality:

> Multiculturality is reality, and a tough one, that can hardly be chased away or wished away. Differentiation of values and of the criteria for setting apart the proper from the improper, humane from inhuman and the decent from the indecent, as well as the awesome holding

power of firm convictions and communal solidarities, are indeed facts of life. But "multiculturalism", in its dual manifestation of a standpoint and a policy—both calculated to inform and trigger practices able to detoxify the unprepossessing consequences of that reality—sets a site for a tension-and-anxiety-ridden minefield (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 143).

The only way to navigate a safe path through this minefield—that is, to overcome individualization and the seductive impulses of consumerism in order to build a shared multiculturality of genuine solidarity—is via the difficult art of conversation between people who do not begin from a position of agreement. After all, dialogue presupposes the right to recognition. Echoing Hannah Arendt, Bauman states that "truly human dialogue differs from mere talk or even discussion in that it is entirely permeated by pleasure in the other person and what he [*sic*] says" (Arendt 1970, 19; here quoted after Bauman and Obirek 2015b, 111). For this reason, Bauman asserts that dialogue is, first and foremost, an *attitude* that will lead to understanding: "For the future of humanity in an irrevocably multicultural and multi-centric world, consent to dialogue is a matter of life and death" (Bauman and Obirek 2015b, 126).

Bauman thus defines dialogue after Martin Buber as *Begegnungen*, meaning a mutual enrichment achieved by broadening the range of options considered by each participant. It is a form of connivance that creates mutual understanding in the context of difference. It is opposed to *Vergegnungen*, which is a form of conceptual understanding that avoids encountering difference (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 62), similar to Erving Goffman's (1963) concept of "civil inattention" in public places. True dialogue means being open to admitting that one may be wrong. In so doing, one exists with an open disposition to change (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 64). Pope Francis is cited as an embodiment of just this disposition, in particular his decision to give his very first interview following papal election to a self-proclaimed atheist, the Italian journalist Eugenio Scalfari. The figure of Pope Francis, and what is to be gained through a creative dialogue between sociology and religion (Polhuijs 2022), is offered as one example of a hermeneutic fusion of horizons. This encounter between a sociologist and prominent religious figure demonstrates the merits of a polyvocal public space, something Bauman (1999, 201) has advocated

elsewhere. Polyvocality means including all voices on moral issues, whether as individuals or as groups. Each unique voice, in all its radical singularity, can nevertheless enrich the common quest for a shared understanding of social and moral troubles that concern us all. In this respect, Bauman calls into questions one of the core principles of modernity, namely the advantages of secularization over religion.

Beyond Good and Evil? Convergence in Post-Secular Times

Zeger Polhuijs's (2022) study of the dialogue between Bauman and Pope Francis reveals two thinkers deeply concerned about social inequity, who both see its persistence as a calling to the moral impulse. In Pope Francis, Bauman recognizes the voice of an authority independent of politics, who dares to address the world (both believers and nonbelievers alike) concerning the dangers of capitalism in its individualized, consumerist, liquid modern phase. Bauman finds convergence too in their shared concern for the world's poor, in the view that poverty is a consequence of social inequity, and in the appeal to rethink deeply the capitalist system as a whole (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 42–44, 130).

The departure point for Bauman's reflections on religion is a reading of the Biblical narration of the Creation, influenced by Emmanuel Lévinas (Lévinas and Nemo 1985). In *Of God and Man*, for example, Bauman's conversation with Stanisław Obirek (2015a, 11–13, 22) stresses the centrality that God gives to humanity, inviting them to cooperate in completing the Creator's work. In this regard, he argues elsewhere, the task of humanity is to avoid the temptation to renounce one's moral responsibility by attributing solutions to the gods (Bauman and Mauro 2016, 79). Bauman refers to Prometheus as an archetype of this responsibility towards the world and contrasts him both with the Messiah (who will reestablish justice in a second coming) and with Satan (who subverts order in pursuit of chaos). He thus paints an image of responsibility as an "active utopia" (Bauman 1976a; Davis 2011), one that acts in and on the present, trying to improve the world here and now in a

disinterested manner (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 50). Since human beings are responsible for making the world better, they are by consequence also guilty when they decide to leave the state of things as they are (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 29–30). Bauman approaches religion in both its cultural and social aspects, seeking a convergence of voices about suffering and the moral troubles of the liquid modern world. Yet he remains an agnostic sociologist, interested chiefly in an open and polyvocal conversation about how to better the society in which we all live.

The transition from solid to liquid modernity has also affected religion itself. Bauman focuses his attention on the concept of "monotheism," mentioned earlier, by assessing its risks and dangers for a plural society seeking multiculturality. "Monotheism," in Bauman's meaning, is compared with the concept of truth, the latter being an *agonistic idea*, formed from a diversity of opinions, contesting them, or trying to overcome them through testing. Monotheism is born from precisely the opposite effort, a fundamentalist desire to cancel any and all other visions of God, who is presented as the one, true religious figurehead (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 19; Bauman and Donskis 2016, 99–100). Monotheism, in this rendering, is a concept of *division* and *exclusion*, one which builds hard borders between different groups. Although this tendency to division is somehow permanent in the human condition, it is nonetheless a barrier to making the world moral (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 25). If monotheism means a set of norms and rules intended to provide absolute certainty when making decisions, the problem is that this deprives the individual subject of their uncertainty, which as we now know is seen by Bauman as the fertile soil necessary for the development of moral responsibility:

> This is what I want to talk to people about, and this is the very thing I want them to listen to. And it is this in which I invest my hope that they might listen. Because it depends on them and them alone whether what is humanly possible will get done—or, on the contrary, neglected and overlooked. We will not overcome our human limitations, and God protect us from trying to; let us avoid playing at an omnipotence that we ascribe to God (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 51).

Following his Polish contemporary, the philosopher Leszek Kołakowski, Bauman asserts that God is the acknowledgment of human inadequacy. But this position is as incomplete as trying to impose a single (monotheistic) truth. Likewise, for Bauman, secularization makes the same mistakes as monotheism, by deifying humanity and pretending to monopolize the truth, but this time in the name of science. Secularization has become a power struggle that tries to impose its explanation of the world as exclusive, canceling all alternatives (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 34, 38, 91, 94). Secularized governments, therefore, have simply transposed onto human beings the power formerly attributed to God (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 31–32). As such, both monotheism and secularization are:

> Two faiths—two mutually exclusive claims of monopoly on truth. Two monotheisms, as two stags locking antlers in the hope that the other will bend first and give way … Studies show that most of us find life without faith hard to accept, and even harder to practice. It is from this state of affairs that both varieties of monotheism, the "scientific" and the "theistic", draw their hope of victory and the determination to continue with hostilities—the sole result being the chances of an end to conflict growing yet more remote (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 94).

The response to the *imposition* of secularization must be to advance a "post-secular" society, one which acknowledges the errors of its own past, questions its own presuppositions, and discloses the possibility that religions may yet provide moral enrichment to a pluralized and polyvocal society striving for multiculturality (Bauman and Donskis 2016, 31). Following Ulrich Beck, he writes:

> Secular society must become post-secular, i.e. skeptical and open-minded towards the choices of religion … Permitting religious language to enter the public sphere should be regarded as enrichment, not as intrusion. Such a change is no less ambitious than the general toleration of secular nihilism by the religions (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 56).

Bauman's thoughts on religion embrace that principle of multiculturality, of the recognition of the right to difference. By this, he refuses the option of syncretism, or the definition of a common Credo which integrates all the

others. The reason is not just that it seems unfeasible, but that it is imposing, once more, a single unquestionable vision upon others, canceling genuine difference and eliminating the need for further dialogue (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 11). Again, what is there for us to talk about when a fundamental truth has been established? Using the concept in an altogether broader, social sense, Bauman instead advocates for a kind of secular "polytheism," or coexistence with "heterodoxy." This means embracing difference as a positive, as an opportunity to expand horizons, always respecting the rights of the other to recognition as an equal participant in discussion. Bauman considers this proposal as morally sound precisely because it permits each individual or group to find a way to its own definition, while respecting the right of others to find their own path (Bauman and Obirek 2015a, 21, 106). But to do so will require individuals to have the courage to encounter not only strangers out there in the wider world, but also the strangeness of one's own self—its curious values, beliefs, and preferences, that through this encounter are revealed in all their radical uncertainty.

Conclusion

Penned more than a decade before the internet bifurcated our liquid world into its offline and online variants, Zygmunt Bauman had somehow already diagnosed the principal challenge for society as it approached the end of another century. Amidst a growing crescendo of voices, emerging from all corners of the world and clamoring to be heard over each other, the difficulty for human beings was now to become one of *too much communication*: "Overflown with messages, messages with meanings which are in no way clear and carry no evidently preferable interpretation … In a world of noise, communication is the main problem" (Bauman 1987, 163). In other words, being able to identify those voices worth listening to, and that require our genuine care and attention, now confronts the world as a moral challenge. In a world of noise, the task is to *facilitate meaningful conversation* in pursuit of "mutually-enriching cultural exchange" between

people at a time when new forms of technology are radically reconfiguring forms of communication.

And, as we now know, those forms of communication are too often reduced to a series of truncated messages punched out by geographically (and so perhaps also morally) distant individuals on various platforms and social media channels. With a growing number of "faceless" screen-to-screen encounters online quickly becoming preferable to the awkward and vexing offline encounters notorious within face-to-face encounters, Bauman *qua* Emmanuel Lévinas (Lévinas and Nemo 1985) continued to maintain that the only way to rescue our moral commitment to the human being behind the screen was to engage in open and mutually-enriching dialogue with them.

As we have shown throughout this chapter, time and again across all six books considered here Zygmunt Bauman puts forward a simple, inclusive solution that is accessible to all who are willing to step bravely beyond the shores of their island of certainty: namely, *true dialogue*: "that is, dialogue between people of explicitly different views—conducted with the aim of mutual understanding: not the kind practiced in a mutual-approbation society with a view to a standing ovation" (Bauman and Obirek 2015b, 124).

The most powerful response to any fundamentalist promise of certainty —a promise that can only be kept by pursuing the futile task of returning liquid modern life to its previously solid modern state, forcing people and things back into neat little boxes—is an openness to conversing with those who believe different things. Individuals striving to be moral must encounter the hitherto "unknown" stranger in order to familiarize themselves with the unfamiliar, to get to know the Other in all their specificity and on equal terms. In doing so, they would close down the attempts of those eager to exploit gaps in knowledge about the "Other," a political strategy unraveled by extending an open invitation to mutual understanding through true dialogue with strangers (Bauman and Raud 2015, 30; Bauman and Obirek 2015b, 116). And yet, the art of conversation remains difficult because:

… when entering into a dialogue worthy of its name, we risk defeat, we risk our truth (our belief) being proven wrong, the opponent's being proven more right than ours … and those concerns have a tendency to deepen and self-replicate, because the less we meet with people with views and ways of thinking other than ours, the more fragile our ability to defend the merits of our position (instead of just shouting down or blocking our ears to the arguments of someone who is seen a priori as an opponent) and the greater the reasons for fearing defeat in argument (Bauman and Obirek 2015b, 125).

By way of ending the chapter, we may say that from Bauman we learn the value of going in search of windows through which we can look out onto the world and see it anew, rather than simply spending time looking blankly at ourselves in so many mirrors that are capable only of reflecting what one can already see. Seeking windows in a world of mirrors is a crucial first task in opening up a radical space in which to recognize one's responsibility to make moral choices. It increases and intensifies a sense of uncertainty, for sure, since one's own deeply held values, beliefs, and way of being in the world are suddenly open to doubt. But—and this is and always has been Bauman's key message—uncertainty is, and must remain, the home of the moral self. Keeping the difficult art of conversation going is therefore our only hope.

Notes

1 *Retrotopia* was the first of Bauman's book published posthumously, in 2017, so it is not included here. Unlike the six books under review, it has also been discussed extensively elsewhere: Aidnik and Jacobsen (2019), Brzeziński (2020), Clegg (2018), Davis (2020), Jacobsen (2020), and Kociatkiewicz and Kostera (2018).

