

## Introduction

# The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman – Challenges and Critique

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“I don’t care who’s right or who’s wrong. There has to be some better way for people to live”

– Grace Kelly: *High Noon*

### Introduction

Books on Zygmunt Bauman’s work abound – and in these years with increasing intensity perhaps mirroring the urgency and receptivity of the ideas expounded in Bauman’s own books. Peter Beilharz’s *Zygmunt Bauman: Dialects of Modernity* (Beilharz 1999), Dennis Smith’s *Zygmunt Bauman: Prophet of Postmodernity* (Smith 1999), Keith Tester’s *The Social Thought of Zygmunt Bauman* (Tester 2004), Michael Hviid Jacobsen’s *Zygmunt Bauman* (Jacobsen 2004), Tony Blackshaw’s *Zygmunt Bauman* (Blackshaw 2005), Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Keith Tester’s *Bauman Before Postmodernity* and *Bauman Beyond Postmodernity* (Tester & Jacobsen 2005; Jacobsen, Marshman & Tester) and most recently the edited volume *The Contemporary Bauman* (Elliott 2007).<sup>1</sup> All these books contain valuable insights into the life and ideas of Zygmunt Bauman. However, most of them remain expository rather than exploratory, biographical and chronological rather than thematic and contextualizing. In this book we wish to bridge these different aims. As the title *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman – Challenge and Critique* indicates, this book is different in important respects which will be explained below. The book aspires to capture, contextualize and critically appraise many of the central and recurrent themes in Bauman’s work – themes that constitute cornerstones in his special way of doing sociology.

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<sup>1</sup> Add to this already impressive list also Peter Beilharz’s *The Bauman Reader* (Beilharz 2001) and the four-volume set *Zygmunt Bauman* containing commentaries, articles and reviews (Beilharz 2002). The first book on Bauman’s sociology appeared in 1996 and was edited by Richard Kilminster and Ian Varcoe in *Culture, Modernity and Revolution: Essays in Honour of Zygmunt Bauman* (Kilminster & Varcoe 1996). A useful introduction to the writings and perspective of Bauman can also be found in the interview book *Conversations with Zygmunt Bauman* (Bauman & Tester 2001).

**At the Core of Bauman's Sociology**

Zygmunt Bauman is a sociologist of sorts and various attempts at categorizing his way of doing sociology has been attempted throughout the years with a multitude of stock phrases and labels such as 'storyteller', 'socialist', 'structuralist', 'critical theorist', 'humanistic Marxist', 'existentialist', 'hermeneutic sociologist', 'postmodernist' or as a hybrid 'poet-intellectual' between sociology and poetry. Most introductions emphasize how Bauman's work is very difficult to nail down or seems slippery as he eclectically draws on a variety of theoretical sources rather than sticks to a certain theoretical orientation and because he continuously insists on sitting astride those barriers intended to separate between traditions, perspectives and schools of thought. In many of the aforementioned introductions there is a tendency primarily to describe Bauman's work negatively by mentioning what it is not or to focus on how various themes have been played out chronologically throughout Bauman's work.

With this book we want to do something different than focussing on Bauman's discussion of, for example, postmodernity or the dialectic of modernity or liquid modernity. Rather we want to introduce and critically discuss Bauman's work as a certain kind of sociology in an overall sense. It is important to recognize that Bauman's sociology is more than an essayistic collection of scattered analyses and diagnoses of particular and unconnected themes. We contend that there is a need to emphasize this dimension as other Bauman introductions have mostly prioritised the extraordinary character of his work. His work may be extraordinary in many senses – in style, passion and originality – but it is not transgressing sociology as a discipline. Rather Bauman in his work is directed towards revizing and revitalizing sociological theory through pushing and challenging the outer limits of established and doxic assumptions. Throughout the years he has defended the necessity of sociology even at times when such a defence seemed quixotic. This book seeks to explore in what ways Bauman confronts classical sociological issues of, for example, morality, power and globalization in order to counter established concepts, and how he wishes to engage with issues traditionally located outside the realm of conventional sociology such as the issue of freedom, strangeness and ambivalence. Moreover, his work can also be characterized as a challenge to sociology in itself through his more poetically approach exemplified by his use of metaphors and his politically inspired approach exemplified through his preoccupation with utopianism.

