

Chapter Four

THINKING—COMMITMENT—ASSIMILATION

BIOGRAPHICAL THEMES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF ZYGMUNT BAUMAN

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The popularity and power of social persuasion of Zygmunt Bauman are due mainly to books written in the 1980s and early 1990s. *Legislators and Interpreters*, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, *Modernity and Ambivalence* and *Postmodern Ethics* are all publications which put Bauman in the midst of the prolific and diverse discussion about postmodernity. It was the period when the most heated debate on the state of the modern world was taking place (or, in fact, drawing to a close—since it was rather the time of conclusions). Bauman's readers saw in his books a critique of postmodernity, a new vision of the coming times, frequent warnings concerning the freedom of choice, pluralism, but also making us realize that postmodernity—with its diversity, lack of faith in the reason, science and great social projects—gives us a chance that can be used by anyone who is able to abandon the illusion of modernity.

Everyone read Bauman similarly then, thinking that he just speaks on a matter that is currently valid. However, if we were willing to do the reading of these books in terms of a more historical or biographical perspective, we would need to pose a question about the personal experiences of the author, allowing him to make such a reflection. Adopting such viewpoint is all the more legitimate since today, more and more often, references are put forward to Bauman's biography or the autobiographical writing of his wife, Janina; what is more, he himself, talking

about his own life is eager to put it in the context of the history of modernity. Also significant in this respect is, for instance, Bauman's view on the parallel nature of his own way of life with the lots of Cornelius Castoriadis. This similarity refers not just to a convergence of views and political ideas, but above all to the weaving of individual experience into historical experience, a certain idea of a generation; it's about "the similarity of that curious and difficult to disentangle mixture of continuity and discontinuity" (Bauman & Tester, 2001, p. 36). Bauman's biography reminds an intellectual chronicle of an era, where the biography is intertwined with the history (of the country, generation, ideas, utopias). What Bauman writes about Castoriadis ("At no stage did he attempt to steer clear from the concerns, worries and ambitions of his contemporaries: never did he seek to locate his own interests at a safe distance from the main intellectual battlegrounds of the time" (ibid., p. 37)) can be successfully applied to him: throughout all his long life he has never stayed aside (emigration to the Soviet Union in 1939, joining the Polish First Army in 1943, membership in the Polish Workers' Party and then PZPR¹) flirting with Marxism, Marxist revisionism and humanist socialism, practicing engaged sociology or taking up criticism of modernity and capitalism.

Bauman's works are "like an intellectual chronicle of the age, a faithful record of successive generations' experiences, discoveries and blind spots, hopes and disappointments, naivetés and wisdoms" (ibid.), so it is impossible to receive them without reference to the thread of individual experiences. Undoubtedly, the vision of this kind of sociology is the result of a deliberate life strategy. In this sense, Dennis Smith (1999, p. 3) says, "Bauman is part of the story he tells. His can be found on the map he draws." This is evident, for example, when Bauman marks out the tasks of sociology: "we would like [sociologists—M.M.-I.] to show us how our *individual* biographies intertwine with the *history* we share with fellow human beings" (Bauman, 1990, p. 10; italics in the original). The demand of combining biographical themes with broader social thought is tempting, and also justified, especially when, in relation to the biography that is of the highest interest to us here, we consider the configuration of the following circumstances:

1. Zygmunt Bauman, over time, has been torn in his views between faith (especially important in this regard seems to be the Polish period

¹ Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza—Polish United Workers' Party was formed following the merging of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and the Polish Workers' Party (PPR). The union of these parties meant that since then there existed in Poland a one-party system. Below I will mostly use the name 'the Party,' except where original form needs to be preserved in citations.

of his Marxist intellectual activity) and doubt that—lined with personal experiences—related to the systemic nature of the social order as a modern illusion; the new hope to get close to the socialist utopia is brought about by emigration that gives Bauman the opportunity to observe from the outside the effects of the emancipatory activity on the part of workers, creation of the trade unions, forming the resistance, etc.

2. An important part of Bauman's discourse related to the criticism of modernity occurs on the level of re-working through the family experiences of Janina (cf. J. Bauman, 1986). *Modernity and the Holocaust* comprises an analysis of modernity as a system of rationality and bureaucracy, in which opportunities and trends of modernity culminated; an attempt of handling the things that go beyond the common thought, and that—despite the fact that the Holocaust is already a part of the past for them—could happen again; this work reveals a dilemma of a human being trying to understand their own position in the face of a struggle with the new, inhumane system.

