

On Z. Bauman's book 'A Chronicle of Crisis: 2011-2016', with the preface by Dr. N. Lawson. London, UK: Social Europe Edition 2017. 163 p. ISBN 978-1-9997151-0-6

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Zygmunt Bauman was undoubtedly one of the most influential sociologists of our times. It's hard to outline the realm of his interests and contributions. Some said that it was the idea of individualized society, others – the concept of liquid modernity, still others – the idea of current globalization, etc. To my mind, all the above aspects had been the various sides of an issue of transition from modernity to postmodernity, or as in the Preface to the book under review has been said, the transition from 'solid modernity' to the 'relativism of post-modernity' or taking the issue in the words of A. Gramsci, the times 'of morbid symptoms that appear in the interregnum when the old is not yet dead and the new is not yet born'(p. x), that is an unexpected break of continuity with the past.

This book is interdisciplinary in essence because it embraces almost all spheres of the life of our planet, from social and political to environmental ones because it contains very concise but deep insights into each of them. It's already a merit of the book by itself. But I'm never was as universal as Bauman was. Therefore, I'd concentrate on some of them only. Especially on those that, to my mind, are still are not well investigated and therefore enough elaborated. The book contains of twenty-four contribution that Bauman wrote for *the Social Europe* from 2011 until his death.

Bauman draws a reader's attention to the issue of the outcast generation. He wrote that 'every generation has its measure of outcasts... It does not, however, happen often that the plight of being outcasts may stretch to embrace *a generation as a whole*. This may, however, be happening now' (p. 3). Besides, Bauman wrote, 'each of generational changes arises from more or less traumatic events; in each case, a break in continuity and the necessity of some painful readjustments, caused by a clash between inherited/learned expectations and unanticipated realities, were signaled...Indeed, after several decades of rising expectations, the present-day newcomers to adult life confront expectations *falling* – and much too steeply and abruptly for any hope of a gentle and safe descent.' These newcomers are confronted with the situation of 'a long, dark tunnel stretching behind every one of the few blinking, flickering and fast fading lights trying in vain to pierce through the gloom' (p. 4).

'This is the first post-war (i.e. after the WWII – O. Yan.) generation facing the prospect of downward mobility. Their elders were trained to expect, matter-of-factly, that children will aim higher and reach further than they themselves managed..., they expected the inter-generational 'reproduction of success' to go on beating their own records as easily as they themselves used to overtake the achievement of their parents. Generation of parents were used to expecting that their children will have a yet wider range of choices..., be yet better

educated, climb yet higher in the hierarchy of learning and professional excellence, be richer and feel even more secure.' Bauman stressed that nothing has prepared 'them for the arrival of the hard, uninviting, and inhospitable new world of downgrading, devaluation of earned merits, doors showed and locked, volatility of jobs and stubbornness of jobless', and so on and so forth. (p. 4-5).

For the first time, 'the *whole class of graduates* faces a high probability, almost the certainty, of ad-hoc, temporary, insecure and part-time jobs, unpaid 'trainee' pseudo-jobs deceitfully rebranded practices -- all considerably below their acquired skills and eons below the level of their expectations...' A capitalist society, Bauman underscored, 'geared in the first place to the defense and preservation of extant privileges and only in distant...second to the lifting of the rest out of their deprivation, is high on goals while low on means.' And what is then? Is a supra-generational consent is possible? Or we are on the eve of a 'new war of generations'? (p. 6-7).

To my mind, the issues of the **outcast generation** and intergenerational conflict are the most acute for so called developing countries and for countries that experience a double stress, namely of coming the Fourth industrial i.e. the digital revolution and sharply growing global mobility. Such double pressure strengthened by the entering of humanity into uncertain and risky world and the weather fluctuations creates the ground for the stresses and social conflicts.

A transition from a society of producers to a society of consumers or from a sustainable modernity to a liquid post-modernity deserves special attention. We are in the transition from the solid and predictable life of the twentieth century to the fragility and the fluidity of a twenty first century in which everyone feels himself unstable and temporary, Bauman stressed.

In a political and sociological literature a sustainability and sustainable development are usually interpreted in demographic, social and environmental terms like the limits of growth, diminished poverty, rational use of energy and other natural resources and a nature protection. Not rejecting these approaches, Bauman focused the reader's attention on the issue of **political balance between the left and the right**. He argued that a 'social democracy has lost its own separate constituency - its social fortresses and ramparts' (p. 9). And therefore this constituency has been pulverized into an aggregate of self-concerned and self-centered individuals, competing for jobs and promotions, with little if any awareness of the commonality of fate and even less inclination to close ranks and demand solidarity action.