Contrary to many of the prominent sociologists of the day whose efforts at theory construction culminated in the early 1980s, Bauman has never aspired to build elaborate or all-encompassing theoretical systems such as Niklas Luhmann (1984), Anthony Giddens (1984) or Jürgen Habermas (1981). Nowhere in his many books will one find a definitive and self-proclaimed theoretical testament. Neither does he present an interwoven set of essential theoretical analytical concepts – e.g. field, habitus and capital – which constitute the backbone of the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (1977). However, an essential feature of Bauman's sociology is his ongoing dialogue with conventional sociological vocabulary through criticizing existing assumptions and by way of developing new understandings through neologisms such as, for example, 'adiaphorization' or 'allosemitism' or by way of his metaphorical cornucopia intended to illustrate the lived experience of a variety of people such as

'flawed consumers', 'players' and 'legislators' (see Jacobsen & Marshman 2006). In this way, another special feature of Bauman's sociology is the concern with the 'human consequences' of social development. He is not concerned with abstract or ethereal social processes, but with the concrete and often merciless repercussions on those whose lives are most severely affected by social transformations and in his descriptions he staunchly remains on the side of those marginalized, hurt or excluded. The questions that Bauman has sought to answer (or rather to pose) have been what social developments have meant with respect to the morality and suffering of human beings and he generally focuses on everyday human concerns to do with community, love and memory and the pain and happiness they bring (Blackshaw 2005:16).

In further describing the core of Bauman's sociological work we want to suggest that his work can best be characterized as an odyssey of the transformation of modernity with its concomitant intensive and extensive repercussions on all aspects of human life. As is evident from all his books, he has been preoccupied with this broad topic of modernity's transformation and its human consequences and therefore he is truly a generalist rather than a specialist sociologist. This topic defines his sociology rather than his adherence to particular schools of thoughts: "I was seeking for an answer to the same questions all along, and if I didn't find it, I moved elsewhere. But I took the questions with me" (Bauman 1992:207). Thus, Bauman focuses attention on selected aspects of this transformation. As he observes regarding his own kind of 'method': "In all my books I constantly enter the same room, only that I enter the room through different doors. So I see the same things, the same furniture, but out of a different perspective" (Bauman in Welzer 2002:109). Bauman enters this furnished 'room' containing the story of the transformation of modernity through a variety of different 'doors' – the Holocaust, ethics, globalization, freedom, consumerism, utopia, ambivalence, the working class, the intellectuals, community, death, love, sexuality, strangers, etc. Although all these 'doors' lead to the same room, their different location allows a shift in perspective on the 'furniture' in the room. Therefore, all these different doors make it possible to look at the same thing, but from different perspectives.

On a methodological level, Bauman has also contributed with a refreshing and original perspective by proposing 'defamiliarization' and 'sociological hermeneutics' as central tenets of his sociology. Throughout his work he seeks to defamiliarize the social world as we have come to understand it, since "concepts tend to outlive the historical configurations which gave them birth and infused them with meaning. This tendency is rooted in the natural propensity to absorb and accommodate new experience into the familiar picture of the world; habitual categories are the main tools of this absorption. New experience does not fit the categories easily" (Bauman 1982:192). In order to allow a new look or a deeper understanding such defamiliarization is part and parcel of any critical and innovative sociological imagination. As a sociologist, one should therefore seek to 'defamiliarize the familiar' because familiarity may hamper and hinder inquisitiveness and the impetus to innovate and transform. In Bauman's view a sociology bend on defamiliarization is something that should be appropriated not only within the university but by people outside the confines of academia: "To all those who think that living life in a more conscious way is worth the effort, sociology is a welcome guide" (Bauman &

May 2001:10). Defamiliarization shatters the impenetrable walls of common sense that prevents us from experiencing and understanding the world anew. Therefore, defamiliarization is inherently heretical and iconoclastic because by

examining that which is taken-for-granted, it has the potential to disturb the comfortable certitudes of life by asking questions no one can remember asking and those with vested interests resent even being asked ... It may open up new and previously unsuspected possibilities of living one's life with other with more self-awareness, more comprehension of our surroundings in terms of greater self and social knowledge and perhaps also with more freedom and control (Bauman & May 2001:10).<sup>2</sup>

The same insistently inquisitive quality is to be found in Bauman's so-called 'sociological hermeneutics' – as distinct from, but not opposed to 'hermeneutic sociology' – which is bent on asking the most pertinent of questions and critically examining and interpreting the most problematic of answers and which, when put to use, intensify our ability to penetrate into the actual workings of the world. As he stated in recent conversation, his sociological hermeneutics "demands that whenever we pursue the meaning of human thoughts or actions we ought to look into socially shaped conditions of people whose thoughts or actions we intend to understand/explain" (Jacobsen & Tester 2007:324). In this way, Bauman's sociological hermeneutics are akin to C. Wright Mills's 'sociological imagination' which sought to make its practitioners and users able to transcend the trappings of personal problems or the seductions of individual illusions by linking biography to history and structural developments (Mills 1959). To Bauman, sociology cannot stop short of being an ongoing, collaborative interpretation of the human world in order to understand how it may eventually be improved.