2 Bauman's affinity with Catholicism was already noted by Flanagan (2010).

References

Aidnik, Martin and Michael Hviid Jacobsen. 2019. "The U-Turn of Utopia: Utopia, Socialism and Modernity in Zygmunt Bauman's Social Thought." *Irish Journal of Sociology* 27 (1): 22–43.

Almond, Gabriel A., R. Scott Appleby and Emmanuel Sivan. 2003. *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Arendt, Hannah. 1970. *On Violence*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Armstrong, Karen. 2001. *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. New York: Harper Collins.

Bauman, Janina. 1986. *Winter in the Morning: A Young Girl's Life in the Warsaw Ghetto and Beyond, 1939–1945*. New York: The Free Press.

——— 1988. *A Dream of Belonging: My Years in Post-War Poland*. London: Virago Press.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1962. "Values and Standards of Success of the Warsaw Youth." *Polish Sociological Bulletin* 2: 77–90.

——— 1965. "Social Structure and Innovational Personality." *The Polish Sociological Bulletin* 1: 54–59.

——— 1973. *Culture as Praxis*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

——— 1976a. *Socialism: The Active Utopia*. New York: Holmes and Meier.

——— 1976b. *Towards a Critical Sociology: An Essay on Common-Sense and Emancipation*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

——— 1978. *Hermeneutics and Social Science: Approaches to Understanding*. London: Hutchinson.

——— 1987. "The Philosopher in the Age of Noise: A Reading of Richard J. Bernstein's Philosophical Profiles." *Theory, Culture & Society* 4 (1): 157–165.

——— 1988. *Freedom*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

——— 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1993. *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

——— 1998. *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

——— 1999. *In Search of Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2004. *Wasted Lives*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2016. *Strangers at Our Door*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, Timo Cantell and Poul Poder Pedersen. 1992. "Modernity, Postmodernity and Ethics: An Interview with Zygmunt Bauman." *Telos* 93: 133–144.

———, and Leonidas Donskis. 2013. *Moral Blindness: The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, and Leonidas Donskis. 2016. *Liquid Evil*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, Efrain Kristal and Arne De Boever. 2014. "Disconnecting Acts: An Interview with Zygmunt Bauman, Part I." *Los Angeles Review of Books* November 14. Available online at: https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/disconnecting-acts-interview-zygmunt-bauman-part/.

———, and Ezio Mauro. 2016. *Babel*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, and Stanisław Obirek. 2015a. *Of God and Man*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, and Stanisław Obirek. 2015b. *On the World and Ourselves*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

———, and Ricardo de Querol. 2016. "Interview—Zygmunt Bauman: 'Social Media are a Trap'." *El País* January 25. Available online at: https://elpais.com/elpais/2016/01/19/inenglish/1453208692_424660.html.

———, and Rein Raud. 2015. *Practices of Selfhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, Ulrich. 1992. *The Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.

———, Wolfgang Bonß and Christoph Lau. 2003. "The Theory of Reflexive Modernization: Problematic, Hypotheses and Research Programme." *Theory, Culture and Society* 20 (2): 1–33.

———, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash. 1994. *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

———, and Edgar Grande. 2010. "Varieties of Second Modernity: The Cosmopolitan Turn in Social and Political Theory and Research." *British Journal of Sociology* 61 3: 409–443.

Beilharz, Peter. 2002. "Modernity and Communism: Zygmunt Bauman and the Other Totalitarianism." *Thesis Eleven* 70: 88–99.

Bruce, Steve. 2000. *Fundamentalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brzeziński, Dariusz. 2017. "Human Praxis, Alternative Thinking and Heterogeneous Culture—Zygmunt Bauman's Revisionist Thought." *Hybris* 37: 61–80.

——— 2020. "From Revisionism to Retrotopia: Stability and Variability in Zygmunt Bauman's Theory of Culture." *European Journal of Social Theory* 23 (4): 459–476.

Campbell, Tom, Mark Davis and Jack Palmer. 2018. "Hidden Paths in Zygmunt Bauman's Sociology." *Theory, Culture and Society* 35 (7/8): 351–374.

Cheyette, Bryan. 2020. "Zygmunt Bauman's Window: From Jews to Strangers and Back Again." *Thesis Eleven* 156: 67–85.

Clegg, Stewart R. 2018. "Reading Bauman and Retrotopia." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 34, (4): 354–363.

Davie, Grace. 2013. *The Sociology of Religion: A Critical Agenda* (2nd Edition). London: Sage Publications.

Davis, Mark. 2008. *Freedom and Consumerism: A Critique of Zygmunt Bauman's Sociology*. London: Routledge.

——— 2011. "Bauman's Compass: Navigating the Current Interregnum." *Acta Sociologica* 54 (2): 183–194.

——— 2013. "Liquid Sociology—What For?" In *Liquid Sociology: Metaphor in Zygmunt Bauman's Analysis of Modernity*, edited by Mark Davis, 1–12. London: Routledge.

——— 2020. "Hermeneutics Contra Fundamentalism: Zygmunt Bauman's Method for Thinking in Dark Times." *Thesis Eleven* 156: 27–44.

———, Jack Palmer, Dariusz Brzeziński and Tom Campbell. 2023. "Editor's Introduction: History and Politics in the Sociological Imagination of Zygmunt Bauman." In *History and Politics: Selected Writings, Volume Two* by Zygmunt Bauman, edited by Mark Davis, Jack Palmer, Dariusz Brzeziński and Tom Campbell, xiv–xlvii. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Dawson, Matt. 2015. "Sociology as Conversation: Zygmunt Bauman's Applied Sociological Hermeneutics." *Sociology* 49 (3): 582–587.

——— 2017. "Keeping Other Options Alive: Zygmunt Bauman, Hermeneutics and Sociological Alternatives." In *Beyond Bauman: Critical Engagements and Creative Excursions*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 224–242. London: Routledge.

Flanagan, Kieran. 2010. "Bauman's Implicit Theology." In *Bauman's Challenge: Sociological Issues for the 21st Century*, edited by Mark Davis and Keith Tester, 92–126. London: Palgrave/Macmillan.

Gane, Nicholas, ed. 2004. *The Future of Social Theory*. London: Continuum.

Giddens, Anthony. 2001 [1991]. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Behavior in Public Places*. New York: The Free Press.

Jacobsen, Michael Hviid. 2020. "Retrotopia Rising: The Topics of Utopia, Retrotopia and Nostalgia in the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman." In *Nostalgia Now: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on the Past in the Present*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 78–98. London: Routledge.

Kociatkiewicz, Jerzy and Monika Kostera. 2018 "After Retrotopia? The Future of Organizing and the Thought of Zygmunt Bauman." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 34 (4): 335–342.

Lévinas, Emmanuel and Philippe Nemo. 1985. *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Mishra, Pankaj. 2017. *Age of Anger: A History of the Present*. London: Penguin Books.

Outhwaite, William. 1986. *Understanding Social Life: The Method Called 'Verstehen'* (2nd Edition). London: Stroud and Pateman.

Polhuijs, Zeger. 2022. *Zygmunt Bauman and Pope Francis in Dialogue: The Labyrinth of Liquid Modernity*. New York: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic.

Tester, Keith. 2018. "On Repetition in the Work of Zygmunt Bauman." *Thesis Eleven* 149: 104–118.

Weber, Max. 1946 [1918]. "Politics as a Vocation." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited by Hans H. Gerth and Charles Wright Mills, 77–128. New York: Oxford University Press.

Chapter Ten

AMBIVALENCE (NOT LOVE) IS ALL AROUND: ZYGMUNT BAUMAN AND THE (INERADICABLE) AMBIVALENCE OF BEING

Michael Hviid Jacobsen

Introduction

Most music lovers probably know the 1967 song by The Troggs "Love Is All Around," later re-recorded, revived, and popularized by Scottish pop band Wet Wet Wet as part of the soundtrack for the 1994 box office success *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (starring Hugh Grant and Andie MacDowell) True, in that movie love *was* in fact all around—even at the one funeral ceremony—and there is little doubt that love is indeed an important emotion in most people's lives. There are, however, many different emotions and emotional experiences that make their mark on human life: love, hate, regret, anger, joy, sadness, happiness, trust, shame, self-blame, contempt, and so on (too many emotions to list here). Although sometimes overlooked, ambivalence is indeed also one of them—but it is an emotion that we often, even within emotion research, tend to disregard, although it is in fact not all that uncommon.

"Ambivalence" is admittedly not a word often used in everyday vernacular, and whenever we do employ it, we seldom stop to think about what it actually means. Sometimes it seems to be almost used synonymously with some sort of indecisiveness or tergiversation, other times it is used in a more technical matter referring to situations characterized by double binds or a deep-seated uncertainty. Moreover, sometimes ambivalence is used to describe a personal situation, other times it captures more structurally determined conditions or consequences. Within social theory, the idea of ambivalence also appears every now and then, but as in everyday language often also in a rather undertheorized manner—it is there between the lines, mostly not explicated or sometimes even regarded as self-explanatory. In many studies, ambivalence is therefore often an implicit rather than an explicit concern or finding. However, ambivalence is, in fact, a phenomenon that should acquire the attention of most social theorists and sociologists, and a topic that should be subjected to a much more targeted treatment (theoretically and empirically), simply because ambivalence is part and parcel of so many different aspects and dimensions of what we call human or social life. As Matthias Junge has rightly commented on the current status of the topic of ambivalence in social theory: "[T]he possibilities of the concept [of ambivalence] for social theory and for the understanding of the constitution of social and cultural order are not exhausted" (Junge 2008, 41). Despite its obvious potentials, ambivalence is an emotional experience that has always lived a kind of shadowy life in the discipline of sociology. Sometimes ambivalence is described as one of the constitutive features and/or main consequences of modern social life (e.g., Levine 1985; Smart 1999; Weigert 1991), other times it is mentioned *en passant* as an identifiable feature of certain historical, institutional, relational, psychological or emotional experiences, processes and developments (e.g., Elias 1994 [1939], 394–399; Goffman 1963, 130–132; Freud 1998 [1913], 16–63). But mostly ambivalence—in and by itself—has not constituted a core concern among sociologists, although it is interesting to consider how many sociologists in fact end up summarizing and concluding their analyses (of many different topics) by suggesting something about the ultimate ambivalence of human and social life.

In the writings of Zygmunt Bauman, however, there is an almost unbroken line of interest in the topic of ambivalence. From the early writings to the very last, Bauman was engaged in writing about ambivalence and a number of ambivalent phenomena. Sometimes the interest in ambivalence was explicated, but other times ambivalence was more of a latent yet constantly detectable concern. This chapter aspires to explore and discuss Bauman's contribution to our sociological appreciation of ambivalence as an omnipresent aspect of human and social life. First, the chapter will briefly consider the notion of "ambivalence" and its relevance to social theory. Following this, there will be an outline of Bauman's contributions to our understanding of ambivalence and the shifting meanings and experiences of ambivalence from "solid-modern" society to "liquid-modern" society. Finally, the chapter will discuss how Bauman's writings—from the earliest to the last—can be seen as a staunch defense of ambivalence as a fundamental condition of human existence and social life. So although ambivalence is in many ways an unbearable, distressing, and unpleasant experience, it is at the same time something we as humans must necessarily learn to live and deal with, not least because ambivalence also holds out the promise of freedom and solidarity.

Ambivalence—Disorder, Emotion, Condition of Life

What is "ambivalence"? How are we to understand the phenomenon of ambivalence? How can we conceptualize ambivalence? Moreover, why is it significant in order to understand human and social life? Is ambivalence an individual or a collective experience or perhaps both? What constitutes and generates ambivalence? What are its consequences? Is ambivalence a good or a bad thing? There are indeed many questions when it comes to the topic of ambivalence—perhaps simply because it in many ways is a somewhat unfamiliar and technical word to most. Since there are many questions, there are also many different answers. Moreover, ambivalence is not a term that we frequently use in everyday conversation, and whenever we do in fact use it, it is seldom that we stop and reflect on its deeper meaning.