3. Yet another aspect of biographical references is related to the ambivalence as a condition accompanying Jewish intellectuals. *Modernity and Ambivalence* highlights the treachery of the pitfall of assimilation (Bauman fell into it as a Jew living in the post-war Poland) and the trap of commitment (relating to the intellectual realm); when a diagnosis is made of the latter it seems helpful to read *Legislators and Interpreters*.

4. It is also worth considering (without expecting simple conclusions) whether *Postmodern Ethics* can be regarded as a kind of a warning for future generations, fascinated by the prospect of social paradise and moral happiness; a warning against ethical principles that are too easy and give a sense of security precisely defining the boundaries of good and evil, friends and enemies. Such warning was uttered by Janina Bauman in her memoir concerning the years after the war titled *A Dream of Belonging: My Years in Postwar Poland*² (1988; this book was also published in an altered Polish version under the title *Nowhere on Earth: Returns—Stories* (*Nigdzie na ziemi: Powroty—Opowiadania* (J. Bauman, 2011)).

Would Zygmunt Bauman, who took part in the then division of the world into the enemies and friends of the system, be able to get rid of his own experiences from the scientific discourse? And maybe—after all—it will be easier for us to understand the message contained in Bauman's texts when we connect reading them with the biography of the author?

² We read there: "If you want to do great things which you cannot do on your own, remember that NOBODY will ever exonerate you from the responsibility of an unexpected outcome of the collective action. This is the message I leave to my children and grandchildren as my last will and testament" (J. Bauman, 2011, p. 72; form as in the original).

Keith Tester, among others, is wary of such way of reading Bauman's works as in his opinion, this way involves serious reductionism, which confines social thought only to an individual dimension. Tester would also like to avoid—for the reasons indicated by Richard Sennett in *The Fall of Public Man*—veiling the public sphere with what is private (cf. Bauman & Tester, 2001). It seems that concerns of this type are relatively easy to resolve, if we take a biography as a chronicle of an era and combine it in this case with the ideas of modernity, the realities of the pre-war and the post-war Poland, the historical background of Stalinism etc. Valuable tips keep flowing to us from Charles Wright Mills, who in *The Sociological Imagination* calls for placing the fate of individuals in a wider social context in order for the fears, anxieties and concerns of a particular human being to be raised to the category of a public problem, so that they are recognized in terms of major issues for the whole generation. Turning individual anxiety into collective commitment is one of the most important challenges of sociology; sociological imagination that allows people to understand what is happening or what has happened outside their nearest environment also provides the opportunity to gain self-awareness that builds us.

In the 'Trap of Commitment'

Maria Hirszowicz, whose biography has some similarity to that of Bauman (she was e.g. an active member of the Party and a lecturer at the Warsaw University, she published texts of praise about Marxism and, ultimately, she made a strong revision of her earlier views, to finally be subjected to forced emigration),³ asks herself how it was possible that soon after the war, with the Nazi totalitarianism still fresh in their memory, Polish intellectuals relatively easy rushed to embrace the 'new faith'? Hirszowicz tries to answer this question in a semi-autobiographical book, *Pułapki zaangażowania: Intelektualiści w służbie komunizmu* (*Traps of Commitment: The Intellectuals in the Service of Communism*). The author notes that the faith in the communist system was built based on an ideal vision of the society of equality, freedom and solidarity. The undeniable charm of Marx's theory probably resulted from a potential concealed in it for a critical look at the status quo, which in the case of the Jews that had survived the war had special significance. Striving to overcome social isolation, quite visible

³ In 1968, the Polish communist government of Władysław Gomułka carried out a propaganda operation against Polish citizens of Jewish origin. Gomułka removed then Polish-Jewish professors associated with revisionism from universities. These were Leszek Kołakowski, Bronisław Baczko, Zygmunt Bauman, Maria Hirszowicz and others.