As mentioned, Bauman's sociology is very much defined by his persistent engagement with one central topic and his ongoing concerns with what social developments and transformations mean with respect to the freedom, justice, morality and the suffering of fellow human beings. A way of understanding why Bauman has been so persistently engaged in this set of concerns – the effect of social transformations on individual lives – can be to attend to his own personal and biographical past which became a dramatic topic of discussion in the spring of 2007 during the completion of this book.

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<sup>2</sup> Bauman started out as an outsider, as an Eastern European Jewish exile in an English outskirts university, but gradually moved into the centre of intellectual and academic attention in which he today occupies the position as one of the most widely read and acclaimed contemporary sociologists. In this way, Bauman's intellectual trajectory is an archetypal specimen of what Pierre Bourdieu (1988) once dubbed 'consecrated heretics' or 'heresiarchs' – autonomous scholars who, according to Bourdieu, are heretics because they question the doxa and criticize the conventions of their discipline by proposing new and heretofore uncharted conceptual and theoretical territory to be discovered, and consecrated because they – despite their marginal position in official academic reproduction – end up upholding prestigious positions and succeed in communicating with the wider public.

## A Life in the Shadow of Totalitarianism

In order to understand why Zygmunt Bauman has been so persistently engaged with understanding especially the issues of morality and totalitarianism, autonomy and heteronomy, the possibilities of and obstacles to decent and moral human existence in the shadow of inhumanities considering his personal background is helpful. At least, we suggest that his thorough academic engagement is understandable on the basis of his own personal experiences of being a victim, but possibly also a perpetrator of totalitarianism.

On November 18th 1925, Bauman was born into a poor Jewish family in Poznan, Poland. When he was 14 years old in September 1939 his family fled the Nazi occupation of Poland and came to live in the Soviet Union during the Stalin regime. Here some of his formal schooling took place and initially he had ambitions of becoming a physicist and started studies at a Soviet university, but the outbreak of World War II made him join the military instead. He joined the exiled Polish Army in the Soviet Union in 1943 at the age of 18 and quickly rose through the ranks. By the end of the war he was wounded, but was still capable of participating in the Red Army's liberation of Berlin in May 1945. Upon his return to post-war Poland he initially reached the rank of Captain in the reconstructed Polish army, later to become one of the youngest Majors in the Polish army (Smith 1999:39). In 1948, at the Warsaw Academy of Social Sciences, Zygmunt met his wife and life-long companion, Janina, who as an inhabitant in the Warsaw ghetto had initially survived the Nazi persecutions and who later for more than two years managed to hide from the Nazis in the houses of ordinary helpful people thereby escaping deportation to the death camps (see Bauman 1986).

Zygmunt officially became a member of the Communist Party in 1951 (Bielefeld 2002:113ff) and as Janina later described, he was initially a devoted believer in the ideas and ideals of a better socialist society promised and proclaimed by the Communist Party. In 1953 he started an academic career as a sociologist when he at the age of twenty-eight was dismissed from the army during anti-Semitic and 'de-Judaising' purges. He completed his MA in the social sciences at the University of Warsaw in the early 1950s and earned himself a position as lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences in 1954. In the following years he received his PhD and made trips to the London School of Economics and the University of Manchester, where he conducted research on, amongst other themes, the English labour movement and the socialist party. From the early 1960s he started editing Polish sociology journals (Bunting 2003:23), functioned as principal editor of *Studia Socjologiczne* and published several articles on specific Polish issues before in 1964 obtaining the position as Chair of General Sociology at Warsaw. Throughout this period he also published numerous books on topics such as British socialism, critiques of American sociology, everyday life and culture many of which were later re-issued in English (Tester & Jacobsen 2005:223-224). In 1966 he was elected President of the Executive Committee of the Polish Sociological Association. During this period he remained a loyal, yet increasingly critical member of the Communist Party, but this came to a swift and dramatic halt in January 1968 when he handed in his party membership card.