"Ambivalence" is indeed a tricky term. Fundamentally, ambivalence means feeling in mixed emotions or being confronted with two mutually opposite, internally irreconcilable, and contradictory options. The word is constituted by the coupling of two words: *ambi* meaning "equal," "equivalent" or "both sides" and *valence* meaning "strength" or "value"—in short, one is placed in a position of contradictory pressures, pushes and pulls and mostly an irreconcilable tension between opposite positions or options of equal strength that each drag a person into different directions at the same time. Ambivalence can be a most challenging, uncertain, and confusing situation, because it somehow needs to be resolved. In many ways, people are "ambivalence-averse"—they want to avoid feeling ambivalent, it is psychologically comforting not to find oneself caught between the pushes and pulls of opposite attractions. Ambivalence can be something relating to a certain situation or individual interest, but it can also be a more encompassing experience on a social, cultural, or structural level thus affecting larger groups of people or describing more general experiences of human and social life.

Ambivalence can be used to define and describe a variety of different experiences and it can be applied in a number of different ways. For example, ambivalence can refer to ontological, cognitive, conceptual, existential, relational, social, structural, and emotional aspects of human experience (see, e.g., Jacobsen 2022a). Within all these areas ambivalence refers to something that does not fit into neatly predefined categories or logical schemas of classification, something that annoyingly sits astride the cognitive, conceptual, or existential barriers intended to keep things apart, something that threatens to create disorder, disarray or mixes that which should remain unmixed and uncontaminated by outside influences. Ambivalence potentially spells chaos, confusion and loss of clarity, control and predictability. To feel ambivalent is mostly not a pleasant experience, because it puts pressure on a person to make up his/her mind no matter how hard this may be in a concrete situation at hand, forcing one to confront choices or make decisions that are difficult and often with unknown consequences. Moreover, ambivalence can be seen as a conceptual disturbance or experiential disruption that threatens the categories which we normally apply in order to navigate in situations, and in this way, the

notions of "ambiguity" and "ambivalence" are interconnected but do not necessarily cover the same ground (see, e.g., Zielyk 1966).

Although we may perhaps only rarely use the specific notion, ambivalence is quite a common experience—the feeling of being caught in mixed emotions. It can sometimes be misunderstood as meaning the same as tergiversation or simply confusion, but ambivalence may in fact serve as the more solid foundation beneath such feelings and experiences. The notion of ambivalence captures the experience of the world as anything but predictable or straightforward, and ambivalence defies everything that is put in its place once and for all. For this reason, ambivalence is often regarded as something negative that raises questions, creates doubts, and spells trouble, but as research has shown there are also positive potentials in ambivalence on the organizational and personal level (Rothman et al. 2017; Miller 2021). Actually, there is nothing that *in itself* is ontologically ambivalent, although we may speculate or decide that certain things or certain people are ambivalent (things/people with dualistic qualities and thus sitting astride conventional cognitive or cultural barriers)—but they are only so because our minds and/or our culture have *constructed* them in this manner (Jacobsen 2022a). But in principle as well as in practice everything can *become* or *turn out* as ambivalent by being defined as such. Fundamentally, *life itself* is ambivalent, because we emotionally relate to it in different and often contradictory ways, sometimes swaying one way, other times the other, finding it hard to find that one straight and narrow path to follow from beginning to end.

As mentioned earlier, sociologists have thought and written about ambivalence for a long time, however often without resorting to or using the specific notion of "ambivalence" or at least without doing so in any direct or systematic manner. In fact, most of the classic sociologists such as Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, and Ferdinand Tönnies (and others)—all writing at the time of the great transition from traditional and feudal society to modern and industrial society—in their work concluded that this was a thoroughly ambivalent experience: something was simultaneously gained and lost in the comprehensive (intensive and extensive) process of modernization. This process of modernization covered a number of different yet interrelated social dynamics such as rationalization, secularization, industrialization,

individualization, bureaucratization, urbanization, scientification and state formation, all of which in themselves were double-edged swords—on the one hand, liberating people from previous forms of oppression and unfreedom, but on the other hand, setting them free only in order to entering them into new and more subtle forms of oppression. In this way, modernity and modernization, some of the most important concepts in sociology, embody ambivalence and somehow also point out that ambivalence is an integral and inescapable part of modern life.

However, the interest in ambivalence as a specific phenomenon did in fact not derive from within the ranks of the discipline of sociology but rather developed from psychiatry and psychology in the early twentieth century. The inventor of the notion of "ambivalence" was Swiss psychiatrist Paul Eugen Bleuler who in his work on mental disorders defined ambivalence as "the tendency … to endow the most diverse psychisms with both a positive and negative indicator at one and the same time" (Bleuler 1950, 53, here quoted from Trémeau et al. 2009, 223). In Bleuler's view, ambivalence—together with autism as well as associative and affective disorders—was one of the constitutive symptoms of schizophrenia (a view both affirmed and rejected by later psychologists) (see Beretta et al. 2015). Bleuler also distinguished between three types of ambivalence, respectively the "emotional/affective," the "voluntary/conative" and the "intellectual/cognitive." Around the same time, partly following, partly revising but significantly expanding on Bleuler's work, also Sigmund Freud different places in his psychoanalytical writings concentrated on the topic of ambivalence, particularly in connection to his studies of childhood sexuality and the child's strained relationship towards parents (the coexistence of love and hate) but also in his thesis on civilization and its discontents, claiming that civilization is a deeply ambivalent experience. Moreover, Freud also wrote specifically about ambivalence (and the "ambivalence of emotions") in his treatise on totem and taboo in which he mentioned the ambivalent feelings that equally characterized primitive cultures towards tabooed objects and the compulsive-prohibitive fantasies of modern-day neurotics (Freud [1998] 1913). Besides being conceptualized as a psychological disorder/problem, ambivalence may, however, also be regarded as a common and indeed normal emotion (or an emotional experience) that every now and then seems to arise in our relationships to our actions,

choices, and relationships (Jacobsen 2022a). Others have therefore described ambivalence as an integral part of emotional and psychic life by stating that "insofar as someone is ambivalent, he is moved by incompatible preferences or attitudes regarding his affects or desires or regarding other elements of his psychic life" (Frankfurt 1998, 99). In Zygmunt Bauman's view, to which we return below, human and social life is indeed characterized by constant pushes and pulls that seem to draw people in different directions, making it difficult to make the right choices or to find their way through the wilderness. In his work, Bauman did neither treat ambivalence as a psychic disorder or as an emotion but rather saw it as a basic condition of human and social life (Jacobsen 2019). Bauman, however, was not the first sociologist to make ambivalence an explicit topic of study.

Ambivalence and Social Theory

As mentioned above, ambivalence is—in and by itself—not a topic that has concerned sociologists or social theorists a lot, although ambivalence, mostly in an implicit manner, has indeed been part and parcel of the analysis or conclusion of many sociology studies. Perhaps the ambivalence of human and social life has so far best been captured by poets and novelists who armed with their literary imagination have teased out the many absurdities and complexities of the human condition. Whenever ambivalence is studied or mentioned, it is sometimes described as a precondition for contemporary social life (something existing in the world almost as a "natural" or "primordial" aspect of any type of social organization), other times as an outcome of a development (as when claiming that the way we live now is an ambivalent experience due to the impact of modernity).

"Modernity" is perhaps one of the most important and used notions in sociology—most likely due to the fact that the discipline itself was born during the great transformation from premodern/traditional to modern society in the nineteenth century. Sociology, as it is sometimes said, is the child of modernity—the offspring of the relentless (and often mutually

contradictory) processes of de-traditionalization, industrialization, rationalization, urbanization, secularization, bureaucratization, and pluralization so characteristic of the coming of modern times. Today, for sociologists it is almost impossible to write about human and social life without resorting to the notion of "modernity" (or some of its more specific manifestations such as "late modernity," "reflexive modernity," "postmodernity," "hypermodernity," "liquid modernity," etc.). According to some sociologists writing about contemporary society, one of the main characteristics of this new period is exactly ambiguity and ambivalence—the fact that individuals are increasingly confronted with an unprecedented number of choices and an equally unprecedented range of contradictions. Ambiguities and ambivalences have simply become integral and defining parts of modern life. For example, according to Donald N. Levine (1985), who conducted an analysis of the writings of some of the classics of sociology, modernity is a compulsive attempt to escape the very ambivalences and contradictions created by modernity itself. Moreover, through a careful reading of the "ambivalent fruits" found in the writings of a number of key contemporary social and philosophical thinkers (including the work of Bauman), Barry Smart (1998) has suggested that modern society is permeated with a number of deep-seated ambivalences regarding morality, self and others, reflexivity and politics. And according to Andrew J. Weigert, as compared to their ancestors living in the traditional world, due to decline in traditional and religious ideas, the pluralization of life choices and possibilities, the rise of a multitude of institutions rendering different worldviews plausible, and experiencing a multiverse of contradictory influences, people living in modern times find themselves in endemic ambivalence—and they have to confront and manage this ambivalence "cold turkey" (Weigert, 1991, xiv). Elsewhere Weigert (1989, 86) thus remarked: "Ambivalence and its resolution are definitive features of our time."

There are thus several sociologists who have paid attention to the topic of ambivalence as a prominent characteristic of the experience of modern life. However, one of the most direct sociological confrontations with the topic of ambivalence is that of Robert K. Merton in his work on so-called "sociological ambivalence"—a notion referring to those positions, occupations, relations, or roles characterized by or caught within a set of

conflicting norms, expectations, and experiences. Together with Elinor Barber, Merton defined "sociological ambivalence" as "*the processes through which social structure generate the circumstances in which ambivalence is embedded in particular statuses and status-sets together with their associated social roles*" (Merton 1976, 7, original italics; see also Merton and Barber 1963). To Merton, relying as he did on a modified structural-functionalist perspective, sociological ambivalence meant that these positions, occupations, relations, and roles (e.g., that of the schoolteacher or the social worker) were constantly subjected to certain strains but that this also provided the foundation for flexibility in organizational adaptation Merton's perspective thus illustrated how ambivalence was, as it were, built into the very structure of modern society. For Bauman, as we shall see later, ambivalence is not only sociological, it is rather "ontological" (in the sense of being a constitutive part of being human in a society) as well as existential. Human existence and social life can only be understood if it is recognized that it inevitably is permeated by a deep-seated ambivalence—there is no escaping it.

Although ambivalence has perhaps not been a major manifest concern in the writings of most social theorists, the topic has nevertheless been a latent presence in many classic and contemporary sociological analyses trying to understand human and social life, particularly throughout modern times. Modernity seems to have spawned its own fair share of ambivalence at the individual, institutional and structural levels, while—as we shall see—being determined to try to avoid and annihilate ambivalence altogether. Modernity, as Anthony Giddens (1990, 7) once stated, is indeed a double-edged sword with an opportunity side coexisting alongside a somber side. Modernity can do good as well as bad. These two sides sometimes clash and collide when opportunities turn into limitations, liberties into new forms of repression and unfreedom, and certainties into uncertainties, thus leaving people, as Ulrich Beck (1992, 137) rightly observed, to seek individual solutions to systemic contradictions.