here, made itself more real through the existence in the community, bearing signs of mutual loyalty and emotional support. From this, there was only a step to automystification (self-deception), emerging at the verge of ideological commitment and truth. "Can you take a stand on important social issues and play an active role in the public life without falling into the trap of automystification?"—wonders Hirszowicz (2001, p. 8). The truth always depends on the circumstances, it facilitates the control of the situation and brings people closer to the purpose. In the important social issues, the truth is not achieved through a procedure that leads to the purification of the 'accretions' of external circumstances. Such truth can be sought on scientific grounds, but not in matters of human slavery and experienced harm. Then, the truth is easily changed into an ideology, and the conflict between them leads inevitably to automystification that provides spiritual comfort and a conviction of the strength of one's own position. Automystification deadens the sense of not only the truth, but also good, it suppresses remorse, seeking adequate justification for the committed deeds. "Self-deception can satisfy: a. a desire to treat one's own actions as actions based on reasonable assumptions; b. a desire of moral justification of personal choices; c. a need to maintain the coherence of views in all those cases where the truth threatens the attitudes" (ibid.), says Hirszowicz.

Janina and Zygmunt share the illusions of the epoch, which on the one hand formulates their choices, and on the other hand limits them. They, in different stages of life, fall for various 'promises' submitted by communism. Among the latter, one should mention first of all satisfying the desire of belonging, political identification with something that goes beyond the routine of the daily life, identification with a 'higher matter,' usually associated with being in the community and the expression of radical opposition to social inequality, uncontrolled mechanisms of capitalism, poignant poverty and humiliation. For Janina, who tries at all costs to break free from the nightmare of *alienated* childhood, the desire to do something momentous after years of war vegetation and struggle for survival meant that communism, originally announcing the abolition of class divisions and ethnic minorities, finally turned out to be a great as much as an unfulfilled hope. "The Party never asks to be judged by the morality of its action. Its kingdom was no of this world. It beckoned to the future. And the future was all bliss—without hatred or prejudice, race or nation. Was this not a world I had dreamed of ever since my life behind the ghetto walls? Was it not the only world in which, once and for all, my dream of belonging would come true?" she writes (J. Bauman, 1988, pp. 88-89; form as in the

original).⁴ Zygmunt, in turn, as a man brought up in a very poor family, experiencing firsthand the 'charms' of the Polish variety of capitalism and anti-Semitism, would not or rather could not distance himself from communism. While in the early development of his intellectual sensitivity, he understood Marxism primarily in terms of ownership and economic planning, with time, this ideology has become for him the only acceptable form of activity of the masses.⁵ Marxism was an unmasking ideology, mobilizing people to resist against injustice, it was a kind of emancipation, giving the chance of liberation.

Hanna Świda (1997, p. 120) calls the people born between 1920 and 1930, the time when Bauman was born, the "spotty generation"—immature, ideologically empty youths who were given a chance to influence the reality, to be "creators of good faith." Maria Hirszowicz (2001, p. 113), in turn, lists a number of historical factors which facilitate understanding the "spotty generation": "They were people living at the crossroads of epochs—their leftism was shaped, at least to a certain extent, by pre-war and wartime experiences. The memories of unbelievable poverty which was commonplace enough to make some parts of Poland look like the Third World, the resistance against anti-Semitism blossoming in pre-war Poland, the disappointment with the policies of the London Government and shock caused by the defeat of the Warsaw Uprising, being almost completely shut off from any information about what was really happening in Soviet Russia—all that favored the acceptance of Stalinist slogans praising the brave new world." In this atmosphere, in 1943, Bauman joined the Polish First Army and took part in liberating Poland. Immediately after the liberation, the 4th Jan Kiliński Division was reorganized to become the basis for the newly founded Internal Security Corps (KBW⁶). The fact that it was this and not any other division to become KBW was "a coincidence from the point of view of my life story... But there was no coincidence in the fact that I accepted this coincidence without a murmur," admits Bauman (Bauman, Kubicki & Zeidler-Janiszewska, 2009, p. 151)).

⁴ In the same tone as Janina Bauman, Aleksander Wat (1998, pp. 71-72) captures the atmosphere of that era in the following words: "And the warmth, the mutual love of this small cell surrounded by a hostile world, a strange one, it was a powerful glue."

⁵ This is particularly evident when one remembers Bauman's military period, his commitment to the activity of PPR, where Marxism was conceived primarily as an economic formation, then his fascination with the views of Stanisław Ossowski and Julian Hochfeld, associated with humanistic socialism (a fraction of PPS); these ideas are indeed still close to Bauman.

⁶ Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego.