Several incidents had lead up to this dramatic decision – particularly one incident in 1965 when a critical letter on the state of Polish socialism authored by two students at the university was subjected to the scrutiny of a committee consisting of Leszek Kołakowski, Włodzimierz Brus and Bauman who allowed the letter to be publicized. As a consequence, Bauman was eventually dismissed from his position as Chair of Sociology in late March 1968 accused of bearing responsibility for the student revolt against the Party and of corrupting the Polish youth. Also this round of purges bore clear signs of anti-Semitism on behalf of the system and ended Bauman's illusions of the wonders and promised ideals of state socialism. Together with his wife and his children he had to flee the country first to Israel via a refugee camp in Austria. For three years they stayed in Israel and later enjoyed brief spells in Canada and Australia where Bauman took up short-term teaching positions. In 1970 they arrived at their, until now, final destination, Leeds in England. Here Bauman taught and functioned as leader of the sociology department until his retirement in 1990. In brief, throughout his life Bauman has suffered several deeply personal experiences as being a victim of totalitarianism in different forms such as Nazism and anti-Semitism. Naturally, such deep-seated experiences cannot but influence and inform his way of doing sociology. As he contended in his inaugural speech as professor of sociology at the University of Leeds in the early 1970s: "In the professional life of a sociologist his most intimate, private biography is inextricably entangled with the biography of his discipline; one thing the sociologist cannot transcend in his quest for objectivity is his own, intimate and subjective encounter-with-the-world" (Bauman 1972:185). Thus, Bauman's 'encounter-with-the-world' as a victim of totalitarianism has, without any doubt, played a significant role in his own choice of topics and perspectives.

Recently, however, the Polish historian Bogdan Musiał in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* has claimed that Bauman, apart from being himself a victim of totalitarian purges, participated in the political cleansing of opponents of the regime while in the pay of the Polish Secret Service. Bauman responded to Musiał's allegations, which were also published in the rightwing Polish magazine *Ozon*, by stating that: "What is true in his article is not new, because everybody knew I was a communist, and that I served also for several years in the 'internal army'" (Edemariam 2007), the only new fact being that he joined the secret service for three years when he was 19. About this cooperation with intelligence Bauman explains that it came about as an accident of history as the Fourth Division, in which Bauman was placed during World War II, was co-opted for the job rather than the Second or Third Division. His job consisted in writing political pamphlets for soldiers and he was expected to inform on people who were fighting against the communist project. Bauman was thus sitting in his office and writing and this was hardly a field in which you could collect interesting or disclosing eye-opening information: "Every good citizen should participate in counter-espionage. That was one thing that I kept secret, because I signed an obligation that it would be kept secret ... So that's the only thing. All the other 'news', so called, is completely in error" (Edemariam 2007).

When asked if his work in the Secret Service might have had adverse consequences he answered: "I can't answer that question. I don't believe there was any. At the same time, I was part of a wider scene, and of course everything you do

has consequences". When confronted with the question whether his three years in the Secret Service were a mistake he responded: "They're part of my biography. I bear full responsibility for that. At that time it seemed to me the right thing to do ... Some choices in everybody's biography can be looked upon as wrong choices, except that it doesn't seem to be a wrong choice at that time. When I was 19 years old I didn't know as much as I know now that I'm 82" (Edemariam 2007). Bauman went on to say: "I have never made it a secret that I am a socialist. I was leftwing, I am leftwing, and I will die leftwing" (Edemariam 2007). Bauman sees his 'outing' as part of a new kind of witch-hunt under way in Poland where right-wing people work to legitimize the rightwing government of Lech Kaczynski and Jaroslaw Kaczynski by discrediting left-wing intellectuals. And what is missing from the stories is that immediately after he left the Secret Service he was the object of persecution for 15 years. He was spied on, his flat and telephone bugged and so on (Edemariam 2007).

The last word in this affair has probably not been written yet, and we are not to decide who is speaking most truthfully. Historians will maybe write that story or maybe not in due time if the allegations turn out lacking tangible documentation. From our own personal experience with Bauman we have many times sensed that he was not interested in talking about his personal life during the times of war and communist regime. *We do not undertake to speculate on the conscience of Bauman, and we have mentioned this so-called 'affair' because it illustrates how Bauman's life has been influenced by the evils of totalitarianism.*

Reflecting on this circumstance, it does not surprise why his books to such a marked degree centres on the issue of how totalitarianism, heteronomy and other societal forms make immoral actions possible – but also how totalitarianism and evil make it possible to stand out as one of the few moral beings among acquiescing perpetrators or passive bystanders. However, no matter how the affair instigated by Musial's revelations eventually turns out, Bauman's sociological body of work has to be assessed on other than moral terms, as his past life neither qualifies nor disqualifies his writings. There is not necessarily a one-to-one identity between the lived life of an author and his or her writings..