Bauman and Ambivalence

Enter Zygmunt Bauman, who has been one of those sociologists who did in fact take a keen and explicit interest in the topic of ambivalence. Throughout his writings, ambivalence is regarded both as a precondition and as a consequence. It shapes and informs the actions that we undertake at the same time as ambivalence is itself an outcome of the way we organize society and act within it. One could also say that for Bauman the ontological condition of human and social life *is* ambivalence: It is something that is always there—beneath the surface, between the lines, or right in our faces, but also something that we, more or less successfully, seek to minimize, eradicate, struggle against or learn to live with. It is evident that Bauman already early on in his career was aware that ambivalence was one of the structural as well as existential constituents or cornerstones of human and social life. Some of the early texts published while Bauman was still in Poland during the 1960s were concerned with the ambivalences of life particularly among young people living under a system of "actually existing socialism" in which their choices and life opportunities were significantly limited (Bauman 1962). Here Bauman was particularly interested in how this system—despite attempts at maintaining the illusion of control and inoculating the right socialist values in people—itself contributed to an enormous amount of ambivalence, evident, for example, in either widespread conservative/parochial values or opportunistic/materialistic values. Most of these young people knew what they wanted in life, but they had no idea about what it meant or how to achieve it. Moreover, Bauman (1965) was also interested in how specific social structures (homogenous/mono-dimensional versus heterogeneous/multi-dimensional) could either hamper or promote the development of different forms of personality (conservative/traditional versus creative/innovational), and that people were often caught in-between with feelings of confusion and ambivalence (particularly in heterogeneous societies) not least due to the fact that they were expected (or forced) to make choices for themselves (see Tester and Jacobsen 2005, 46–53). In these early and largely overlooked pieces of work, it was Bauman's contention that people, even when living under the spell of totalitarian regimes, are confronted with a variety of pressures but are bound to make decisions and choices regarding the course of their lives. Sometimes the preconditions for and consequences of these choices and decisions were

(and continues to be) out of the individual's own direct control, but it is nevertheless his/her own responsibility to make choices and to try to find the right path (something that runs throughout Bauman's writings as a continuous thread). Bauman thus subscribed to the classic insight from Karl Marx that people make their own history but not under conditions of their own choosing. The external world does not easily or necessarily yield to wishful thinking or even to determined action, but people are nevertheless still capable of making a difference. The world, in Bauman's view, is never closed down once and for all. As he once memorably remarked: "Each moment of human history is, to a greater or lesser degree, an open-ended situation; a situation which is not entirely determined by the structure of its own past, and from which more than one string of events may follow" (Bauman 1976, 10). In is this fact that is one of the main reasons behind the omnipresence of ambivalence.

In Bauman's work, although ambivalence is a constitutive feature of human and social life, the experience and management of it, as we shall see, is very much the result of social processes—and in this way, ambivalence in its specific manifestation is not an ontological phenomenon, but rather something that is forced on the raw material of human existence, a social and cognitive construction. To say that something is "ontologically ambivalent" (see Jacobsen 2022a) and thus constitutes an incontrovertible premise or truth of life is in fact quite difficult, because most things we encounter and have to manage in human and social life are the outcomes of definitional, interpretative and social processes.

Despite writing about ambivalence continuously throughout his many books, Bauman did not provide any clear-cut definition of what ambivalence actually is or means. As rightly stated by Matthias Junge: "Looking back at Bauman's work, the diversity, ambiguity and the step by step unfolding of new dimensions of ambivalence is rather remarkable. No given definition of ambivalence provides the reader with the whole of ambivalence" (Junge 2008, 52). However, according to Junge, despite lacking any clear-cut definition there are many different fragments in Bauman's work that adds to the mosaic of ambivalence—fragments that sometimes are interconnected, other times mainly adding new pieces to the expanding jigsaw puzzle of the ambivalence of human and social life (see also Mattes 1994). Moreover, in Junge's view, Bauman does not distinguish

in any analytical manner between “ambivalence” and “ambiguity”—ambiguity breeds ambivalence and vice versa, thought influences practice:

> In Bauman’s work, ambiguity and ambivalence are two sides of the same coin. Ambiguity concerns knowledge, cognitive classification and patterns of orientation for action. Ambivalence, on the other hand, designates action and experience. We can only understand ambiguity and ambivalence as twins (Junge 2008, 52).

In his writings, Bauman thus seems to use these words—“ambiguity” and “ambivalence”—almost indiscriminately, although others have argued that they need to be understood as different yet sometimes interrelated phenomena/experiences (see, e.g., Weigert 1991, 17; Zielyk 1966).

As mentioned, the topic of ambivalence appears in many different places in Bauman’s books. For example, Bauman’s sociology “textbook” *Thinking Sociologically* (1990) contains many references to and examples of ambivalence. Here Bauman shows how the phenomenon of “strangers” is defined by and imbued with ambivalence, the stranger being neither friend nor foe (Bauman 1990, 56–58), he describes how “culture” is all about drawing clear-cut distinctions between “us” and “them,” “high” and “low,” “native” and “foreign” in order to avoid ambivalence (Bauman 1990, 159), and he argued that the modern quest to construct an artificial order out of wilderness and chaos is a never-ending fight against ambivalence (Bauman 1990, 184–187). All in all, ambivalence is fundamental feature of certain groups of people, of certain forms of practice, and of certain forms of social organization. In this way, ambivalence is a basic condition of life, something almost unavoidable, at least if humans are free to make choices, and even when these choices are somehow preempted or delimited by external agencies with seemingly only one right or possible path to follow, it is still Bauman’s contention that ambivalence is bound to become part of the game. In his work, ambivalence is thus a rather widespread and common phenomenon, but it is also something closely connected to living in a modern world. Let us now turn to Bauman’s most unfolded analysis of ambivalence and modernity.

Modernity and Ambivalence—Annihilating Ambivalence

Bauman's without comparison most comprehensive and detailed engagement with the topic of ambivalence is found in *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991). In many ways, this book outlines parts of the foundation for the argument presented in the award-winning *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) published a few years earlier. Whereas the latter book had focused primarily on the social processes behind the industrialized genocide that the Holocaust represented with its six million Jewish casualties in the concentration camp system—not as an aberration from but as a culmination of the potentials of modern society—the former book, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, rather provided a broader look at how modernity defined, constructed and managed ambivalence (and in some cases, like in Nazi Germany, particularly the Jews) as its archenemy. Obviously, the Jews were far from the only victims of the atrocities of World War II—soldiers, ordinary civilians, political dissidents and minority groups such as the handicapped and the homosexuals also suffered from incarceration and indiscriminate killings—but the Jews were in the unique situation that they were almost single-handedly declared as the problem to be resolved in "the final solution." *Modernity and Ambivalence* seeks to excavate some of the reasons why it turned out this way by looking at the broader picture.

According to Bauman in *Modernity and Ambivalence*, modernity should be understood as a gigantic ordering project—a new order was to be constructed on the rubbles and ashes of premodern society (*l'ancien regime*) relying, as it had done, on tradition, ancient customs, religion, and local communities. Bauman admits that his argument in the book is quite similar to that of Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer (2002 [1944]) who in their somber thesis on "the dialectic of Enlightenment" had observed that modern society was obsessed with controlling the world and with subjecting nature to instrumental uses, and that it, therefore, feared anything that fell "outside" of its own realm of rational dominance (Bauman 1991, 17). Ambivalence is exactly such an "outside phenomenon." Bauman's perspective also seems to support the so-called "intolerance of

ambiguity" argument advanced within critical personality studies in the mid-twentieth century (see, e.g., Frenkel-Brunswik 1949), although his work on ambivalence is located at the level of society (modernity) rather than personality (motivation). As also Mary Douglas (1984 [1966]) had pointed out, ambivalence is the very outcome of a categorizing mania and ordering obsession concerned with boundary-maintenance in order to avoid the "pollution" from ambiguous or confusing objects. Ambivalence is problematic, because it calls into question the accuracy of linguistic means and cultural inventions used to make sense of, organize, and control the world. In Bauman's view, ambivalence is thus the unpleasant "waste product" of the production of order between binary opposites, and it marks the existence of an excluded third option, something falling outside the tight, logical, and rational, categories created by language as well as by social and cultural practices.

In *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Bauman regarded this ordering-obsession as the main organizing principle behind modern society and modern culture, namely the aspiration to cultivate nature (nonhuman and human) and to subject it to human control. Modernity took off as a desperate dissatisfaction with the way things were and with an unyielding ambition to making the world a better place—and only through visionary blueprints and grand-scale projects in social engineering could the world be improved. In order to achieve this, order was required—the disorder and chaos of the premodern rag rug of feudal lords, backward communities, local languages, and ingrained customs and beliefs had to be replaced with a rationally conceived plan for society. The so-called modern "gardening state"—a horticultural metaphor inspired by Ernest Gellner's work (see Smith 2017)—was therefore concerned with eradicating all sources of chaos and ambivalence. The gardening mentality was aimed at creating order, clarity, homogeneity, and transparency out of the wilderness and eradicating or uprooting everything that stood in the way of progress. The modern state was all about designing a new order to replace the old one that was no longer up to the task of providing progress, growth, and social improvement. Bauman captured the modern mentality and its approach toward ambivalence in the following way:

> Taxonomy, classification, inventory, catalogue and statistics are paramount strategies of modern practice. Modern mastery is the power to divide, classify and allocate—in thought, in practice, in the practice of thought and in the thought of practice (Bauman, 1991, 15).

In Bauman's view, modern culture, modern science, and not least modern bureaucracy relied on ideals from the natural sciences and particularly geometry—that the world could and should be described in great detail or even exhausted by way of geometrical models and grids, although the world, as Bauman (1991, 15) observed, is in fact anything but geometrical. In his perspective, ambivalence is a creation, the outcome of intricate and determined definitional, classificatory, and taxonomical procedures and processes aimed at organizing the world by way of either refined or arbitrary inclusionary and exclusionary principles, which subsequently had significant social ramifications for those defined as belonging outside of the invented classificatory schemas. What is *defined* as representing an ambivalence category in turn by default *becomes* ambivalent by the very processes of being assigned to this category in the first place. In this way, there is something self-evident, self-explanatory, and self-propelling about the modern creation or production of ambivalence—and almost something inescapable.

It was Bauman's contention that modern society suffered from a deep-seated horror of mixing ("mixophobia"), because mixing or merging transcend the categorical boundaries meant to be upheld between things (Bauman 1995, 221). In other words, modernity is "ambiguphobic," disliking anything that is open to interpretation, and which does therefore not fit perfectly into the unequivocal and unambiguous categories intended to circumscribe and fixate meaning (Smith 2016, 20). As mentioned, according to Bauman the project of modernity was a grand ordering and organizing project and in such a project there is no room for that which did not fit the preconceived categories—this not only pertained to objects but also to groups of people. Those phenomena, groups of people and individuals (by Bauman defined as "strangers" and no one were seemingly stranger than the Jews) who for various reasons sat astride the barriers—determined by language, logic, and culture—intended to keep things apart or who fell outside the categories altogether were destined to run into

problems. As we shall see, assimilation was one possible strategy to deal with them, annihilation another. Whereas for some anthropological writers studying non-Western cultures such as Arnold van Gennep and Victor W. Turner (1995 [1969]), ambivalence is mainly seen as a trait of the temporary phase described as "liminality" (between separation and reintegration and often surrounded by ritual and ceremonial activities marking and securing the transition from one status/identity to another), for Bauman modern society attempted to make ambivalence a much more permanent condition. Those assigned to the ranks of the "ambivalent" (and particularly the Jews) were not expected to be "cleared" later or allowed for reintegration. Instead, being once and for all designated or relegated to the ranks of "weeds" or even worse regarded as "lives unworthy of life" (*Lebensunwertes Leben*) in the Nazi terminology sometimes turned out as a death sentence.