In the 'Trap of Assimilation'

Already as a soldier, political officer and a member of the Workers' Party, Zygmunt Bauman fell into the pitfall of assimilation, similar to the one into which there fell the assimilated Jews of the interwar period. The example of German Jews, cited in *Modernity and Ambivalence* shows that assimilation was—in some ways—the most serious threat that lurked also in the post-war Poland. The previously stigmatized Jews were deliberately allowed to anchor in the strong structure of the socialist state, with the hope that this will effectively weaken the collective Jewish identity. Bauman (1991, p. 107) writes, *inter alia*, "tolerant treatment of *individuals* was inextricably linked to intolerance aimed at collectivities, their ways of life, their values and, above all, their value-legitimizing powers" (italics in the original). The autonomy of a beyond-individual identity of any non-socialist provenance was not acceptable for the authorities preparing to exert the totalitarian rule of power. However, the same authorities were willingly accepting to their ranks individual 'aliens' whose identity was measured in terms of their loyalty to the state. Since then, the world was not divided into Jews and non-Jews, but people ideologically mature and non-mature, or in other words: to those who understand the 'historical necessity' or are 'resistant' to it. The trap of assimilation was based on offering the assimilated persons equal access to power, which, through a somewhat circuitous route, generated informed and committed members of the strong structures of the system. On the other hand, those who belonged 'nowhere' were left with a strong sense of rejection, sometimes even taking the form of a kind of crippling loneliness.⁷ The assimilated Jews always acted as if under the pressure to prove the ideological usefulness, paradoxically, however, the evidence of political involvement—just as in the world of pre-war Germany—could turn against them at any moment. "Without any conscious design on their part and without any noticeable pressures from outside, the Jewish activists of the socialist movement found themselves heavily concentrated in selected areas of party activity. They constituted a majority among party journalists, theorists and teachers of party schools. Those roles assured them of a central and highly prestigious role in party life, and through it in German politics as a whole. The same roles, however, made their position inside the party increasingly awkward and widely resented—the moment when the radical political movement of the early years ossified into a highly bureaucratized establishment [...]" (ibid., p. 147).

⁷ It is manifested, *inter alia*, in the following confession of Janina Bauman (1988, p. 15): "During the first year after the war I wanted to leave Poland—to get away from the place where I was seen as an unwanted stranger. I felt lonely at school, lonely among my neighbours, singled out and set apart in the very place where I felt I belonged."

Trying to make sense of the existence in the trap of assimilation, Bauman does it naturally in the scientific discourse, but in the depths of the soul, he is experiencing a personal historical paradox. *Modernity and Ambivalence* is a clear proof of the discovery in his own life story of an area fully taken over by strangeness. That is probably why in the Foreword for Polish readers we come across the following words: "This is a book about strangers. About how they became strangers. And how they tried to stop being them. And how they failed" (Bauman, 1995, p. 7), and further, in relation to the events of 1968, it is written there: "I could no longer come into public buildings—I would probably infect the walls, and certainly the people who stayed within them" (ibid., p. 9). In the same Foreword, Bauman emphasizes, which is highly meaningful, that his translator into Polish is his wife Janina, because "it rarely happens that the fate of the translator and the author resonate so closely. And it seldom happens that the translator and the author understand each other so well" (ibid.).⁸

Anti-Semitism and repressions related to it that Zygmunt Bauman experienced while living in Poland, after all, turned out to be less painful for him than the general disappointment with socialism. The system in which he saw himself as an engaged citizen made him an outcast, a stranger, an enemy of the people. Hence, after *Modernity and the Holocaust* there was a need for a book about how modernity (not only Nazism and capitalism, but also socialism) dealt with the problem of ambivalence.

Stefan Morawski would probably not agree with the thesis that Bauman himself fell into the trap of assimilation. He was not to be absorbed by the system. Morawski (1998, p. 30) points out that the author of *Postmodern Ethics* never changed his Jewish-sounding surname, because "he wanted to be himself, to challenge and test the new system which promised brotherhood rather than parochial xenophobia."

However, if we assume that Bauman stuck in the double trap (assimilation and commitment), this was not due only to anti-Semitism, poverty, and forms of humiliation provoked by it. The trap of commitment (and the consequent danger of automystification) was the greater, the stronger was the force of theoretical arguments, which (especially after the military period) he might have referred to more and more frequently. In 1948 he explained to his wife to be that "[...] there would be no room for anti-Semitism, or any other racial hatred, under Communism—this fairest of social system, which would guarantee full equality between human beings regardless of language, race, and creed. We were particularly lucky,

⁸ It is worth noting that already in the Polish period of Bauman's writing he referred to the experience of his wife. His work, *Wizje ludzkiego świata* (*Visions of the Human World*) is dedicated to "Janina, the companion of thoughts and actions."

he stressed, to have been born at the right time and in the right place to become active fighters for this noblest cause. The greatest of historical changes was happening before our eyes, here and now. To stand by as idle witnesses would be to miss a unique opportunity. Running away would be betrayal" (J. Bauman, 1988, p. 49; form as in the original).