Accordingly, '*the 'solidarity' was a phenomenon endemic to the now bygone society of producers* (my italics - O. Yan.); it is but a nostalgia-bred fancy in the society of consumers. Members of this brave new society are notorious for swarming the same shops on the same date and hour ruled by the invisible 'hand of the market'. They have no common interest as tax of the taxpayers' (p. 9). There are no substantial differences between the right and the left now. And 'it is the right and the right only, that with the left's consent assumed and the uncontested dictatorship over political agenda of the day' (p. 10). Therefore, the 'message to the poor and needy cannot be clearer: there is no alternative to the society that makes rooms for poverty and for needs stripped of the prospects of satisfaction, but no room for dreams and dreamers' (p. 11).

Bauman bound the above right-shift with the idea of a **just society**. This society 'is a society permanently sensitive and vigilant to all cases of injustice and undertaking to take action to rectify them without waiting for the search of the universal model of justice to be completed.'

It is the society that has 'the capacity of making real and formal human right to decent life – recasting 'freedom *de jure*' into 'freedom *de facto*' (p. 22).

In the end of this section Bauman discusses the opposition offered by R. Rorty, namely the **politics of movement vs. the politics of campaign** (p. 22-23). Since during 30 years I've studied theory and practice of social movements and campaigns in Russia and abroad both as a theorist and a participant, I'd like to analyze this opposition a bit more detailed. First, the campaigns and movements are closely interconnected. Second, the campaign is usually temporary while the movement may exist over the years and decades. Third, in order to reach some positive result the campaign has to be repeated several times. Fourth, the statement that the politics of movement starts from *an ideal model of a fully 'just society'* means that it is going on about ideologically-sound movement only. Fifth, if the grassroots confronts with a certain injustice it doesn't mean that a total political structure of a given society is unjust as well. Sixth, the above two forms of politics have different structures, resource base and so on and so forth. It is sad that in this section Bauman only signified but not developed a very important of aspect of civil activism, its time regime. Anyhow, it's clear that any 'sustainability' is usually reached over a set of political and public campaigns and movements.

In his numerous works on postmodernity Bauman seldom used to spoke on the influence of new **scientific and technological revolution** on a society. And so the section titled 'On Internet, Slender and Irresponsibility' is of a special interest. Being not a technocrat, but a sociologist Bauman argues that the 'value of an information is enhanced or debased not so much by its content, as by the authority of its author or messenger' (p. 25). In this statement Bauman refer to J. Habermas' idea that 'people tend to judge the value of information by the quality of its source' (ibid).

But in our type of society, Bauman continued, all or almost all communication belongs to the 'distorted' kind of information. To be free from being distorted the communication would require genuine equality of participants, equality not just around the debating table, but in the 'real', offline or off-the-debating chamber life. And the main conclusion: Realization of 'such a condition would require nothing less than exploding and levelling up the hierarchy of speakers' authority' (p. 25). That is why the '*genuine adversary/alternative to the internet anonymity is not the principle of freedom of speech but the principle of responsibility: internet-style anonymity is first and foremost, and most importantly socially, an officially endorsed license for irresponsibility and a public lesson in practicing it...*' (p. 26, my italics – O. Yan).

In the online world, unlike the in the offline one, everybody can be the 007 agent. Being involved in the world of computer i.e. simulation world children and teenagers are losing a difference between real and virtual worlds. So modern internet, Bauman stated, is potentially the deadly weapons. 'Slander, invective, calumny, slur, smear, casting aspersion and defaming belong to the deadliest of weapons: deadly to persons, but also to the social fabric' (p. 27). It leads to an emergence of the phenomenon of a 'floating responsibility.' Here Bauman refer to Hannah Arendt who warned us the long time ago that such responsibility is the 'responsibility of nobody' or a total irresponsibility.