To the modern mind and modern society, ambivalence was not only a most undesired and unwanted phenomenon, it was also seen as downright dangerous—a thorn in the side of the aspiration to design, order, cultivate and control every single aspect of human and social life. As Bauman noted: "The typical modern practice, the substance of modern politics, of modern intellect, of modern life, is the effort to exterminate ambivalence" (Bauman 1991, 7). Sometimes modern society thus went to great and deadly lengths to annihilate and exterminate ambivalence—the Holocaust being only one extremely violent example of this tendency (Bauman 1989). As Bauman observed: "Ambivalence is the enemy against which all means of coercion and all symbolic powers are enlisted" (Bauman 1990, 185). Because ambivalence calls every ordering project into question and because it calls the bluff on the entire modern project, it needed to be annihilated. However, although ambivalence was regarded as unwanted, it was also needed and in this way, modernity was ambivalent about ambivalence. Without the existence/construction of ambivalence, no order would be possible or needed, and without the incessant quest for order, no ambivalence would arise. By way of the vocabulary borrowed from Claude Lévi-Strauss (from his *Tristes Tropiques*), Bauman suggested two preferred strategies with which to deal with the alien, the strange, the deviant, the ambivalent, or that which did somehow not fit the boxes. On the one hand, there is the "anthropohagic" strategy intended to incorporate, assimilate, take in, and

consume, as it were, the ambivalent or deviant, thus making it part of whole by way of "eating it up," devouring or digesting it. This was according to Bauman (following Lévi-Strauss) *not* the preferred strategy of most modern societies—but one used by certain primitive societies. On the other hand, however, there is the "anthropoemic" strategy which aims to expel, exile, "vomit out," as it were, those who are unwanted and needs to be kept out (Bauman 1995, 179–180). In modern society, this anthropoemic strategy sometimes turned into an all-out attempt at extermination. Elsewhere in his critical work on modern society, Bauman also showed that one way of trying to get rid of ambivalence was through the transformation of "morality" into "ethics," or—as Bauman remarked elsewhere—promoting a "morality of conformity" rather than supporting a "morality of choice." Whereas the ethics/morality of conformity provides a bulwark against ambivalence, because it tells people exactly how to think, act and live their lives by staying on the straight and narrow path, the latter (morality/morality of choice) is instead setting them free to make up their own minds. To the modern mind, building on the legislative principles of the Ten Commandments, nothing was regarded as more inefficient, uncontrollable, or downright dangerous than to let people think for themselves (Bauman 1998c). Bauman, on the other hand, was an unwavering advocate of the "morality of choice"—to him, choice is in fact what makes morality a moral matter in the first place as well as in the last instance (Bauman 1989, 207). In his view, morality is exactly characterized by a constant and deep-seated uncertainty and ambivalence about what is right and wrong, and this uncertainty can only be momentarily suspended but never solved through law-like procedures, codes or conduct, or demands for obedience or conformity.

However, modernity's incessant quest for order, conformity, control, and ethical codes of conduct was itself in paradoxical manner the main precondition for ambivalence—without order, ambivalence would not exist. As Bauman noted: "[T]here would be no ambivalence were it not for the dichotomous entailed necessarily in every search for order" (Bauman 1990, 184). It is the desire for dichotomy and dualism, the quest to distinguish, separate and divide, the obsession with regularity, transparency and predictability, and the ambition to catalog, classify, and categorize that in itself spawns and is the main driving force behind ambivalence. In

Bauman's view, in such a modern ordering frenzy ambivalence was not only an archenemy, it was also an unavoidable byproduct—something produced by modern society's own ordering obsession. The forced creation of a new artificial order—itself an outcome of the creative destruction of that which went before or stood in its way—resulted in the almost paradoxical and unintended expansion and spreading of ever more annoying ambivalence. Ambivalence was the very waste produced by attempts to do away with it and in this manner, ambivalence continuously escaped modernity's ceaseless assassination attempts and continued to grow.

Postmodernity, Liquid Modernity, and Ambivalence—Ambivalence All Around

Bauman ended *Modernity and Ambivalence* on the seemingly hopeful note that postmodernity—a modernity described by him as becoming conscious of itself, a modernity coming of age and without its previous illusions—would inaugurate a much less intolerant attitude towards ambivalence than that of its modern "predecessor" (Bauman 1991, 98). Bauman believed—or perhaps rather hoped—that postmodernity would be better suited than modernity to accommodate, accept and embrace the ambivalent. Bauman thus recast the classic Enlightenment (and modern) mantra of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" into the postmodern maxim of "Liberty, Diversity, Tolerance." But the question remains if this proposed tolerance towards diversity was in fact a step towards acceptance of and solidarity with the ambivalent (and the suffering imposed on it) or whether it was merely a cover up for new and more subtle ways of trying to manage and contain it. One thing was certain: with the coming of "postmodernity" and "liquid modernity," as Bauman wrote about from the 1990s onwards, ambivalence did not disappear. It is still there, but now no longer due to or as a result of a modern quest to eradicate it—it is there simply for the reason that ambivalence persists as a basic condition of being human but also due to the way society is still organized (see, e.g., Junge 2008, 48–51; Schiel 2005). In postmodernity and liquid modernity, with its deregulation, privatization, globalization, and individualization processes, ambivalence is, as it were,

perhaps set free to roam more freely without fearing incarceration or annihilation attempts as in modern society, but at the bottom of it, human existence is still an ambivalent struggler between freedom versus security, contingency versus certainty, choice versus control, ethical conformity versus moral responsibility, and so forth.

So after his extensive showdown with modern society and its aspiration to do away with ambivalence, to annul or annihilate it particularly in his late 1980s writings, throughout the early 1990s, Bauman became one of the leading representatives of the so-called "postmodern perspective" in sociology and social theory with books such as *Intimations of Postmodernity* (1992a), *Postmodern Ethics* (1993) and *Life in Fragments* (1995). However, instead of proposing a "postmodern sociology," one that according to Bauman through mimesis imitated the postmodern condition, he wanted to propose a "sociology of postmodernity" that rested on a sober, rational, and critical analysis of postmodern society and its prevalent features within culture, everyday life, science and politics (Bauman 1992a). It was Bauman's contention that postmodern society on the one hand seemed to leave parts of its modern heritage behind, but on the other hand, repeated and sometimes even radicalized other parts of modern society but now under new and increasingly contingent circumstances. Whereas everyone in modern society, Bauman once mused, seemed to be a planner or a social engineer, in postmodern society, this was no longer the case. The ambition of constructing a tightly knit web of order gave way to adventures in experimentation within the arts often described simply as "postmodernism"—and spreading from there to other spheres of social and human life. For example, modern "mixophobia" was, at least to some extent, replaced with the postmodern "mixophilia" as seen in pastiche, bricolage, imitation, and blurred genres. Homogeneity gave way to heterogeneity, order to contingency, and control to choice (or at least so it seemed). However, as Bauman wisely warned towards the end of *Modernity and Ambivalence*:

> The postmodern world of joyful messiness is carefully guarded at the borders by mercenaries no less cruel than those hired by the managers of the now abandoned global one … The unfinished business of modern social engineering may well erupt in new

outbursts of savage misanthropy, assisted rather than impeded by the newly legalized postmodern self-centeredness and indifference (Bauman 1991, 260).

Even though Bauman abandoned the specific terminology of "the postmodern" towards the end of the 1990s (becoming increasingly dissatisfied with his association with the waning "postmodern movement"), and with his "liquid-modern turn" replacing it instead in 2000 with the notion of "liquid modernity" (Bauman 2000), he did believe that postmodernity and liquid modernity—the two intellectual epithets covering approximately the same period of time—ushered in a time characterized by a "privatization of ambivalence." Ambivalence, which was previously regarded as a general problem to be solved at a societal/structural level, now increasingly became an individual task to be managed to the best of one's ability (Bauman 1991, 197). With the intensification of globalization and individualization as well as the rise of rampant consumerism permeating every nook and cranny of human life (Bauman 2007b), ambivalence was increasingly unanchored from large-scale attempts at social engineering to roam more freely and becoming a problem of everyday life. Ambivalence has thus not disappeared with the transition from "solid modernity" to "postmodernity" or "liquid modernity." In fact, ambivalence remains and is perhaps even made more unmanageable, uncontainable, and unrestrained by the replacement of the solid with the liquid, the stable with the fluid, the heavy with the light (see also Jacobsen 2017). In addition to this, in his liquid-modern writings, Bauman did not believe that the acceptance of ambivalence had grown significantly—if at all. If Bauman's "postmodern" writings in the 1990s had a certain ring of hopeful anticipation to them, this disappeared in his "liquid-modern" work in the new millennium, which is mostly a somber reading. True, in liquid-modern society, there is no shortage of ambivalent phenomena and apparently there is at the same time not the same frenzy or worry about them as in solid-modern society. However, from this does not follow that ambivalence is simply accepted. First of all, as mentioned above, it has now instead sneaked into the inner citadel of the individual who will have to deal with it by him/herself. As Bauman observed: "The attainment of clarity of purpose and meaning is an individual task and personal responsibility. The

effort is personal. And so is the failure of the effort. And the blame for the failure. And the feeling of guilt that the blame brings in its wake" (Bauman 1991, 197). It all now falls back on the individual's own broad or not-so-broad shoulders (see also Bauman 2001a, 9). Second, society still spawns conceptions and experiences of ambivalence that requires social management. Let us look at a few examples of this that illustrate the transformation of the management of ambivalence.

In the aforementioned modern "gardening state" there was a constant and ceaseless preoccupation with the strict definition, uprooting, and extermination of ambivalent phenomena/groups who were defined/targeted as "weeds" (e.g., the Jews) and seen as blemishes on the beautiful flower beds in the society-cum-garden needing careful human cultivating. Such weeds still exist but in liquid modernity, they have now been redefined as "human waste"—referring to people who are no longer needed (in contrast to the "reserve army" of unemployed in solid modernity who waited until they would be recalled to active service) and whose function to society is regarded as minimal. The transformation of solid modernity into liquid modernity thus inaugurates a change from "weeds" to "waste" but the process and its function is quite similar—to exclude. Liquid modernity excels in the production of "superfluous populations" that exist at the outskirts of society and whose moral status is ambivalent. In *Wasted Lives* (2005), Bauman showed how those groups who no longer seem to serve a noble purpose, those unable to take care of themselves, hold up a job or contribute to society—illegal immigrants and refugees, single mothers, those on welfare benefits as well as those who are otherwise regarded as socially useless—are cast into the broad category of "human waste." They are for all practical intents and purposes redundant and not needed for anything—perhaps apart from serving as signs of failure for all others who can then avoid making the same mistakes. Whereas the poor and unemployed in Bauman's view previously were useful to modern society as a pool of "producers" waiting in line to be put into relevant use, today in liquid-modern consumer society "the new poor" or the "underclass" has lost not only their function but simultaneously their moral status as God's unfortunate beings for whom benevolence and moral concern is expected (Bauman 2005). They are not waiting in line to be recalled to active service—they are permanently excluded. It was Bauman's contention that the

"human waste"—those cast in the category of unneeded and unworthy—are most accurately understood not only as permanently excluded producers but as "flawed consumers" who are unable to take part in the liquid-modern game of consumption (Bauman 1998b, 38–40). They will have to resolve their own unfortunate situation under ambivalent circumstances and pull themselves by the bootstraps as Baron von Munchausen, yet without the means to do so. In principle, and if misfortune strikes, anyone can potentially end up in this ambivalent category of "human waste" or "flawed consumers," unable to alleviate their own situation. In Bauman's view, liquid-modern consumer society mostly relies on seduction (using the notion of the "Synopticon") rather than repression (the "Panopticon") as its primary strategy of power and control, however, repression, surveillance, and incarceration are still found useful and effective particularly when dealing with those "flawed consumers" living in the "involuntary ghettos" of contemporary society (Bauman 2001b). All in all, liquid-modern society is full of ambivalence, it is full of uncertainty and insecurity, and it is full of fear (fear of strangers, criminals, refugees, terrorists, death, and—perhaps more commonly—individual failure). Living life as "nomads" (postmodern/liquid-modern-style identity) rather than "pilgrims" (modern-style identity) means constantly being presented with choices and decisions and having to live with the consequences. The relentless dismantling of road signs and the quickly outdated character of available route plans to guide one's way through the wilderness makes it even more difficult and nerve-wrecking to navigate and search for direction in the uncharted and treacherous waters of liquid modernity.