### **Against Heteronomy, Totalization and the Assumptions of Modern Sociology**

As we mentioned above, Zygmunt Bauman has blessed sociology with a wide range of compelling analyses, novel concepts and challenging understandings which have all been incorporated into the overarching story of the transformation of modernity and connected to the accompanying human consequences. With respect to assessing the selected core features of Bauman's sociology each contributor has been asked to present Bauman's ideas and discuss their strengths and weaknesses and then evaluate their significance for sociology and contemporary social theory. One way to explain the selection of certain features of Bauman's wide-ranging work is to say that all included issues in this book reflect Bauman's ongoing critical reflection on heteronomy or totalization on various levels – individual, relational and societal – by way of which he challenges several tacit assumptions of modern sociology.

The contributions to the book can, in a broad sense, be organized or classified under the headings of *Methodological Issues*, *Ethics*, *Social Integration* and *Politics*. Concerning the methodological and stylistic issue of how to do sociology, Bauman has – despite not being overtly concerned with methodological questions – continuously been stressing how all theory is selective in choosing a certain focus and empirical data to support this focus (Bauman 2004). Consequently, no theory can be all-encompassing or all-telling and therefore totalizing theory is a misguided effort. Thus, ambivalence and the fragmentary are not momentary irritants in our desire to understand, but remain part and parcel of the human way of comprehending the world. Bauman is also stressing how metaphors are crucial, but equally partial instruments in understanding social life. Methodologically, Bauman has also been eager to work out the significance of ambivalence in social life and in the apprehension of it. In this volume we have therefore included contributions of a more methodological orientation.

In Chapter 1, “Bauman on Metaphors – A Harbinger of Humanistic Hybrid Sociology”, *Michael Hviid Jacobsen* and *Sophia Marshman* investigate how Bauman’s writings stylistically can be seen as a humanistic hybrid between sociology and more literary expositions, between social science and poetics. One of the primary means stemming from this hybridity is Bauman’s frequent recourse to metaphors as a fertile way of describing and analysing the human world – metaphors such as ‘tourist’ and ‘vagabond’ which have captured the sociological imagination of many scholars around the world. By mixing sociology with literary sources and poetic formulations such as metaphors, Bauman dissolves clear-cut divisions between the different realms of human knowledge and exposes a more lenient attitude towards how to conduct and report sociological knowledge. Jacobsen and Marshman applaud Bauman’s ability to present a poignant metaphorical arsenal for combined analytical and moral purposes. According to them, Bauman’s utilization of metaphors attests to a ‘humanization through metaphors’ strategy aimed at pointing to the inhumanities and injustices in modernity and liquid modernity alike and to the possibility of a more humane world waiting somewhere beyond these social formations. However, they are also cautious to add that metaphors cannot stand alone as ornamentations of sociological knowledge – they need sociological substance and analytical clarity and validity.

In Chapter 2, “Bauman on Ambivalence – Fully Acknowledging the Ambiguity of Ambivalence”, *Matthias Junge* shows how Bauman’s contribution to a sociological understanding of ambivalence is much needed because sociologists have often ignored the more explicit phenomenon of ambivalence as central to the construction of social order. A crucial point of Bauman’s work is that ambivalence has come to stay and therefore sociology should be better at appreciating the inherently ambivalent character of social life. Junge initially locates the work of Bauman on ambivalence within wider sociological theory claiming that Bauman’s perspective is one of the few explicating how ambivalence remains a pivotal aspect of our understanding of phenomena such as culture, language, order, ethics, risk or waste. Junge also shows, through a selected reading of Bauman’s oeuvre from the early work to the more recent, how Bauman’s appreciation of ambivalence has undergone a refinement throughout the years. Junge appreciatively concludes the chapter with

the observation that Bauman's conceptualization of ambivalence is itself ambiguous, oozing with what the author calls an 'experimental plurality of perspectives' that incites us to work with fuzzy and ambiguous concepts and phenomena.

Bauman has treated the issue of ethics and morality in a variety of texts and one basic point he continues to argue is that morality is to be understood as individually or personally felt responsibility based on an inherent and pre-societal moral impulse (Bauman 1993). Morality cannot be legislated or subsumed under universal and all-encompassing principles. To him, morality is a matter of personal choice and personal sacrifice in contingent circumstances and he thus challenges most of the sociological theories dealing with ethics and morality. We have therefore included two contributions that deal with how ethical and moral issues are treated in Bauman's work.