In this respect the Bauman's notice on **the shaky prospects of meritocracy** is indicative. He draws our attention to the divergence of two processes/trends. On the one hand, a university diploma is an entrance ticket to a labor market. The most prestigious academic institutions are full of applications every year. 'Social promotion-through-education serves for many years as a fig leaf for naked/indecent inequality of human conditions and prospects: as long as academic achievements correlated with handsome social rewards, people who failed to climb up the

social ladder had only themselves to blame – and only themselves on whom to unload bitterness and wrath' (p. 30). On the other hand, there is a shock of rapidly rising phenomenon of graduate unemployment much below graduate...expectations' hits a wider category of people. Not only in the US and the EU one could observe a picture of rising heaps of frustrated hopes. In the 'societies of allegedly-powered and information-driven economies and of education-driven economic success, knowledge seems to be failing to guarantee success and education failing to deliver the success-guaranteeing knowledge' (p. 33). How to maintain the idea of meritocracy in these conditions?

The above theme is tightly interconnected with the **new looks of inequality**. Bauman cited C.M. Blow, the US columnist: 'According to the National Centre for Children in Poverty, 42 percent of American children live in low-income homes and about a fifth live in poverty. It gets worse. The number of children living in poverty has risen 33 percent since 2000...There is no need to tell the parents of 42 percent of American children, struggling as they are day in, day out, trying to make ends meet, that the prospects of equality are nowhere nearer their children, while parents of the 20 percent of children living in poverty would hardly understand what the 'chances', of the vanishing of which the latest figures inform, were supposed to mean'. The message is very simple: 'this is no longer a land of opportunity; this is a land for people for gumption' (p. 35). Bauman concluded this section pointing out that 'inequality is bad not as such, not because of its own injustice, inhumanity, immorality and life destroying potential, but for making souls bad and melancholic.' It is a meeting point of the natural and social sciences because as it had been scientifically confirmed, '*humans become stressed when they find themselves at the bottom of <social> hierarchy*' (p. 37, my italics – O. Yan.). In any case, as Bauman argued, the Americans as well as the Russians are in a 'big disconnect.'

But alongside with inequality **the forced equality is produced by new technologies**. In principle there are endless forms of them. Bauman distinguish two of them: an 'information tsunami' and production of micro-drones. The former is presented by hackers' attacks and the latter by mass production of micro-drones which size is reduced to the size of a dragonfly or of a humming-bird.

For the reason of a suddenness of their appearance, unidentified size and speed of attack a cloud-like flight of drones is a mighty weapon. Besides, people are very sensitive to the invasion of any strangers in their private life, be it their behavior, time-table of activity, contacts with parents and friends, etc. New generation of drones will be not only much smaller but 'will be programmed to fly on their own. 'The new generation of drones will stay invisible while making everything else accessible to view; they will stay immune while rendering everything else vulnerable' (p. 56). The 'end of invisibility and autonomy is a shock for all levels and structures of individual life. We are 'never being alone again.

More than that, 'everything private is now done, potentially, in public – and is potentially available to public consumption... This erosion of anonymity is a product of pervasive social media services, cheap cell phone cameras, free photo and video web-hosts, etc. But most important of all, a change in people's views about what ought to be public and what to be private' (p. 59). Bauman calls this phenomenon as 'public privacy.'

In the section on 'The Changing Nature of Work and Agency' Bauman posed two of the key questions related to the period of transition from modernity to post-modernity. It is going on *the relationships between global and local agencies and between modern and postmodern modes of governance*. 'During most of the modern era, managerial strategies...were focused on rendering behavior of their subordinates utterly predetermined and therefore predictable

though eliminating or suppressing all and any factors of influence other than the commands issued by the superiors; those strategies involved as their major tenet the repression by the subordinates of their personal idiosyncrasies...for the duration of performing the tasks set by their superiors...' (p. 114-115). The kind of performance was measured and judged down to the single yardstick 'of the job having been done as commanded' (p. 115).

In the times of hard (solid) modernity 'the managers used to record individual idiosyncrasies of the managed on the side of liabilities.' The managers repressed 'those liabilities and better still to extirpate them altogether, as factors throwing out of balance routine and uniformity, the two pillars of an instrumentally-rational performance and also of a smooth and unswerving goal-pursuit' (p. 115).

According to Bauman, the liquid phase of modernity is characterized by new managerial strategy. The side-effect of it 'is the shifting of responsibility for the results onto the shoulders of the managed, simultaneously reducing the responsibilities of the managers according to the promise of profitability they hold for the enterprise and to the evaluation of quality (measured first and foremost in financial terms) of what they deliver' (p. 116). As Bauman stressed, it means 'the though and well-nigh comprehensive *individualization* of the employer-employee relations' (p. 116).

