

## Book Review

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**Zygmunt Bauman (2004).**  
*Wasted Lives Modernity and  
its Outcasts.* Cambridge:  
Polity Press. 152 pages,  
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To understand the ideas and arguments discussed by Bauman in this very book, it is important to take into account the historical circumstances which shaped his early identity. He was born in Poland in 1925 to a Jewish family. The Nazi Occupation in Poland resulted in his forced migration to Soviet Union in 1939 and then anti-Semitic surge landed him in Israel, finally settling in Leeds.

These personal experiences are reflected in his work as well, his early life as a refugee has provided him with a deep insight on such categories of marginalized sections of society. The book deals with the strange kind of crisis generated by modernity, unknown to the world before, that of 'human waste'. The very production of such categories of humans is due to their obsession in liquid modern world with 'novelty' manifested in form of consumables and acts as a source of pseudo enchantment in otherwise disenchanted world. This vicious cycle of consumption leads ultimately to human waste and rise of risk and uncertainty accompanying it which is apparent from the fact that the section of well off consumers can easily drift into redundant category of people. Using language of Marx, Bauman asserts that in liquid modern world, a specter is haunting world and that is the specter of redundancy where everything manufactured is replaceable. It is a world of distorted realities which has taken over the entire globe. The goals of people keep changing and the notion of time is fluid. The very idea of 'flawed consumers' which Bauman invokes for such waste, don't add anything to the existing profit driven market economy. Their contribution in terms of expansion and feeding into the culture of bourgeoisie society is zero; they are a waste in literal terms.

Bauman argues against the role of demographers who tend to measure over-population in terms of resources to people ratio and the capacity of

environment to sustain life but they miss an important point. Rich countries have access to resources from all over the world and hence can afford large population and produce in turn huge toxic waste from industries. The blame game played by rich nations in terms of binaries like Us vs. Them is downright unjustifiable. The

Covid-19 pandemic can be taken as an example where China was blamed by developed nations for causing the global havoc. To tackle the problem of overpopulation, developing countries are targeted and marketing of contraceptives is carried out under the pretext of alleviating female education and employment. These rich nations ignore the immense role played by global south, had it not been for 'them', the sustenance of 'us' would have been critical. Part of the blame can be put on politicians as well, who in Weber's terms have started living off the politics and thus contribute to more human waste. With State withdrawing from socio-economic domain, it has now taken the job of providing 'personal safety' to members of society by invoking notion of fear and unpredictability in their minds which then gives legitimacy to idea of surveillance in name of security against this form of cosmic fear. As noted by Giroux, "Repression increases and replaces compassion. Real issues such as a tight housing market and massive unemployment in the cities-as causes of homelessness, youth loitering and drug epidemics-are overlooked in favor of policies associated with discipline, containment and control.

Refugees and migrants are central in such game of politics which are represented through hyper exaggeration of terroristic activities. Such categorization of refugees as 'deviant' and 'criminals' is a construct created by the state which are then portrayed as tangible embodiment of fear and uncertainty. This spread of xenophobia against refugees and immigrants can be witnessed through Trump's travel ban from Muslim populated countries to America. If we take a closer look at the ground reality, more killings and mishaps happen otherwise due to disease, accidents, state violence etc. Such circulation of 'myths' to take from Barthes is given heed by dominant discourses of society about these refugees and asylum seekers, thereby shifting focus of fear to them.

According to Bauman both economic migrants and asylum seekers come into category of 'wasted humans' which society takes as a burden to be disposed off. The case of Rohingya Muslims is one such matter where

these people were dehumanized and relegated to 'waste'. For such marginalized section of society, the mere notion of 'labor' is crucial for their survival. These refugees present a reality check for the natives of a particular region by reminding them that their safety and security is precarious too and that nothing is determinate in the world. The techno-centric world of capitalism has transcended all limits and there is a crisis occurring now in 'human waste disposal industry'. These refugees face the problem of liminality and the consequent chaos in terms of transition and dilemma of its permanence or temporariness.. As Bauman says 'On the way to the camps, their future inmates are stripped of every single element of their identities except one: that of stateless, placeless, functionless refugees. When they are assigned the status of waste, it liquifies their individualities and differences. With the arrival of modernity, odds favored humans and universe was downplayed because such consumer society apparently offered "solution" to every problem.. Men make themselves immortal through their "work" as observed by Arendt and hence escape death and the fear it accompanies with it. Here culture provides with such diversions to deal with uncertainties of life, by focusing on materiality, new possessions and obsession with progress offer relief in otherwise disenchanted world .The liquid society is gulped by "impatience syndrome"(p.109), and everything changes at fast pace and consumers adherently follow such changes to escape the fear of getting retarded to 'human waste'. Bauman also shifts our focus to modern credit card system where 'people driven by notion of conspicuous consumption avail credit to emulate the present consumption trends. And thus fall into trap of 'what is in' today. The very idea of beauty attains a different idea in modern society, "a variety of techniques (ranging from diets to sex change operations) for body change that make the body of consumer itself potentially ephemeral and manipulable; and a system of body-related fashion practices in which impersonation (of other genders, classes, roles and occupations), not indexing, is the key to distinction". Such processes imply that nothing is permanent and the very notion of temporality is ever changing. Liquid society is featured with fluid identities, work, consumption and tastes, and where change is the only category to achieve permanence. The same cycle of purchase and waste disposal is extended to relationships and

idea of renewable relations which make companionships, commitments as indeterminate and fluid categories and where people rely on fictive relationships and speed dating as solution for waste disposal. People develop relations online better than managing them offline.