Although (and also because) liquid-modern society has largely given up on the modern (and modernist) ambition of creating order for the sake of order, ambivalence is still there—it did not disappear (how could it?). Instead, it has now become endemic, an everyday experience that people have to struggle with and solve for themselves. In his writings, Bauman, as mentioned above, thus regularly cited Ulrich Beck's (1992:137) apt statement that in contemporary society people are increasingly expected to find biographical solutions to systemic and structural challenges and contradictions. It is now up to the hapless individual him/herself to try to figure out the solutions to the problems confronting one's life, to expect no salvation or redemption from society, and to learn to live with the constant

pressures, uncertainties, and alluring yet deceitful trap of apparent choices (at least when it comes to consumer items) that characterize liquid-modern human and social life. This is not unlike what Bauman, as we saw above, had discovered already in his early writings on Polish youth in the 1960s: that people themselves are requested to find out how to deal with socially produced problems and contradictions. Ambivalence is thus here to stay—it is impossible to finish off, and in liquid modernity, it even seems as if it is now increasingly something that is allowed to exist and spread not least for lack of any agency interested in or capable of effectively dealing with ambivalence.

In Defense of Ambivalence

Of the many different conditions or emotions that make up and sometimes surface in human and social life, ambivalence is perhaps one of the most prevalent. Perhaps we do not recognize or associate what we feel and experience with ambivalence, but the distressing feeling that something is difficult to deal with or solve because we are drawn in different directions is probably known to most. For most social science writers on ambivalence, this strange feeling of indeterminacy, indecision, and uncertainty is regarded as unpleasant, intolerable, and frustrating. It creates a sense of tension and urgency not to know how to act, to be uncertain, to feel torn between alternatives, or caught in mixed emotions. Ambivalence puts a strain on people, because they are suddenly placed in a situation or position in which different paths appear or follow from the same situation and which have different consequential outcomes (e.g., who does not remember the poem "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost). Ambivalence is thus often regarded as a problem—something to be controlled, managed, or fixed. It is also therefore that ambivalence within the discipline of sociology is commonly associated with the coming of modern society and its polytheistic and pluralistic worldviews that replace the old dogmas and certainties of the past. With modern society, the expansion of life choices and possible life courses not available to most during premodern times made it easier to fall into the trap of ambivalence. But this also meant the

need to react to the rise of ambivalence—to turn ambivalence into something to be managed and solved. All the “solids” of the past that were melted with the transition from premodern to modern society now needed to find new molds in which to re-solidify. Even in postmodern/liquid-modern society with its abandoned ambition of controlling the present and planning the future, attempts are still being made at keeping ambivalence at bay, trying to avoid its spreading.

In his work, as we have seen above, Bauman did not specifically regard ambivalence as an emotional but rather as an experiential phenomenon. As with so many other apparent “emotions” described in his work (such as love, freedom, solidarity, compassion, nostalgia, fear, or suffering), Bauman did thus not write about ambivalence as an affective category, but rather as a general condition of life (Jacobsen 2019). In his view, as we saw above, modernity waged an all-out war on ambivalence, exactly because it increasingly became a problem to be dealt with. In his writings, ambivalence is therefore mostly presented as something seemingly “negative” or socially undesirable that is being managed, controlled, contained, and potentially annihilated. But perhaps ambivalence is instead liberating, perhaps ambivalence spells freedom, choice, possibility and opens up a door for moral responsibility? In Bauman’s work, ambivalence is not merely a social or existential phenomenon—it is also a moral issue. True, ambivalence puts people in situations of indeterminacy, uncertainty, and choice, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Bauman’s point of departure is that “humans are morally ambivalent: ambivalence resides at the heart of the ‘primary scene’ of human face-to-face” (Bauman 1993, 10). Ambivalence means an uncanny situation or experience of uncertainty and unpredictability, sometimes verging on the intolerable. Moreover, there is no guarantee that people will act morally good when they are set free from restrictive codes of conduct, but the codes of conduct that modernity tried so hard to legislate and maintain did not prevent evil or immoral actions either, as Bauman’s (1989) study of the Holocaust showed. In fact, it seems as if the so-called “adiaphorization” processes so characteristic of solid-modern society (and particularly prevalent in the Holocaust atrocities and inhumanities)—and not unlike the “moral indifference” identified by Bauman as a major sign of liquid-modern society (Bauman 1995, 149–152; Bauman and Donskis 2013)—could be seen as different yet equally alluring

(and more or less effective) answers to the persisting problem of ambivalence. In his work, Bauman wanted to reinstate the moral responsibility (and burden) for others in the individual human being instead of locating the solution to the vexing problem of wrongdoing in the "morality factory" of society. Ambivalence is liberating, because it shows us that there is not only one straight and narrow path to follow in life. According to Bauman's "ontological" perspective, as we saw earlier, every moment of human history is—to a greater or lesser degree—always an open-ended situation with a path that is not predetermined. The world is never closed down once and for all, there are always cracks, weaknesses, and undiscovered possibilities in the seemingly impenetrable and solid wall of reality. This is all part of Bauman's utopian outlook—there is *always* an alternative. As Keith Tester once so memorably observed: "Within his sociology, Bauman tries to show that the world does not have to be the way it is and that there is an alternative to what presently seems to be so natural, so obvious, so inevitable" (Tester in Bauman and Tester, 2001, 9). It is exactly this inherent openness of the world, ontological and existential, that makes it hospitable to ambivalence.

Following Sigmund Freud, who—as we saw above—had also taken an interest in ambivalence, Bauman several places wrote about "the existential ambivalence of being" (Bauman 1992b, 18–22) and how life is always a series of strains, pushes and pulls, tensions, dilemmas and double binds between pleasure and pain, freedom and dependency/security, selfishness and responsibility, life, and death (*Eros* and *Thanatos*). There are thus many ambivalences that a life needs to balance, some relating to private life, others to professional life (e.g., one's job), yet others to one's overall being-in-the-world. In this way, ambivalence is a constant feature of human and social life. Ambivalence can, in concrete situations, sometimes be relieved by making a choice or decision, but as an existential, social, and cultural phenomenon, it cannot be resolved. In itself, ambivalence is ineradicable and unannihilable—it remains despite (and not least because of) determined efforts to eliminate it (Jacobsen 2022b).

In fact, throughout Bauman's work, *everything* is potentially ambivalent. Many of the topics described and analyzed by him throughout his impressive line of writings are in themselves deeply ambivalent: culture, utopia, modernity, freedom, morality, death, and immortality. Let us take

some examples from the treasure trove of ambivalent topics covered by Bauman. According to Bauman, utopia is inherently ambivalent—it can buttress the hope for a better future, but it can also lead to human misery if it is forced through by way of totalitarian projects in social engineering (Bauman 1976, 2007a, 94–110). As Bauman thus remarked about this inherently dual nature of utopia:

> I now believe that utopia is one of humanity's constituents, a "constant" in the human way of being-in-the-world. This does not mean that all utopias are equally good. Utopias may lead to a better life as much as they may mislead and turn away from what a better life would require to be done (Bauman and Tester 2001, 48–50).

Besides utopia, which Bauman regarded as a constituent of human and social life, also culture is an ambivalent or dualistic phenomenon. Just as utopia can be either a static/preserving force or a critical/progressive force, culture can be either "structure" or "praxis," something that passively transmits information and institutions across generations or it can be a critical knife pressed against the throat of the present and demanding change (Bauman 1999 [1973]). In Bauman's book *Freedom* (1988), he showed how also the experience of freedom is ambivalent, always spun out between the poles of realized freedom and (inter)dependency—in this way, freedom is never really free. As Neil Smelser once memorably suggested in his plea for an appreciation of ambivalence among sociologists: "In investigating freedom *and* dependency, as well as freedom we reach toward a fuller understanding of human action, social institutions, and the human condition itself" (Smelser 1998, 13, original italics). In Bauman's view, even consumer freedom—perhaps expressing and epitomizing the most desired freedom experience of our liquid-modern times—is in fact not only shallow and short-lived but thoroughly manipulated (Bauman 1988). Consumerism is also an ambivalent experience—it surely brings pleasure and satisfaction, however always with an almost immediate realization of the unfulfilled emptiness that follows and the constant fear of being ousted from the consumer game, thus ending up as a "flawed consumer" (Bauman 1998b, 2007b). In Bauman's work, also the stranger is a sort of permanent ambivalent figure existing somewhere uneasily betwixt and between friend

and foe (Bauman 1995, 126–138). Death, as well as immortality, is also ambivalent topics in Bauman's work—death can either be denied or embraced, it is at one and the same time something to be defeated and something we need to learn to live with, and immortality can be pursued either as something waiting at the end of life or it can be a daily rehearsal in survival (Bauman 1992b). Modernity is ambivalent (Bauman 1991), globalization is ambivalent (Bauman 1998a), community is ambivalent (Bauman 2001a), identity is ambivalent (Bauman 2003), love is ambivalent (Bauman 2004), and so on. All these human experiences are Janus-faced, dichotomous, dualistic, ambivalent. For Bauman (1998c), ambivalence is a deeply moral category, but morality itself is also ambivalent—it can be either a "morality of conformity" or a "morality of choice" (Bauman 1993, 1998c). In the former manifestation, morality tells people what to do and warns them against the consequences of not heeding the call. In the latter rendition, morality spells out that the world is an open playing field and that more than one path may lead from the present. Morality raises many tough questions to which there are often no simple answers: should I "live-with" or "live-besides" the Other, thus tolerating his/her existence but feeling no moral responsibility for his/her well-being and suffering, or should I instead "live-for" the Other by embracing his/her life with solidarity and self-sacrifice? Should I save myself from potential pain and persecution or should I be willing to give up my own life in order to save the Other (sometimes even a complete stranger) (see Bauman 1989, 1992b, 1993)? These are indeed questions destined to cause ambivalence. By pointing to the innate ambivalence of human experience, Bauman thus shows us that there is an ontological openness to the world. Fundamentally, Bauman claims that human life—as an existential and experiential condition—is inherently ambivalent. We may try our best to control, order and organize everything into ironclad classificatory systems or neat inventories (often based on the properties of language, culture, and power), but at the end of the day, something always escapes and turns out as a thorn in the side of such efforts. All these aforementioned phenomena—utopia, freedom, death, immortality, morality, and so forth. (certainly not conventional topics for sociological analysis)—contain something that makes their very existence ambivalent. They can be painful or pleasant, but they are defining features of humanity (that we all struggle to be free, that moral action is not an easy

call, that dreaming of a better world is distressing and hopeful, and that we must all die).

There is no choice according to Bauman when it comes to the responsibility of sociologists—they need to side with the ambivalent. In fact, according to him, sociology is itself an inherently ambivalent (perhaps even schizophrenic) discipline:

> I think sociology is a schizophrenic discipline, organically dual, at war with itself … Whether it is praised or castigated and condemned, it is always considered very much like, in simpler societies, blacksmiths were: people who were sort of alchemists, who sit astride the normal barricades which ought to be used to keep things apart (Bauman in Kilminster and Varcoe 1992, 209).

Because sociology is inherently an ambivalent and dualistic discipline, throughout its history lingering uneasily somewhere between progressive/revolutionary perspectives on the one hand and more reactionary/conservative perspectives on the other, the way one decides to think and work sociologically is fundamentally a matter of choice. However, in Bauman's own view, "there is no choice between 'engaged' and 'neutral' ways of doing sociology. A non-committal sociology is an impossibility" (Bauman 2000:216). For Bauman then, sociology is and must continue to be a committed and critical engagement with the human and social world by serving as a constant thorn in the side of everything that parades itself as self-evident, natural, incontrovertible, unchanging, or the only possible alternative. In Bauman's work, the ambivalent is therefore always there, sometimes hiding between the lines, other times placed right in the spotlight. For him, ambivalence—be it in the shape of Jews, strangers, the wasted lives of liquid modernity, morality, death, utopia, sociology, and a host of other phenomena—represents not only the vulnerable and the marginalized, it also symbolizes that which is perhaps the most human thing of all, that which cannot be eradicated or annihilated, that which is constitutive of human and social life. Throughout Bauman's work, from the first published pieces to the last, ambivalence was at the heart of his attempt to understand the human condition. Ambivalence cannot be—and in Bauman's view should not be—regarded as a problem,

an enemy, or deficiency, it is simply a condition of life, and throughout his career, he thus remained a lifelong and valiant defender of the ambivalent.