Realizing that racial divisions did not disappear in the new system, and demobilized in 1953 due to his father's contacts with the Embassy of Israel, Bauman was suddenly left with no institutional support. Then again, submitting to the rules of inclusion and engagement he began to specify his belonging (if not loyalty) to the state. He found the socialistic grounding at the University of Warsaw. Only two years elapsed from his demobilization to his taking on a job as an assistant. On the one hand defending his life strategy and willingness to enter a strong structure, on the other the extraordinary power of theoretical grounds, pushed him into the abyss of self-deception: "In 1953, I still believed that communism could be led back to the right path... Whatever I found annoying and repulsive in the practices of 'the ruling powers,' I attributed to 'errors and distortions.' I saw more and more human misfortune, unjust judgments and disgraceful actions, but I failed to generalize them into a big picture. I did not think (or was afraid to believe?) that they were deliberate and fitting the newly introduced 'Polish system.' [...] My doubts did not concern the idea, but rather the way it was implemented," he explains (Bauman, Kubicki & Zeidler-Janiszewska, 2009, p. 163). Janina stresses that "since he had left the army he seemed to see things more clearly. Thought still a sincere socialist—which deep in his heart he has remained to this day—he now began to see that all was no right in this world of his. He became more and more aware of contradictions between word and deeds. Perhaps Marxist theory itself, conceived a century ago in different historic and social conditions, needed a new interpretation in our modern time and change society? Perhaps the duty of a communist who happened to be a scholar was to point his finger at what was wrong, to raise doubts, to rethink ideas which were clearly unworkable? Daily arguments which his university friends and colleagues helped to clarify his mind. His first critical essays followed. He was no longer a blind worshipper of the Party line" (J. Bauman, 1988, p. 115).⁹ Thus, it is clear that Zygmunt Bauman has never ceased to be

⁹ Jerzy Wiatr, a friend and a scientist involved in the activity of the Party, remembers that when in February 1956 a paper presented by Khrushchev revealed that Stalin had committed crimes, for many people it was a real shock. "Smart and honest people, one of my closest friends Zygmunt Bauman among them, were devastated. I was then struck by how our responses differed. For me, the disclosure (though only partial) of Stalin's crimes was something optimistic. Since I had known before that he had been guilty of crimes, I did not despair, but rather felt psychological liberation," writes Wiatr (2008, p. 40).

a Marxist, just as he has never entirely doubted in socialism, whose human face was to be an alternative for the individuals stuck in consumer lethargy. This belief, however, shaded him the truth about the everyday life in a socialist system.

The treachery of commitment is based on the conflict between individual aspirations (participation in the community, desire to belong somewhere, implementation of the principles of equality and freedom, fight against exploitation, poverty and humiliation) and the objectives that the Party actually implemented. Maria Hirszowicz (2001, p. 10) writes, "They do not remember how often the truth appeared within reach, but they looked away, instinctively guarding their faith. That faith was for many the defense of the chosen way of life; it was also a form of psychological adaptation to the new order, ensuring good mood and allowing to operate in the belief that there are higher goals that guide our actions." The belief that personal aspirations are reasonable and consistent with the ideological line of the Party results in a kind of moral torpor, and the very action in the Party gradually becomes an internalized need. At the same time, all the 'dangerous' practices of the Party are deemed to be mistakes that are sure to be noticed and timely corrected by the Party leadership. Communism, like any well-functioning, rational system, cleverly shifts the burden of moral responsibility from the consequences to the intentions of the perpetrators. And if the intentions were right, i.e. if they served the system, all the distortions, forgeries, and even crimes were passed and treated as a temporary inconvenience. It can be well seen in the confession of Janina who, describing the Party's imponderabilia in 1950, puts into Zygmunt's mouth an eloquent statement: "unfortunately [...] the Party ranks were still full of untrustworthy individuals, ruthlessly ambitious climbers and ideologically immature members. Yet, despite this transitory weakness, despite the grave mistake often committed in its name, the Party was the most powerful agent of social justice and had to be implicitly trusted. You cannot make an omelette, he said, without breaking eggs. You cannot make a revolution without accidentally hurting some of the innocent. The Soviet Revolution had created many victims and there had been many mistakes" (J. Bauman, 1988, p. 77).