This shift has been mainly based on three preconditions: the deregulation of the labor market; the employee have been cast in a setting that favors mutual competition instead of solidarity; the management of situational uncertainty turned into a task of the managed instead of the managers; the ties between the managers and the managed were substantially weakened; and growing autonomy of the managed and flexibility of their working times.

And here Bauman pass on to the topic that seems to me yet underdeveloped in social sciences and in sociology of large complex systems in particular. It is ***a problem of an interregnum*** or a 'state in-between' in such systems in transition. 'Interregnum – the condition in which the old ways and means of getting things done have stopped already working properly, yet the new, more effective ways and means are still at the designing stage or at best in the stage of experimentation – has its temporal, to wit 'diachronic', but also its spatial, that is 'synchronic' dimension. Calling our present condition an 'interregnum' we refer to a time-span of yet unknown length, stretching between a social setting which has its course and another, as yet under-defined and most certainly under-determined, which we expect or suspect to replace it.' (p. 119). I'd draw the reader's attention to the fact that the very interregnum is also not permanent but is dependent on the development of means of information and communication i.e. on *a speed of inversion of a space into time*. So, to my mind, is more correct to speak not only about a time of transition from one state of a particular complex system to another but about of a tempo-rhythm of a given interregnum.

Bauman absolutely right speaking in this connection about the morphology of human togetherness or the structure of human co-habitation. 'Old structures...are falling apart, its fragments enter new and untested arrangements emergent settings are spattered with blank spots and ill-fitting fragments in an advanced stage of despair, as well as with other zombie-like fragments, still mobile though out of joint and lacking obvious uses and applications: the condition typical of 'failing systems' (p. 119).

It means that *the postmodern epoch is the time of permanent re-composition of large complex systems*, and it is one of their peculiarities as unstable and therefore uncertain and potentially risky ones. 'The structures once interlocked into something reminiscent of a system are now,

clearly, in disarray. But structures' function is to serve as catapults as well as guiding/steering frames for action.' It is the 'big, perhaps the biggest question of the time of interregnum, fully and truly the 'meta-question' – one that needs to be answered in order to for all the rest questions' of our transition era.

And here Bauman shifts to the issue of my long-term interest, to the place and role of mega-cities in globalization processes in general and their role in the transformation of the nation-states in particular. Following the viewpoint of prof. Monika Kostera, Bauman stated that a certain level i.e. meso-level of social integration will be optimal for a reconciling of top-down management with self-management and self-organization. Bauman said that prof. Kostera is 'right in disqualifying the uppermost level – the level of territorially sovereign nation-states – and the lowest level, that of the individual – or family-centered life politics' (p. 121).

Bauman stated that 'territorial sovereignty – the relic of the 1648 Westphalian settlement...for the duration of the nation-building and imperial colonialism eras presumed to remain the universal precept on the world order and practiced as such – has by now, in the era of global interdependency turned into illusion' (p. 121). From my viewpoint, the global interdependency is still not totally global. There is a continuous struggle between global, national and local forces and trends. More than that, the development of internet and other technical innovations opened the battlefield of invisible attacks on every social and technical structure. Such communities and structures are now in the search of technical constructions allowed them to be inaccessible and invisible. Then, one should distinguish a spatial morphology and a social one. The former may be relatively stable while the latter is very mobile.

The investigations carried out by prof. S. Sassen from the US and by my own showed that the technical morphology of large cities is relatively stable while their social structure is very mobile. Therefore, I'm not consent with B. Barber manifesto titled 'Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities.' In particular, I disagree with his statement that the city as a human habitat of first resort, has in today's globalizing world once again become democracy's best hope'. From my viewpoint, existing cities is not 'the best bet to all of us wishing for an agency able and willing to rise to the challenges of a globalized, multicultural and multi-centered planet' (p. 122, 123).

Yes, modern mega-cities are the 'dustbins in which the globally produced problems are disposed and where they ultimately land.' At the same time the mega-cities 'function as laboratories in which effective tools to tackle and methods to resolve those problems are daily designed and put to test' (p. 123). It's a dialectics of current globalized world. Thus, it seems to me that the concluding remark of this section that 'we are, *homini sapienti*, squeezed between an increasingly irrelevant past and stubbornly recondite future' (p. 124) is much more relevant characteristic of the current period of interregnum.