Conclusion

This chapter has engaged with Zygmunt Bauman's work through the lens of the theme of ambivalence. Ambivalence has been an integral part of his writings from beginning to end—sometimes explicitly mentioned and discussed in great detail, other times present more as a sort of undercurrent in his treatment of a range of other topics. According to Bauman, ambivalence is an unavoidable and unannihilable feature of human and social life. All attempts to kill off or to solve the "problem of ambivalence" in Bauman's view seem only to lead to its continuous growth and expansion—and sometimes even end in discrimination and human suffering (Jacobsen 2021).

In the chapter, we first looked into how social theory and sociology—at least on the surface—has to a large degree remained silent about the topic of ambivalence, although it seems to sneak back in whenever a variety of different social phenomena or problems needs explanation. Then we looked into Bauman's own work on ambivalence and concentrated on his critical and substantial analysis unfolded in *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991) followed by a presentation of his ideas on ambivalence in what he called "postmodernity" and "liquid modernity." Finally, we saw how ambivalence—in Bauman's view—is all around and how his work can be regarded as an attempt to safeguard ambivalence and to point to its necessarily ineradicable presence. A world without ambivalence would be not only unimaginable but utterly undesirable.

In many ways, the presence of ambivalence spells openness, freedom, and responsibility. It is exactly the openness of the world—and the uncertainty, indeterminacy, and unpredictability that come with this openness—that makes ambivalence such a prevalent phenomenon (but also a problem). If everything was straightforward, one-dimensional, or set and fixed once and for all, then ambivalence would not occur and would not be regarded as a problem. Ultimately, ambivalence is an outcome of human

freedom and of human choice. This is also the reason why for Bauman, morality and ambivalence are mutually interconnected. As William James had once remarked in his *Principles of Psychology*: "An act has no ethical quality whatever unless it be chosen out of several all equally possible" (James 1890). To act under ambivalent circumstances—where there is no way of knowing in advance what is right or wrong and also not knowing what the outcome of one's actions will eventually be—is in the last instance the foundation for making morally informed choices. This is indeed a frustrating and painful experience, but it is also part and parcel of human life lived as a moral life. As Bauman memorably stated: "*The moral self is a self always haunted by the suspicion that it is not moral enough*" (Bauman 1993, 80, original italics). The long, winding, and often bumpy road to morality and moral living is thus paved with ambivalence.

References

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1962. "Values and Standards of Success of the Warsaw Youth." *The Polish Sociological Bulletin* 2 (1/2): 77–90.

——— 1965. "Social Structure and Innovational Personality." *The Polish Sociological Bulletin* 1: 54–59.

——— 1976. *Socialism: The Active Utopia*. London: Hutchinson.

——— 1988. *Freedom*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

——— 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1990. *Thinking Sociologically*. Oxford: Blackwell.

——— 1991. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1992a. *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge.

——— 1992b. *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1993. *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

——— 1995. *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality*. Oxford: Blackwell.

——— 1998a. *Globalization—The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 1998b. *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

——— 1998c. "What Prospects of Morality in Times of Uncertainty?." *Theory, Culture & Society* 15 (1): 11–22.

——— 1999 [1973]. *Culture as Praxis*. London: Sage Publications.

——— 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

——— 2001a. *The Individualized Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2001b. *Community—Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2003. *Identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2004. *Liquid Love—On the Frailty of Human Bonds*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2005. *Wasted Lives—Modernity and Its Outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2007a. *Liquid Times—Living in an Age of Uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
——— 2007b. *Consuming Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, and Keith Tester. 2001. *Conversations with Zygmunt Bauman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
———, and Leonidas Donskis. 2013. *Moral Blindness: The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Beck, Ulrich. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.
Beretta, Véronique et al. 2015. "Ambivalence According to Bleuler: New Trajectories for a Forgotten Symptom." *Psychothérapies* 35 (1): 5–19.
Douglas, Mary. 1984 [1966]. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Elias, Norbert. 1994 [1939]. *The Civilizing Process*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Frankfurt, Harry. 1998. *Necessity, Volition and Love*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Frenkel-Brunswik, Else. 1949. "Intolerance of Ambiguity as an Emotional and Perceptual Personality Variable." *Journal of Personality* 18 (1): 108–143.
Freud, Sigmund. 1998 [1913]. *Totem and Taboo*. London: Dover Publications.
Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor W. Adorno. 2002 [1944]. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Jacobsen, Michael Hviid. 2017. "Paradoxes and Ambivalences of Liquid Modernity: Zygmunt Bauman and the Peculiar Solidity of Liquidity." In *Beyond Bauman—Critical Engagements and Creative Excursions*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 243–271. London: Routledge.
——— 2019. "Liquid-Modern Emotions: Exploring Zygmunt Bauman's Contribution to the Sociology of Emotions." *Emotions and Society* 1 (1): 99–116.
——— 2021. "Suffering in the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman." *Qualitative Studies* 6 (1): 68–90.
——— 2022a. "Ambivalence—Exploring a Mixed Emotion." In *Emotions in Culture and Everyday Life*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 223–252. London: Routledge.
——— 2022b. "The Unannihilable—Zygmunt Bauman as Analyst and Ambassador of Ambivalence." *Studia Litteraria et Historica* 11 (Article 2791): 1–21.
James, William. 1890. *Principles of Psychology*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Junge, Matthias. 2008. "Bauman on Ambivalence—Fully Acknowledging the Ambiguity of Ambivalence." In *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman: Challenges and Critique*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Poul Poder, 41–56. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

Kilminster, Richard, and Ian Varcoe. 1992. "Sociology, Postmodernity and Exile: An Interview with Zygmunt Bauman." In *Intimations of Postmodernity*, edited by Zygmunt Bauman, 205–228. London: Routledge.

Levine, Donald N. 1985. *The Flight from Ambiguity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mattes, Joachim. 1994. " 'Mit Ambivalenz leben': Zygmunt Bauman's halbherzige Kritik der Moderne: Rezension zur Zygmunt Bauman: *Moderne und Ambivalenz*." *Soziologische Revue* 17 (3): 291–297.

Merton, Robert K. 1976. *Sociological Ambivalence*. New York: The Free Press.

———, and Elinor Barber. 1963. "Sociological Ambivalence." In *Sociological Theory, Values and Sociocultural Change*, edited by Edward A. Tiryakian, 91–120. New York: The Free Press.

Miller, William R. 2021. *On Second Thoughts: How Ambivalence Shapes Your Life*. New York: Guilford Publications.

Rothman, Naomi B. et al. 2017. "Understanding the Dual Nature of Ambivalence: Why and When Ambivalence Leads to Good and Bad Outcomes." *The Academy of Management Annals* 11 (1): 33–72.

Schiel, Tilman. 2005. "Modernity, Ambivalence and the Gardening State." *Thesis Eleven* 83 (1): 78–89.

Smart, Barry. 1999. *Facing Modernity: Ambivalence, Reflexivity and Morality*. London: Sage Publications.

Smelser, Neil J. 1998. "The Rational and the Ambivalent in the Social Sciences." *American Sociological Review* 63 (1): 1–16.

Smith, Dennis. 2017. "Exploring Modernity's Hidden Agenda in Europe: The Complementary Contributions of Zygmunt Bauman and Ernest Gellner." In *Beyond Bauman—Critical Engagements and Creative Excursions*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 163–181. London: Routledge.

Smith, Tiffany Watt. 2016. *The Book of Human Emotions*. London: Profile Books.

Tester, Keith, and Michael Hviid Jacobsen. 2005. *Bauman Before Postmodernity—Invitation, Conversations and Annotated Bibliography, 1953–1989*. Aalborg: Aalborg University Press.

Trémeanu, Fabien et al. 2009. "In Support of Bleuler: Objective Evidence for Increased Affective Ambivalence in Schizophrenia Based Upon Evocative Testing." *Schizophrenia Research* 107 (2/3): 223–231.

Turner, Victor W. 1995 [1969]. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Weigert, Andrew J. 1989. "Joyful Disaster: An Ambivalence-Religion Hypothesis." *Sociological Analysis* 50 (1): 73–88.

——— 1991. *Mixed Emotions: Certain Steps Toward Understanding Ambivalence*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Zielyk, Ihor V. 1966. "On Ambiguity and Ambivalence." *The Pacific Sociological Review* 9 (1): 57–64.

INDEX

A

Adiaphorization 7, 12, 134, 142n3, 150–152, 160, 170, 199
Adorno, Theodor W. 10, 29, 34, 38, 62, 69, 70, 83, 84, 99, 191
Agoraphobia 9
Alone Again 5
Aly, Götz H. 61, 63
Ambivalence 8, 17, 19, 30, 42, 43, 49–50, 53–55, 56n2, 69, 85, 86, 97, 99, 141, 147, 153, 168, 169, 183–203
Angel of History (Paul Klee) 132–136
Anthropoemic 156, 159, 193
Anthropohagic 193
Anti-Semitism 3, 4, 18, 34, 59, 60, 64, 66–69, 71, 72, 99
Appadurai, Arjun 139
Ariès, Philippe 112, 115, 125, 126

B

Babel 165, 172
Bachmann-Medick, Doris 131, 141
Barthes, Roland 91
Bartov, Omer 60, 64, 68
Baudrillard, Jean 2, 78, 79, 88, 139
Bauer, Yehuda 60–62, 64, 65, 73
Bauman, Janina 6, 38, 98, 115, 173, 174
Bauman Institute, The 7
Beck, Ulrich 2, 150, 166, 167, 177, 188, 197

Becker, Ernest 110
Beilharz, Peter 19, 25–39, 41, 42, 66, 67, 69, 71, 95, 104, 115, 142, 168
Benedict, Ruth 85, 93
Berger, Peter L. 111, 114
Berman, Marshall 26
Best, Shaun 4, 19, 147–162
Between Class and Elite 5, 31
Bjerg, Svend 109, 117
Blackshaw, Tony 11, 14, 19, 41, 70, 117, 137
Bleuler, Paul Eugen 186
Bloch, Ernst 136
Blum, Alan 112
Borges, Jorge Luis 38, 91
Bourdieu, Pierre 1, 2, 38, 79
Boym, Svetlana 131, 134, 139
Brexit 9
Browning, Christopher R. 61, 63, 67
Brzeziński, Dariusz 19
Burawoy, Michael 8
Bureaucracy 29, 34, 37, 38, 59, 62, 63, 67, 70–71, 192

C

Capitalism 27–31, 33, 35–38, 62, 86, 88, 100, 102, 111, 123, 175
Carleheden, Mikael 138
Carroll, John 119
Chicago School (of Sociology) 78, 79
Civilization 2, 28, 43–47, 49–51, 55, 56, 59, 62, 68, 69, 83, 94–96, 140, 142, 186
Collateral Damage 31
Communism, communist 5, 18, 20, 35, 61, 63, 79, 86–88, 91–93, 97, 100–104
Comte, Auguste 18, 79
Consumerism, consumerist 8, 38, 46, 87, 102, 123, 134, 137, 166, 167, 170, 174, 175, 196, 200
Continental divide, the 19, 77–89

Cultural turn 93, 95, 131, 141
Culture 7, 8, 26, 28, 30, 33, 38, 43, 49, 65, 66, 80–84, 87, 88, 92–97, 103, 110, 113, 116, 117, 122–124, 128n1, 134, 136, 137, 139–141, 150, 153, 162, 168, 186, 190, 192, 193, 195, 200, 201
Culture as Praxis 5, 94, 95, 101, 166