How quickly the originally noble intentions can get warped knew no one who had not burned his hands. Again there worked the mechanism of automystification damping the moral instinct, which this time disappeared into the collective responsibility, in the common action: "Beware of those who promise you to bear responsibility of your deeds. What they want is your compliance. The responsibility will remain your own. Ignorance is not excuse for complicity. Do not let the powerful catch hold of

your finger: they take your whole arm. And you will not even notice when they engulf the rest of you" (ibid., p. 89).

The ideological veil finally stopped masking the distortion of the system. Although Bauman, as I suggested above, remained a Marxist, step by step, he began to realize the gap between the ideal and the real world. "The hope that the 'party' will understand and admit their 'mistakes,' will turn back from the false path and [...] restore a human face to socialism, stubbornly remained then and even some time after the wiser and more keen than me, for example, Leszek Kołakowski, had reached the conclusion that it was not about the mistakes, but the system assumptions," he wrote elsewhere (Bauman, Kubicki & Zeidler-Janiszewska, 2009, p. 164). Revisionist views of Zygmunt Bauman emerged only in the early 1960s.¹⁰ But, before that happened, he gave the political elites, like all engaged intellectuals at that time, the legitimacy of a policy of terror. He strengthened the regime by skillfully operating words. Therefore, if today something touches Bauman in a special way and if we demand accountability from him, it primarily refers to the responsibility for his words.

The key to examine the submission of intellectuals to ideology should not be sought in the label of an intellectual and his moral superiority over the common thinking, not in the validity of his choices, but in what Jean-François Revel (1989, p. 331) described as "an abundance of conceptual, logical, and verbal resources, which he uses to justify his choice." Although scientists do not have the superhuman ability to predict future events, nevertheless, they are characterized by skepticism and critical thinking skills that are often amplified by believing that the world could be better than it is at the moment. 'Innate' distrust towards what only appears to be clear promotes seeing the reality through the prism of human actions, intellectuals' actions that is. This effect was captured by Leszek Kołakowski (1978, p. 978) as "replacement of thought by engagement." The scientific view of the world provides the tools to enchant the world, which was brought by Bauman to "finally mighty words—which, as never before, were to become flesh..." (Bauman, Kubicki & Zeidler-Janiszewska, 2009, p. 147).

Bauman at some point implicitly trusted the Marxist theory, perfect in its totality and seduction, highly contributing to the conceptual resources, ensuring many 'mighty words.' The charm of the internal coherence,

¹⁰ Jerzy Wiatr (2008, pp. 56-58) writes that "Bauman and Hirszowicz gradually shifted to a more radical position, which was probably influenced by the climate of the philosophy and sociology department of the Warsaw University, where Leszek Kołakowski played first fiddle and he was becoming more and more radical in his criticism of the post-October political situation."

a huge dose of rationality and logic of Marx's argumentation effectively choked the moral instinct, which is deeply and fully explained in *Post-modern Ethics*. The author made a long-awaited settlement with the past, giving valuable tips to the ascending generations.¹¹ Since that moment, he has continually referred to Stanisław Ossowski and Julian Hochfeld. In the first of them Bauman appreciated the effort of taking the responsibility for words. Towards the other he showed gratitude for gaining the awareness of the consequences of making any social action (including thinking). They made Zygmunt Bauman learn that sociology is a critical science, that it is not only *about* people, but also *for* people; thanks to them he—long before Mills—experienced a 'sociological enlightenment,' recognizing the urgent need to bind the fate of individuals with history in which they are embedded (cf. Bauman, Kubicki & Zeidler-Janiszewska, 2009; Bauman & Tester, 2003). The thought of Hochfeld and Ossowski will finally become a leaven of the inflected vision of sociology as a "companion in the difficult art of freedom" (Bauman, Kubicki & Zeidler-Janiszewska, 2009, p. 26). Remembering both mentors during his inaugural lecture on the occasion of taking over the Chair of Sociology at the University of Leeds, Bauman said: "More than ever we must beware of falling into the traps of fashion which may well prove much more detrimental than the malaise they claim to cure. Who knows, perhaps our vocation, after all these unromantic years, may become again a testfield of courage, consistency and loyalty to human values" (Bauman, 1972, p. 203). Maintaining the same conclusive tone, Maria Hirszowicz (2001, p. 11) says, however, that "the only effective way to safeguard oneself against ideological automystification is not so much distancing oneself from the current social problems, but keeping the constant awareness of the pitfalls of engagement and axiology, which determines the political choices—the rejection of the principle of making others happy against their will, sensitivity to everyday human affairs, respect for the individual, checking up on the representatives of power and opposition to all lies, regardless of the purpose for which they are used."