*Manni Crone*, in Chapter 3 entitled "Bauman on Ethics – Intimate Ethics for a Global World?", explores one of the central tenets and continuing topics in Bauman's writings, namely his widely acknowledged theorizing on morality and ethics and the transformation from modern legislative ethics to a postmodern morality of responsibility and proximity. Crone presents and locates Bauman's critique of modern law-based ethics followed by an exposition of his alternative and more postmodern sociological perspective on morality. Bauman suggests that sociology should not investigate how society creates morality which is the question conventional theory, that sees society as the guardian of morality posits. Rather, it should research into how different social forms manipulate morality, differently. While the author supports Bauman's critique of the modern law-based ethics, she contends that Bauman only goes half-way in formulating a genuine alternative to existing sociological theories of morality. She also remains critical to the possibilities of expanding a 'morality of proximity' to global contexts and how an unspoken ethical demand on the micro level may be transformed into a matter of politics and justice on the macro level. Crone notes, however, an apparent shift in Bauman's work in recent years – a shift leading to the support of global cosmopolitan law and politics.

In Chapter 4, "Bauman on Genocide – Modernity and Mass Murder: From Classification to Annihilation?", *Sophia Marshman* explores the sociological importance of Bauman's neo-classical study *Modernity and the Holocaust*. This study severely challenges established ideas about the civilization of modern society since Bauman demonstrates how Holocaust was also a modern phenomenon and not simply a return to pre-modern uncivilized barbarism, and therefore the Holocaust can be seen as a window into the potentialities of modern societies. Marshman discusses criticism of Bauman's thesis that the spread of 'instrumental rationality' is accounting for why the Holocaust became a reality. The author concludes that Bauman's unique contribution to a sociological understanding of the Holocaust consists in his work on classification. Bauman seeks to universalize the lessons of the Holocaust and its dangerous ascriptive criteria of difference. Moreover, the author illustrates how Bauman has carried on to show that also in the liquid modern period do we incessantly seek self-definition through contrast with the irredeemable 'other'.

The sociological core issue of social order or social integration is something that Bauman has dealt with in various ways. Theoretically, he argues in favour of

dispensing with the idea of determining totality or social system. His more chaos-acknowledging concept capturing the social totality is ‘habitat’ which refers to the over-all context of living consisting of historically created goals and means and in which actions and meanings is *possible*. The constant changes of the habitat cannot be explained objectively, that is, without reference to the subjective actions of the actors involved. If some of the actors had acted differently, the habitat would also have turned out differently. The states of the habitat are contingent and the habitat is therefore a chaotic and ambivalent condition for *all* actors. However, the most powerful and thereby free actors can, naturally, handle this contingent condition along the lines of their interest and wishes in highest degree (Bauman 1992). Society or the totality does not determine in advance the actions and meanings of the actors as is implied in paradigms that stress humans as being socialized to play out their cultural background. Such paradigms and their understandings of integration favour the creation and exclusion of strangers. Bauman instead stresses an understanding of integration which conceptualizes freedom as intrinsic to processes of social integration. These ideas – and in connection to these how globalization is not merely an integrating but also a disintegrating phenomenon – are spelled out in the following contributions.

In Chapter 5, “Bauman on Freedom – Consumer Freedom as the Integration Mechanism of Liquid Society”, *Poul Poder* provides an exposition of Bauman’s analysis of individual freedom as developed during the last couple of decades. Bauman criticizes the common sociological assumption of thinking agency (freedom) as a generic feature of actors. Poder therefore argues that Bauman’s theory is a significant contribution to a genuine sociological understanding of freedom. By theorizing resources and security as positive conditions of freedom, Bauman moves the understanding of freedom further than the understanding of freedom qua liberation or emancipation from old tradition and structures common to conventional ‘negative’ individualization theory. Bauman’s analysis of contemporary individual freedom is original by suggesting that social integration is ensured through individual consumer freedom rather than through domination and ideological indoctrination, common values or habit and tradition. However, it is also explained how Bauman’s analysis has certain limitations and intimated how his positive theory of freedom can be further developed.

In Chapter 6, “Bauman on Consumerism – Living the Market-Mediated Life”, *Tony Blackshaw* argues that Bauman’s work on consumerism offers deep insights into what it means to live a market-mediated life. According to Bauman, consumerism should not be seen merely as a particular set of activities contained in a certain sphere of social life as it is mostly done. Rather, it is more to the point to understand consumerism as referring to a whole way of life, which is why Bauman speaks of ‘consuming life’. In discussing other theorists’ take on consumerism, Blackshaw underlines how consumerism for Bauman is less an ideological conspiracy in which we all collude as a competition between sellers and buyers who try to get the best value for their money. In conclusion, Blackshaw suggests that Bauman’s message is that liquid modern individuals need to develop the ability to get away from the dominant re-usable language of consumerism to form an alternative discourse that speaks itself for the first time.