In the section titled 'The Charlie Hebdo Attack and what it reveals' Bauman argued that 'political assassination is as old as humanity and the chances that will be dead before humanity dies are dim. Violence is un-detachable companion of inter-human antagonisms and conflicts – and those in turn are part and parcel of the human condition' (p. 125). But the attack on the World Trade Center, on September 11, 2001 showed that the terrorists' attack was targeted against global social institutions symbolized economic and military power of the West. And the attack of the Charlie Hebdo murders was aimed at the shaking of public opinion of the EU and of the rest world.

As Bauman stated, 'knowingly or not, by design or by default, the murders endorsed – whether explicitly or obliquely – the widespread and fast gathering public sense of effective power moving away from political rulers and towards the centers viewed as responsible for public mind-setting and opinion-making' At the same time together with 'shifting the target to another institutional realm, that of public opinion, the armed assault against Charlie Hebdo was also an act of personalized vendetta' (p. 126). From institutional viewpoint, it had been the actions aimed at further de institutionalization, individualization and privatization of human condition as well as the perceptions of public affairs shifting away from the management of established aggregated bodies to the sphere of individual 'life politics' and 'away from social to individual responsibility' (p. 127).

In media-dominated informational society and close proximity of aborigines and newcomers in large cities the Christian-Muslim antagonism is a profoundly complex phenomenon deeply rooted in the remote past and liquid' present. Bauman saw one of the roots of social and religious conflicts in the ongoing process of 'diasporisation of the world.'

The close proximity of aborigines and the newcomers is always potentially conflicting. Especially when it is goes on about the migrants for North Africa and the Near East. The deep differences in the demands and wellbeing between the above groups is a strong barrier on the way of the policy of multiculturalism. 'It is in the nature of offence and humiliation to seek an outlet, through which it can be discharged, and a target. And when it so happens, as it does all around an increasingly diasporised Europe, that the boundaries between humiliating and the humiliated overlap with the boundaries between socially privileged and socially deprived, it would be naïve not to expect that both the outlets and the targets are avidly sought keenly pinpointed. We presently live on a minefield of which we know (or at least we should) that it is spattered with explosives. Explosions occur, though there is no way to predict when and where' (p. 129).

In his concluding remarks Bauman wrote that 'hopes for freedom of self-assertion and for arresting the rise of inequality, invested in democracy, blatantly failed to realize. Democratic politics and, yet more, the trust in democracy as the best road to the solution of the most haunting social problems are in crisis'. All around Europe 'we witness a rising tide of anti-democratic sentiment – and a massive 'secession of plebeians' (in the current reincarnation as precarians) to the camps located on the opposite extreme of political spectrum though promising in unison to replace the already discredited high-mindedness with yet to be tried high-handedness of autocracy' (p. 130).

And Bauman continued, heretofore widely unknown term securitization 'has appeared quite recently in debates. What this imported term is meant to grasp and denote is the ever more frequent reclassification of something as an instance of 'insecurity'' (p.134). The widespread sense of 'existential insecurity is a hard fact: a genuine bane of our society priding itself, through the lips of its political leaders, on the progressive deregulation of labor markets and 'flexibilisation' of work and, in the end result, notorious for the growing fragility of social positions and instability of the socially recognized identities, as well as for unstopably expanding the ranks of the precariat...' (p. 137).

Governments promote anxiety because the governments 'are not interested in allying their citizens' anxieties. They are interested instead in beefing up the anxiety arising from the future's uncertainty and constant and ubiquitous sense of insecurity...' (p. 138). Among the urgent problems, Bauman repeated, are 'such principal factors of the human condition as the availability of quality jobs, reliability and stability of social standing, effective protection

against social deregulation and immunity against a denial of dignity – all such determinants of the safety and well-being which the governments, once promising full employment and comprehensive social security, are nowadays incapable of pledging, let alone delivering' (p. 138).

Bauman periodically returns to the issue of 'floating' uncertainty, fears, risks, etc. 'We may risk guessing that, if coupled with a focus on a specific, visible and tangible adversary, an intensification of fear is somehow more endurable than are dispersed floating fears of unknown origin.' In the final analysis, the 'police of 'securitisation' helps to stifle our, the bystanders', pangs of conscience at the sight of its victims; it 'adiaphorises' the migrants issue (exempts them, that is, from moral evaluation), putting those victims, once they have been cast in public opinion in the category of would-be terrorists, outside the realm of moral responsibility...' (p. 140). As a result, on the 'top of being morally callous and odious, socially blind as well as to a large extent groundless and intentionally misleading, 'securitisation' can be charged with playing into the hands of the recruiters of genuine (as distinct from falsely accused) terrorists' (p. 142).