¹¹ Glimpses of a kind of 'reverse' thinking can be seen much earlier. In 1967, *Twórczość*, a journal of more literary than scientific character, published Bauman's article entitled *Notatki poza czasem* (*Notes Beyond Time*). Despite the fact that it is an essay in nature, its interpretation poses many difficulties. The author was highly critical in it of the scientific tendency in the contemporary sociology and he was also severe in the assessment of modernity: "Cruel is the age of the worship of science and the death of god" (Bauman, 1967, p. 86). He also considers there the situation of individuals, pointing to the inability to solve the conflict between what is subjective in an individual and what makes this individual an object. Moreover, in the paragraphs devoted to love he seems to have already read Lévinas, which is not chronologically possible. This philosopher was discovered by Bauman only during his work on *Modernity and the Holocaust*.

The involvement in the life of the Party was for the Polish sociologists a proof of their willingness to participate in the creation of reality, involving the construction of a new social order. It was also an attempt to play a significant role in the process of social change (is it not what Charles Wright Mills called for, when he wrote about the promise made by sociology?).¹²

Love to Sociology

Since the 1960s, Zygmunt Bauman has sought to answer the question concerning the functions that sociology should perform. Publishing in 1964 a popular science book, *Socjologia na co dzień* (*Sociology for Everyday Life*) he offered the readers participation in the peculiar course of thinking about their own lives, because he wanted ordinary people to know what shapes their plans. Sociology in such form is not about the great problems of science, it does not explain where regimes come from, it rather refers to “the most personal matters—the matters of everyday life” (Bauman, 1964b, p. 8). Focusing the attention on things close to us all is a clear sign of cracks in the previously uniform structure of thought. Bauman begins to fear that the results of his earlier work are double-edged, useful not only for the society, but also and foremost used by the authorities. The book, *Wizje ludzkiego świata* (*Visions of the Human World*), published in the same year as *Socjologia na co dzień*, enhances the doubts as to how knowledge should be managed. Sociology is presented as a tool of social engineering, resorting to manipulation (personified by Parsons and Lundberg) and rationalization (in engaged sociology outlined by Mills and sociology in action presented by Gramsci). They are obviously still legislative visions of science (let us remember that *Legislators and Interpreters* will come out in print twenty years later),¹³ but looking for inspiration in Mills, Gramsci,¹⁴ Ossowski and Hochfeld, they care more for the experience of individuals than the mechanisms of the system practices.

¹² Sociologists in Poland (Bauman, Hirszowicz, Ossowski and Hochfeld) deeply believed that sociological reflection may change the world. And the degree to which this belief proved to be justified is shown by a certain anecdote told by Bauman: “During Mills’s stay in Warsaw, Gomułka went on the radio to criticize an essay by my friend Leszek Kołakowski. We all trembled; having our fingers singed so many times before, we expected the worst. But Mills was elated: ‘How lucky you are and happy you must be—the leader of the country responding to philosophical tracts! No one at the top pays any attention to what I am doing!’” (Bauman & Tester, 2001, p. 28).

¹³ Peter Beilharz (2000, p. 87) proposes to read *Legislators and Interpreters* as Bauman’s confession of the former Marxist who still feels responsible for the world that as a legislator he co-created.

¹⁴ It is worth noting that Bauman discovers and uses Gramsci to deconstruct Marxism long before his works are read by the English leftists.