In Chapter 7, “Bauman on Globalization – The Human Consequences of a Liquid World”, *Mark Davis* critically explores Bauman’s analysis of globalization, which centres on the human consequences of globalization in contrast to a lot of globalization literature that centres on economic or political processes, financial transactions of global markets, technological advances or the World Wide Web. Initially, Davis introduces to the central themes in Bauman’s analysis of globalization, which is the relationship between globalization and his wider theoretical model of ‘liquid modernity’; the re-stratification of the world’s population into those that are free to move globally on the one hand, and those that are condemned to a life lived locally on the other; and, finally, the prevalence of fear and insecurity at both the macro- and micro-levels of ‘liquid life’ in the age of ‘negative globalization’. Bauman sees globalization as forming two dominant cultural-types, namely the ‘tourist’ and the ‘vagabond’. However, the author is critical of Bauman’s analysis for being limited by a ‘will to dualism’, which he believes remains a problematic tendency in Bauman’s work precisely because of the importance such dualities are given in his analysis. To take the present example of ‘tourists’ and ‘vagabonds’, Davis finds it far from easy to identify particular empirical social groups that fit the descriptions Bauman provides.

In Chapter 8, “Bauman on Strangers – Unwanted Peculiarities”, *Niclas Månsson* discusses Bauman’s perspective on strangers as a central theme running through his writings during the 1980s and 1990s. Månsson starts out by delineating the gradually evolving perspective on strangers in Bauman’s work and by locating it alongside other traditions dealing with strangers within sociology. The author shows how Bauman provides an original analysis of the social construction of strangers as representing ambivalence respectively in solid modernity and liquid modernity and how strangers are still part and parcel of human existence and the outcome of any attempt to construct social order. Månsson also describes those specific strategies that are deployed by different types of societies in order to either incorporate or eradicate the stranger ranging from assimilating via expelling to eliminating politics and practices. The chapter is concluded by Månsson’s Bauman-inspired understanding of the necessity to learn to live with ambivalence – and thus also with strangers.

Politics and more widely the issue of power has been an undercurrent running throughout the work of Bauman, never really present, yet always touched upon implicitly or lingering between the lines. His mistrust of iron-clad political ideologues or all-encompassing political programmes – due to their totalizing and totalitarian tendencies – has meant that his own work on politics has always been ‘in search of’ rather than arriving at a specific political agenda. Despite Bauman’s effort to carve out a political mentality of the contemporary age of apathy (Bauman 1999), it remains characteristic of his work that he has always been reluctant to explicate the actual content of ‘the good society’ or ‘the common good’ and yet he has never surrendered the utopian hope of a better society.

Consequently, *Mikael Carleheden* in Chapter 9, “Bauman on Politics – Stillborn Democracy”, explains how Bauman considers that what happens ‘at the base’ rather than the brighter legal-political formalities ‘at the top’ to be of greater bearing on the conditions of human life. Bauman challenges the widespread idea that democracy is a very defining feature of modern society. Thus, the commonly thought connection

between freedom and democracy on the one hand, and modernity on the other, is broken and opens for an analysis of the contradictions between democracy and other types of modern institutions such as industrialism, bureaucracy and commercialism. Carleheden contends that we have a lot to learn from Bauman's analysis of such contradictions. However, in critique of Bauman he also argues that Bauman's theory is too one-sided and tends to lead social criticism into a dead-end.

In Chapter 10, "Bauman on Power – From 'Solid' to 'Light'?", *Robert Campain* outlines Bauman's understanding of power from a 'hard/solid' modernity to 'soft/liquid' modernity. According to Bauman, also power becomes softer as he argues that we now live in a post-panoptical period where disengaging techniques of speed, slippage, escape, elision and avoidance become characteristic forms of power contributing to de-institutionalization rather than institutionalization. Campain pinpoints strengths and limitations of Bauman's insights and particularly criticizes the extent to which Bauman's broad definitions of modernity and liquid modernity represent and capture the complexity of contemporary social arrangements as questions of agency – politics and resistance to power – need to be examined. A main point of the author's argument is to emphasize how power is central to the, in one sense, only important question of 'What shall we do and how shall we live?', as the ways power is exercised – by individuals in their daily interactions with one another, and at the broader social and global level – go to the heart of the human condition. Consequently, a sociological imagination must always be seeking to examine the way in which power is employed and the consequences for human freedom and the exercising of moral responsibility.

