



From Liquid Society to Refugee Crisis:

Zygmunt Bauman and Psycho-Sociological Mapping of Time

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Bauman was a strong moral voice for the outcasts marginalised and dispossessed in a world upended by globalisation and describing how many people have seen their chances of a dignified life destroyed by the new borderless world. He also wrote about the crisis of democracy, the fight with terrorism and the migration crisis. In recent years Bauman analysed the refugee crisis and the rise of right wing populism across Europe and the US as a “crisis of humanity”. Bauman argues there is a shortcut resolution to the contemporary refugee crisis (Humanity is in crisis) and there is no way out from that crisis other than the solidarity of humans. He fearlessly spoke truth to power, and by questioning about the concept of globalisation, he was of the view that globalisation is a projected term meant to advance central power and disempower the marginalised and rootless individuals that led to the furtherance of the gap between rich and poor. His place in contemporary social theory has been achieved through hard work, progressive sophistication, a philanthropic attitude, endless enthusiasm and a hermeneutic search for knowledge and truth. Bauman is considered as the theorist of postmodernity and is particularly known for his analysis of the links between modernity and the Holocaust and for his description of the shift from modernity to postmodernity and of the resultant ethical issues. Zygmunt Bauman as a great repeater of key ideas had a pronounced homogeneity about his thought. Evidently defining the onus of social scientist or social critic precisely to be the “revealer” of reality even of that part of reality that is not immediately visible or

that had been deliberately hidden; in effect, upholding this spirit of inquisitiveness and observing sharp behavioural contradictions in dynamic micro-sociologies in time-space continuum.

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Zygmunt Bauman, counted as one of the most celebrated and prolific European sociologists who died at the age of 91, was a perceptive observer and extensive and prolific writer of modernity and the mind behind the brilliant concept what he calls the “liquidity of modernity” and in which identity is constantly fluid, generating unprecedented anxiety and insecurity. Bauman says “In liquid modernity, we have moved from an epoch where we understood ourselves as “pilgrims” in search of deeper meaning to one where we act as “tourists” in search of multiple but fleeting social experiences”. In his book *Liquid Modernity* (2000), he examined the effects of consumption-based economies, the increasing disappearance of social institutions that once provided the foundations of human societies, and the rise of globalisation. He explored the fluidity of identity in the modern world, the Holocaust, consumerism and globalisation and disappearance of solid structures and institutions. He distances himself from postmodernism and rebrands his approach to understanding the contemporary world as ‘liquid modernity. He argued that this new “liquid modern” world of ours, like all liquids, cannot stand still and keep its shape for long. Everything

seems to change – the fashions we follow, the events that catch our attention, the things we dream of and the things we fear. An increasing polarisation between the elite and the rest, our growing tolerance of ever-expanding inequalities, and a separation between power and politics remained constant themes in his writings. In *Liquid Modernity* Bauman talked about self-identity and mass consumer products. He argued that in a consumer society, people wallow in things, fascinating, and enjoyable things. If you define your value by the things you acquire and surround yourself with, being excluded is humiliating. We live in a world of communication; everyone gets information about everyone else. There is universal comparison and you do not just compare yourself with the people next door, you compare yourself to people all over the world and with what is being presented as the decent, proper and dignified life. As the state and the market vie for supremacy within the space of global capitalism, the fate of poor and vulnerable people assumes particular importance. As he puts it: “When elephants fight, pity the grass.” He also coined the phrase “Liquid Fear” and by “Liquid Fear” he means fear flowing through our own courtyard, not staying in one place but diffused. And the trouble with liquid fear, unlike the concrete specific danger which you know and are familiar with is that you do not know when it will strike. “We are walking”, that is his favourite metaphor, “as if on a minefield”. We are aware that the field is full of explosives, but we cannot tell where there will be an explosion and when. There are no solid structures around us all on which we can rely, in which we can invest our hopes and expectations. Even most powerful governments, very often, cannot deliver on their promise. They do not have enough power to do so.

Zygmunt Bauman analysed diverse sociological themes and topics which include Modernity and Holocaust, post-modernity, globalisation, consumerism, inequality, identity, critical sociology, liquid modernity, fear, death, immortality, culture, ethics, love, individualisation, education, freedom, happiness, etc. His sociology is in several ways altogether different from mainstream and hardcore/orthodox sociology, and can be seen more as a critical

social commentary with a certain literary edge. He has altered sociology, not the other way around, and his place in contemporary social theory has been achieved through hard work, progressive sophistication, a philanthropic attitude, endless enthusiasm and hermeneutic search for knowledge and truth.

Bauman was a strong moral voice for the outcasts, marginalised and dispossessed in a world upended by globalisation and he described how many people have seen their chances of a dignified life destroyed by the new borderless world. Whether he was writing about the Holocaust or globalisation, his focus remained on how humans can create a dignified life through ethical decisions. He wrote that it was the rational world of modern civilisation that made the holocaust thinkable. In his famous book *Modernity and Holocaust* (a work for which he got the Amfali Prize) he argued that the Holocaust could only happen because of modernity’s based technology and bureaucracy. What modernity did was to generate unintended consequences of bureaucratic complexity and thus created the conditions in which moral responsibility disappeared. He also wrote about the crisis of democracy, the fight with terrorism and the migration crisis. In recent years, Bauman analysed the refugee crisis and the rise of right wing populism across Europe and the US as a “crisis of humanity”. Bauman argues there is a shortcut resolution to the contemporary refugee crisis (Humanity is in crisis) and there is no way out from that crisis other than the solidarity of humans

Bauman is considered as a theorist of postmodernity and is particularly known for his analysis of the links between modernity and the Holocaust and for his description of the shift from modernity to postmodernity and of the resultant ethical issues. He had strong reservation with the fashionable term “postmodernity”; Bauman felt that the term “postmodern” is a misleading, confusing and problematic term. He instead used the term “liquid modernity” to better explain the state of constant mobility, changes which he witnessed in relations, identities, and global economics within contemporary society. Instead of referring to modernity and postmodernity, Bauman writes of a transition from solid modernity to a more liquid form of social life. For Bauman,

postmodernity is the result of modernity's failure to rationalise the world and the amplification of its capacity for constant change. Bauman also diagnosed the crises of social democracy and warned of a "liquid modern" world that put consumption before compassion. Bauman experienced poverty and anti-Semitism that fuelled his commitment to social justice. He fearlessly spoke truth to power, and questioned the concept of globalisation; he was of the view that globalisation is a projected term meant to advance central power and disempower the marginalised and rootless individuals that led to the furtherance of gap between rich and poor.

Zygmunt Bauman as a great repeater of key ideas had a pronounced homogeneity about his thought. Evidently defining the onus of social scientist or social

critic precisely to be the "revealer" of reality even of that part of reality that is not immediately visible or that had been deliberately hidden, thereby upholding this spirit of inquisitiveness and observing sharp behavioural contradictions in dynamic micro-sociologies in time-space continuum. This is what Bauman's world of sociological praxis meant and to keep with it would be a fitting tribute to his astute academic odyssey.

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