Dennis Smith, wondering *Who is Zygmunt Bauman?*¹⁵, makes a reference to the *First Letter to the Corinthians* by Paul the Apostle, suggesting that Bauman's intellectual biography reflects the three values, namely: faith, hope and love (cf. Smith, 1999, p. 33). Almost blind faith in socialism, which was to cure us of humiliation promoting universal equality and justice declined when—first in 1953 and then in 1968—the same socialism rejected Bauman due to his 'Jewishness.' The direct effects of anti-Semitic political action were manifested, among other things, in making him resign from the position of the head of the General Sociology Department, and then in removing him from the University of Warsaw. At the same time, the whole edition of the recently prepared book *Szkice z semiotycznej teorii kultury (Sketches of Semiotic Theory of Culture)*¹⁶ was destroyed, and its author was forced to emigrate abroad. "Because of his origin, position in the scientific life in Poland, activity in the Polish United Workers' Party, identification with Marxism, Bauman became a particular object of offensive campaign organized by the media and politicians. His name was found in press releases used as the generic name, it was written with lowercase letters and in plural," reminds us Nina Kraško (1995, p. 33). In spite of this, the author of *Postmodern Ethics* could still see the sense in the pursuit of a socialist utopia, perceiving in it the axiomatic ground that does not permit forgetting about an individual. Marxism was/is a form of a struggle for culture, understood as an action exceeding human limitations.

Bauman watched closely and with great enthusiasm the labor movement in Poland, pursuing the ideas of Gramsci of working people aware of their situation, who, under an active civic attitude worth following effectively stand up for the right to the freedom of choice. The hopes placed in Marxism were therefore associated with the option of the birth of a civil society, rather than with the state apparatus. Bauman was convinced that 'Solidarity' being born in Poland in the late 1970s and early 1980s is a significant sign of maturation of socialism. At the same time, workers were protesting in the UK, there was a crisis of the system of production, and alienated individuals began to voice their opinions. Perhaps it is no coincidence that in such general mood a book *Memories of Class* (Bauman, 1982) was created—an expression of great hope for the final chance of socialism.

¹⁵ This is the title of a chapter in Smith's *Zygmunt Bauman: Prophet of Postmodernity*.

¹⁶ This work was a summary of Bauman's interest in the semiotic theory of culture, which he developed in the years 1966-1968. Within the institutional dimension, it led to the idea to bring into being, in 1967, the Department of Social Anthropology at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Warsaw University, and, at the turn of 1967/1968, also the Theoretical and Empirical Laboratory (see Tarkowska, 1995, p. 9-21).

When in the late 1980s *Freedom* (Bauman, 1988) was published, the UK government of Margaret Thatcher had long been incorporating the privatization reforms, at the same time extremely efficiently pacifying the resistance of the working class. Bauman who was observing that situation got rid of the last illusions and gained the confidence that socialism ceased to be the counter-culture of modernity. Its place was taken by capitalism, greedily devouring its opposition. Thus, the old love for socialism and socialist-oriented sociology gradually took on the character of sentimental memories. Bauman's biographers noted in his room at the Leeds University two pictures; Peter Beilharz (2000, p. 79) noticed a picture of Marx standing on the bookshelf, but Richard Kilminster and Ian Varcoe (1996, p. 7) spotted a reproduction of Picasso's work hanging on the wall of the office and depicting Don Quixote. Both these figures seem to be helpful in the interpretation of the vision of Bauman's sociology, as well as the reconstruction of the life strategy adopted by him. From Marx, Zygmunt Bauman draws the belief that the world may be different—better than it is, and that we need a utopia to know which direction to follow. Utopia is a valuable sign-post, although it is known that it will never be fulfilled. Probably that is the reason why Don Quixote is also close to Bauman, with his irony, stubborn persistence of ambiguities, consistent eluding any routine solutions and negation of common sense. Marx is dedicated to the love of socialism, and the knight-errant disturbs the order of everyday life, thus making it more bearable.

Not taking any dictionary for the final one, Bauman, like the hero of the Cervantes' novel, is at times reminiscent of Richard Rorty—the liberal ironist. He has read many a novel and participated in more systems than one, he has reveled in the world in various forms, so now he can raise uncertainty, undermining the self-evident truths; he constantly makes others wonder, like Don Quixote who tells Sancho Panza to undermine the folk wisdom and common knowledge contained in the proverbs, which he continuously used. Where once he was convinced that he was in possession of all vital answers, now he is not even certain whether he asks the right questions. It is, therefore, human being in the world, so full of irony, that leads to a situation in which there will always be something else to be done. In addition to Marx and Don Quixote, I would place in Bauman's office also a picture of Alfred Schütz, both because of the immigrant life and thinking about sociology as an ironic strategy.

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