Chapter 11, "Bauman on Utopia – Welcome to the Hunting Zone" by *Michael Hviid Jacobsen*, explores another central aspect of Bauman's work that has received surprisingly sparse attention, namely his utopianism and utopian analysis. Bauman challenges conventional sociological wisdom in that he defends the necessity of utopianism in social thinking, yet remains critical of the widespread tendency to regard utopia as an end-state or final destination. To him utopia is a constantly receding horizon, a knife pressed against the throat of the future. Throughout his work – from the early writings in English to the latest – utopia has remained a central tenet, concern and presence in Bauman's writings both as a temper or mentality and in recent years also as a thematic optic for understanding wider social transformations. Central to Bauman's perspective is utopia as a critical counter-culture – utopia as immanence and transcendence. However, utopia remains an ambivalent phenomenon in his writings because utopia as critical counter-culture may inspire hope of a better present and future but, when enforced or realized, eclipse the chance of such betterment ever to follow. Throughout the chapter, Jacobsen illustrates how utopianism relates to a host of other central concepts and themes in Bauman's sociology. He ends up welcoming Bauman's utopianism as a fertile addition to social theory, but also pinpoints that the inconclusiveness of Bauman's utopianism presents an obstacle to more substantial theorizing.

In the book's Postscript, "Pro Domo Sua" ("About Myself"), *Zygmunt Bauman*, for the first time more substantially, reflects on the twists and turns of his lifelong sociological vocation and on those who have inspired his work. He particularly emphasizes how he took the book *The Rebel* by the French existentialist writer

Albert Camus and *The Prison Notebooks* by the revolutionary social theorist Antonio Gramsci to his heart in a way that has been formative on his sociological outlook on the world. He also describes his passage into and out of the postmodernity debate and other aspects central to the development of his thinking. All in all, this postscript reads as an important and illuminating self-reflection on behalf of Bauman.

### **How this Book Can Be Used**

Compared to many other introductions to, or discussions of, the work of Zygmunt Bauman mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and towards the end of this introductory chapter want to emphasize some differences in order to explicate what this book in particular offers and consider how it may be used.

Firstly, as explained above, this book introduces to and evaluates Bauman with respect to essential features and themes of his sociological work and it highlights how Bauman is devoted to sociology as a theoretical discipline by focussing on how he challenges many ingrained and taken-for-granted ideas of contemporary sociology. In brief, this introduction to his work seeks to introduce Bauman through actualizing his significance for the theoretical and analytical discipline of sociology. It does not limit itself to Bauman's most recent writings which explore 'liquid modernity' as a key metaphor (Elliott 2007),<sup>3</sup> as such time restriction is unproductive to our aim of critically appreciating how the sociology of Bauman has contributed to sociology at large.

Secondly, other introductions (Jacobsen 2004; Tester 2004; Beilharz 2000; Smith 1999) on the overall apply a chronological way of introducing as they map Bauman's project by taking as their launching-pad to tell the story about his Marxist beginnings and then carry on through what can be seen as different phases of intellectual influences and development. In this book we do not expose Bauman's ideas in the context of the development of his authorship. Instead, our focus is on the selected theoretical themes in order to discuss Bauman's contribution in terms of its both more specific and broader sociological implications.

Thirdly, this book contains specialized treatment of each topic. Each contribution therefore engages in a critical evaluation of Bauman's theorizing with the aim of suggestion how it may contribute to sociological theory more generally and how it may be improved. By focussing on the pros and cons of Bauman's perspective, each chapter intends to show both the promises as well as the shortcomings of Bauman's sociology.

Given these differences compared to other books on Bauman our book can be used as an introduction to the basic framework of Bauman's sociology, but also as way of getting a complex and critical understanding of his theorizing and its

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3 Zygmunt Bauman's 'liquid turn' has in recent years resulted in numerous books ranging from *Liquid Modernity* (2000) through *Liquid Love* (2003), *Liquid Life* (2005) and *Liquid Fear* (2006) to *Liquid Times* (2007). These titles all testify to the prevalence and importance of the metaphor of liquidity in Bauman's latest writings justifying his classification as *the* theorist of liquidity.

significance for contemporary sociology. In brief, Bauman's work is contextualized and not merely treated isolated as an entity in itself.

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