All in all, this book deals with the important and relevant questions of exclusion, marginalization and dehumanization of certain categories of people which are considered as 'waste' on a global scale. However the consumer in a modern context is an individual or group contributing to profit generation of techno-centric world, so Bauman's use of 'flawed consumers' is an oxymoron. Also with the age of multimedia pervading our lives, new kinds of exclusions and stratification in society are created, hence another kind of waste by the mere fact of their inaccessibility to such technologies of power.

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**Book Review**

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**Anthony Giddens (1992). *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. California: Stanford University Press, 205 pages, ISBN: 0-8047-2214-5**

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Anthony Giddens, a distinguished British sociologist and prominent figure in sociology, has made substantial contributions to our comprehension of intimacy, love, relationships, sexuality, and marriage in modern society. This book examines the evolving terrain of love, sexuality, and interpersonal connections in contemporary society. The publication occurred in 1992 and consists of a preface, an introduction, and 10 distinct chapters. Each chapter focuses on a distinct subject, namely, relationships, sexuality, love, the emergence of the pure relationship, contradictions of the pure relationship, and intimacy as democracy with appropriate coordination. Besides these chapters, Giddens's view on plastic sexuality and Michel Foucault's on sexuality are intellect par excellence. The book provides a sociological viewpoint on intimacy, examining the influence of issues such as feminism and changing societal structures on our ability to form connections with people. Giddens argues that there was a worldwide revolution in sexuality, marriage, and the family, as well as in how individuals perceive themselves and their relationships. Moreover, we are presently undergoing a novel stage of technical and economic progress that is greatly impacting the lives, preferences, and decisions of individuals. Traditional family institutions are undergoing significant changes or facing challenges in several regions across the globe, especially as women assert their rights for increased equality. Throughout recorded history, there has not been a culture where women have achieved a level of equality with males. This phenomenon represents a worldwide transformation in daily existence, with far-reaching effects observed globally in several aspects such as

employment and governance. Recently, there has been a greater level of gender equality between men and women, both in practice and in terms of legal rights. The family was no longer functioning as an economic unit, and the concept of love as the foundation for marriage had supplanted the idea of marriage as a financial agreement. Furthermore, he observes a substantial association between the principles of a democratic society and the emerging concepts of familial relationships. More and more, folks perceive a good marriage as a collaboration between couples who have equal social standing. Giddens recognizes that certain changes in family dynamics are worrisome, but returning to the traditional family norms of the past is not a practical choice. In addition, he contends that conventional marriage patterns, which are defined by rigid gender roles and economic interdependencies, have been replaced by what he refers to as "pure relationships" or "confluent love." Giddens argues that pure partnerships are characterized by greater egalitarianism and democracy compared to typical marriages. He perceives the emergence of interconnected love as a consequence of modernization and globalization. As societal and religious customs wane in significance, individuals shape their own life stories through personalized decisions, such as selecting romantic partners, with the ultimate aim of ongoing personal growth. In addition, he emphasizes the significance of human agency and personal independence in modern partnerships. He asserts that in contemporary civilizations, individuals possess increased autonomy to select their mates based on affection, harmony, and shared principles rather than being constrained by societal, economic, or familial factors. Presently, there is a significant change in our understanding of ourselves and the way we form interactions and connections with others. The revolution is advancing unevenly in different areas and civilizations, resulting in the emergence of various forms of opposition. He asserts that partnerships are now distinguished by three overarching traits. a) The foundation of marriage and family has shifted towards a model where couples have the freedom to personally define their relationships, rather than conforming to predetermined roles dictated by law or tradition; b) The typical relationship is characterized by being solely focused on meeting the needs of the

partner and is likely to endure only as long as it remains successful. Couples remain in a relationship due to the presence of love and the joy derived from sexual attraction, rather than according to traditional norms, a sense of obligation, or for the well-being of their children. c) Relationships are integral to the process of self-discovery or self-identity. Exploring various connections is crucial to shaping our identity during our quest for self-exploration. Giddens observes that an increase in choice results in less secure personal relationships, as each party can terminate the relationship at their discretion. In contemporary times, the legal obligations and commitments of marriage have become more individualized and flexible, since individuals now have the freedom to marry, divorce, and enter into subsequent marriages with relative ease. Marriage and family have transformed into what he referred to as "shell institutions" - they may still be named by the same names, but their fundamental nature has undergone significant changes. Today, the pair, whether married or unmarried, is the central component of the family. The couple assumed a central position in family life as the economic function of the family diminished, and the formation of marital bonds began to rely on love and sexual desire. Nevertheless, Giddens' analysis of recent transformations in intimate relationships highlights both benefits and potential hazards. Giddens acknowledges that the transformations in marriage and relationships have introduced novel difficulties and doubts. The prioritization of individual satisfaction and the ability to end relationships when they no longer meet one's requirements can lead to feelings of uneasiness and instability. Giddens thinks that individuals must consistently engage in efforts to uphold and reevaluate their relationships to preserve emotional closeness and enduring dedication. In general, the book provides a stimulating examination of how love and relationships have developed in recent years. Furthermore, it offered a comprehensive sociological comprehension of these subjects. Furthermore, it provides valuable perspectives for individuals who are interested in comprehending the intricacies of contemporary intimacy. Nevertheless, numerous cultures and communities may not identify with the perspective and theoretical framework presented

in the book. Many societies, particularly those outside of the Western world, have not yet experienced the same changes in relationships, sexuality, love, and intimacy.

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