D

Davis, Fred 139, 141
Davis, Mark 4, 11, 19, 26, 48, 132, 137, 142, 165–179
Dawson, Matt 11, 14, 19, 41–56, 83, 92, 98, 165
Death 5, 8, 15, 18, 19, 27, 36, 42, 43, 49–50, 53, 55, 59, 61, 63, 66, 71, 91, 93, 94, 102, 109–127, 134, 155, 175, 193, 197, 199–202
Death denial 112
Death taboo 112, 113
Decolonization 91–97, 101, 103, 104
Derrida, Jacques 1, 78, 83, 117
Dewey, John 79
Donskis, Leonidas 14, 103, 165, 167, 168, 170, 171, 173–177, 199
Douglas, Mary 38, 93, 191
Durkheim, Émile 2, 10, 16, 62, 63, 70, 78–80, 83, 85, 88, 89, 98, 114, 186

E

Einstein, Albert 51
Elias, Norbert 2, 3, 10, 62, 68, 69, 110, 114, 184
Engels, Friedrich 2, 11, 26, 30
Erikson, Erik 85
Eurocentrism 19, 91, 92, 95, 96, 98, 103, 104

F

Fear 8, 50, 55, 68, 86, 109, 110, 113, 126, 132–136, 139, 140, 142, 151, 155, 160, 161, 170, 191, 195, 197, 198, 200
Fehér, Ferenc 98, 102
Foucault, Michel 1, 2, 32, 38, 70, 78, 83
Frankfurt School (of Critical Theory) 12, 28–30, 62, 65, 69, 72, 84

Freedom 5, 7, 200
Freud, Sigmund 28, 38, 41–56, 56n2, 62, 81, 83, 85, 99, 123, 124, 184, 186, 199
Frisby, David 26, 79
Fromm, Erich 28, 53, 84
Frost, Robert 198

G

Gellner, Ernest 97, 98, 192
Genocide 12, 60, 62, 64, 65, 67–73, 99, 103, 155, 191
Giddens, Anthony 2, 9, 25, 31, 78, 79, 88, 114, 167, 172, 188
Gilroy, Paul 70, 92, 103
Globalization 2, 6, 8, 16, 31, 67, 124, 137, 152, 156, 195, 196, 200
Globalization: The Human Consequences 16
Goodlet, Kirk W. 61, 66
Gouldner, Alvin W. 33
Gramsci, Antonio 4, 30, 31, 38, 93, 174
Gross, Jan T. 60, 63–68, 72, 73

H

Habermas, Jürgen 1, 2, 9–12, 14, 29–31, 62
Happiness 44, 46, 102, 126, 133, 136, 154, 183
Hegel, G. W. F. 28, 81, 83, 135
Heidegger, Martin 83, 168
Heller, Agnes 33, 98, 102
Hermeneutics and Social Science 5, 96, 165
Hobsbawm, Eric 2
Holocaust, the 2, 4, 8, 16, 19, 34, 38, 43, 59–73, 81, 98, 99, 110, 114, 127, 148, 173, 191, 193, 199
Holocaust Studies 59, 61, 67, 73
Honneth, Axel 2
Horkheimer, Max 9, 29, 34, 70, 84, 191

I

Immortality, deconstruction of 117, 120–123, 125, 127
Imperialism 28, 32, 91, 92, 94, 95, 97, 99, 103, 104
In Search of Politics 123
Individualization 2, 8, 150, 174, 186, 195, 196
Intellectuals 1–6, 8–10, 15, 26, 29, 31, 36, 43, 78–81, 93, 94, 96, 97, 99, 100, 102, 104, 125, 142, 157, 160, 186, 196
Intimations of Postmodernity 5, 7, 77, 86, 87, 195

J

Jacobsen, Michael Hviid 1–20, 26, 39n1, 41, 53, 56n1, 78, 82, 93, 94, 101, 109–127, 131–133, 135, 136, 138–142, 142n1, 174, 179n1, 183–203
James, William 77–79, 83, 84, 88, 202
Jameson, Frederic 139
Jasińska-Kania, Aleksandra 6, 103, 126
Jews, Jewry 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 16, 34, 41, 54, 56n2, 59, 61–66, 68, 70–72, 84, 85, 91, 92, 97–100, 103, 104, 114, 147, 150, 151, 168, 191, 193, 196, 202
Junge, Matthias 183, 184, 190, 195

K

Kautsky, Karl 29
KBW (Polish security police) 4
Kershaw, Ian 61
Klee, Paul 132, 133, 135
Kołakowski, Leszek 5, 176
Korpi, Walter 1, 2
Kristeva, Julia 92, 140
Kuhn, Thomas S. 31, 141

L

Legislators and Interpreters 5, 7, 10, 26, 31, 36, 77, 97
Lenin, Vladimir 30
Lévinas, Emmanuel 12, 38, 124, 155, 175, 178
Levine, Donald N. 184, 187
Lévi-Strauss, Claude 30, 92, 93, 156, 159, 193

Life in Fragments 3–7, 195
Lipset, Seymour Martin 72, 77
Liquid Evil 165, 170–172
Liquid Fear 134, 136, 161
Liquid Love 133
Liquid Modernity 6, 8, 20, 25, 34, 77, 88, 100
Liquid modernity, liquid-modern society 2, 6, 8, 10, 26, 34, 41, 43, 45–47, 51, 52, 55, 56n3, 67, 79, 80, 88, 110, 122, 127, 132, 135–137, 148–151, 154, 157, 158, 167, 168, 170–172, 176, 187, 194–198, 202
Liquidarity 171
Luhmann, Niklas 1, 2
Lukács, Georg 27–29, 38

M

Maeterlinck, Maurice 111
Marcuse, Herbert 10, 28, 31, 33, 53
Markus, György 102
Marshman, Sophia 13, 16, 19, 26, 41, 53, 132
Marx, Karl 2, 4, 7, 10–12, 18, 19, 25–39, 42, 62, 65, 77–79, 84, 88, 92, 93, 95, 96, 98, 114, 171, 186, 189
Mass society 69, 84
Mauro, Ezio 14, 165, 167, 170–174, 176
Mead, George Herbert 77, 78, 83, 93
Memories of Class 5, 32, 37, 96
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice 27
Merton, Robert K. 80, 188
Messina, Adele Valeria 19, 59–73
Meštrović, Stjepan G. 77–89
Metaphor 13, 48, 53, 55, 77, 80, 84–86, 97, 101, 132, 133, 136, 149, 167, 192
Microsociology 11
Milchman, Alan 60–63, 65
Mills, C. Wright 11, 35, 38
Mixophobia 158, 192, 195

Modernity and Ambivalence 5, 7, 26, 56n2, 77, 84, 97, 168, 191, 192, 194, 195, 202
Modernity and the Holocaust 5–7, 26, 33, 34, 37, 59–62, 64–73, 77, 97, 98, 114, 115, 136, 147, 173, 191
Morality 4, 7, 8, 15–17, 46, 62, 63, 65, 69, 71, 127, 188, 194, 199–203
Mortality, deconstruction of 117, 119, 120, 122, 125–127
Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies 5, 7, 49, 110, 114–118, 120, 122–124, 126, 127
Morality of choice 17, 194, 201
Morality of conformity 16, 194, 201
Multiculturality 174, 176, 177

N

Narcissism 42, 44, 50–52, 55
Nazism 33, 62, 65, 66, 84–86
Negative globalization 8
Nostalgia 131, 132, 134–142, 143n4, 157, 198
Nostalgic turn 19, 131–142, 147, 151, 161

O

Obama, Barack 81
Obirek, Stanisław 14, 153–155, 159, 165, 168–170, 173–178
Of God and Man 165, 174, 175
On the World and Ourselves 165
Other, the (otherness) 7, 50–51, 55, 84–86, 94, 96, 98, 118–120, 123, 124, 126, 127, 134, 147, 151–157, 159, 162, 169, 178, 201

P

Palmer, Jack 4, 19, 26, 41, 91–104, 166
Park, Robert E. 78, 79, 98
Parsons, Talcott 13, 16, 25, 29, 36, 62, 72, 77–80, 84, 85, 88, 89, 93, 94, 114
Pierce, Charles S. 79, 83
Pleasure principle, the 41, 42, 46–49, 53–55

Pogrom 16, 63
Poland 3–5, 9, 13, 14, 17, 30, 63, 72, 92, 93, 100, 101, 104, 142n1, 189
Pope Francis 51, 147, 152–156, 162, 166, 175
Post-communism 92, 100, 104
Postmodern Ethics 5, 7, 195
'Postmodern sociology' vs. 'sociology of postmodernity' 5, 195
Postmodernity, postmodern society 5–8, 10, 56n3, 78, 85–87, 92, 95–99, 110, 112, 113, 120, 121, 125, 127, 133, 135, 148, 166, 187, 194–198, 202
Postmodernity and Its Discontents 6, 8, 133
Post-trinitarian world 3
Practices of Selfhood 165, 168
Pragmatism 35, 77–79, 83, 88
Praxis 30, 31, 35, 94–96, 98, 101, 124, 200
Privatization 9, 12, 195, 196

R

Reality principle, the 31, 41, 47, 48
Refugees 16, 34, 103, 104, 134, 147, 148, 150, 152, 155, 161, 197
Retrotopia 51, 132, 134, 137–140, 142, 152, 157, 179n1
Riesman, David 78–80, 83–88
Rosa, Hartmut 2, 38
Rosenberg, Alan 60–63, 65
Runge, Nicklas 19, 109–127

S

Schopenhauer, Arthur 83, 123, 124
Security 42–50, 52, 53, 55, 102, 132, 133, 135, 136, 149, 151, 152, 160, 167, 169, 171, 195, 199
Simmel, Georg 2, 4, 10, 13, 26, 27, 38, 50, 79, 83, 98, 99, 114, 147, 148–150, 152, 158, 162, 186
Sketches in the Theory of Culture 94, 133
Skinner, Quentin 103
Smith, Dennis 19, 192
Socialism: The Active Utopia 5, 30, 35, 136
Sociological hermeneutics 11, 48, 117

Solid modernity, solid-modern society 7, 8, 10, 43, 45–48, 55, 56n3, 85, 88, 102, 148, 151, 152, 157, 158, 167, 168, 170, 172, 176, 184, 196, 199
Solidarity (*Solidarność*) 100, 101, 134, 170–172, 174, 184, 195, 198, 201
Sorokin, Pitirim 80, 88
Soviet Union 4, 86, 87, 100, 101
Spectacular death 114
Stalin, Josef 35, 93
'Strangers' 8, 16, 19, 42, 124, 147, 148, 150, 151, 153, 156–161, 168–172, 174, 177, 178, 190, 193, 197, 202
Strangers at Our Door 149, 153, 165, 169
Suffering 2, 3, 7, 9, 12, 16, 17, 20, 26, 47, 109, 126, 138, 170, 176, 195, 198, 201, 202
Survival, survivalism 102, 122, 127, 134, 159, 200

T

Tec, Nechama 72
Tester, Keith 5, 6, 9, 11, 14, 19, 41, 48, 78, 82, 92–94, 101, 133, 137, 142, 162, 165, 189, 199, 200
There Is No Alternative (the TINA Syndrome) 15, 171
Thinking Sociologically 33, 190
Tönnies, Ferdinand 2, 10, 186
Totalitarianism 7, 12, 20, 29, 38, 65, 71, 84, 104
'Tourists' 148
Towards a Critical Sociology 5, 166
Trump, Donald J. 9, 81, 140, 142, 152, 161
Turner, Bryan S. 67, 68, 139

U

Utopia 7, 8, 15, 31, 37, 131, 135–138, 152, 171, 174, 176, 200–202
Utopianism 142

V

Vagabonds 150
Veblen, Thorstein 78, 79

Vetlesen, Arne Johan 60, 65

W

Wagner, Izabela 3, 4, 19, 31, 92, 98
Wagner, Peter 68
Walter, Tony 113, 114
Wasted Lives 31, 33, 97, 197
Weber, Max 2, 10, 25–39, 62, 65, 68–70, 78, 79, 83, 88, 89, 98, 102, 114, 125, 137, 138, 142, 167, 186
Weigert, Andrew J. 184, 188, 190
What Use Is Sociology? 133
Work, Consumerism and the New Poor 36

Z

Žižek, Slavoj 120