

An abstract artwork featuring a layered composition. The top section is a vibrant green, textured surface. Below it is a wide, wavy band of white and light beige, suggesting a beach or a layer of sediment. A thin, dark green horizontal strip separates this from a thick, textured layer of grey and white, resembling a rock face or a cross-section of earth. A prominent, dark, jagged crack runs horizontally across the middle of this grey layer. The bottom section is a light beige, textured surface with numerous small, dark green, circular spots scattered across it, resembling pebbles or small plants. The overall effect is one of natural, layered textures and colors.

ZYGMUNT
BAUMAN
Theory and Society

Theory and Society

Zygmunt Bauman

Theory and Society

Selected Writings, Volume 3

Edited and with an Introduction by
Tom Campbell, Dariusz Brzeziński, Mark Davis
and Jack Palmer

With translations by
Katarzyna Bartoszyńska

polity

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To our students, who carry us forward

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Series Introduction

Mark Davis, Dariusz Brzeziński,
Jack Palmer, Tom Campbell

The author of over seventy books and several hundred articles across a career spanning sixty-three years, Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017) was one of the world's most original and influential sociologists. In both his native Poland and his adopted home of England, Bauman produced an astonishing body of work that continues to inspire generations of students and scholars, as well as an engaged and global public. Their encounter with Bauman is shaped above all by two books that have acquired the status of modern classics: *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) and *Liquid Modernity* (2000). While this is understandable, it also means that many readers will be unfamiliar with the great range and diversity of Bauman's work and with the course of its development over time. Moreover, as Keith Tester argued, an in-depth understanding of Bauman's contribution must engage seriously with his foundational work of the 1970s, which builds upon his earlier writings in Poland, before his enforced exile in 1968. The importance of this broader and longer-term perspective on Bauman's work has shaped the thinking behind this series, which makes available for the first time some of Bauman's previously unpublished or lesser-known papers from the full range of his career.

The series has been made possible thanks to the generosity of the Bauman family, especially his three daughters Anna, Irena and Lydia. Following Bauman's death on 9 January 2017, they kindly donated 156 large boxes of papers and almost 500 digital storage devices as a gift to the University of Leeds. Anyone privileged enough to have visited Bauman at his home in Leeds, perhaps arguing with him

long into the night whilst surrounded by looming towers of dusty books and folders, will appreciate the magnitude of their task. With the support of the University of Leeds, the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Polity, and the Bauman Estate, we have studied this material and selected texts with a view to making them available to a wide readership through the volumes of this series. In partnership with professional archivists and data management experts, we have read, collated and indexed this vast and unique body of material written in both Polish and English since the 1950s. Through this research, we discovered many unpublished or lesser-known articles and essays, lecture notes and module summaries, contributions to obscure publications no longer in print, and partially completed drafts of papers. It quickly became clear that no commentary on Bauman's life or work to date has been able to grasp fully the multi-faceted and multi-lingual character of his writings.

This series begins to correct that. As well as including many of his lesser-known English-language papers, we have started to tackle the multi-lingual dimension of Bauman's sociology by working with the translator Katarzyna Bartoszyńska to ensure each of the volumes in this series includes Polish-language material previously unknown to English-speaking readers. This includes more contemporary Polish-language material, with a view to emphasizing Bauman's continued engagement in European intellectual life following exile.

Each volume in the series is organized thematically, in order to provide some necessary structure for the reader. In seeking to respect both the form and content of Bauman's documents, we have kept editorial changes to a minimum, only making grammatical or typographical corrections where necessary to make the meaning of his words clear. The endnotes are Bauman's own, unless otherwise stated. A substantial introduction by the editors offers a guide through the material, developing connections to Bauman's other works, and helping to paint a picture of the entanglement between his biographical and intellectual trajectories. This series will facilitate a far richer understanding of the breadth and depth of Bauman's legacy and provide a vital reference point for students and scholars across the arts, humanities and social sciences, and for his wider global readership.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Mark Davis is Professor of Economic Sociology and Founding Director of the Bauman Institute in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds, UK.

Dariusz Brzeziński is Assistant Professor in the Department of Theoretical Sociology at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland.

Jack Palmer is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Leeds Trinity University, UK, and Visiting Fellow at the Bauman Institute in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds, UK.

Tom Campbell is Associate Professor in Social Theory in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds, UK.

Translator's Note

Katarzyna Bartoszyńska

An extremely observant reader might notice a difference between my translations in this volume and those in the previous two. I have allowed myself a little more space, this time around – I have moved, even if only infinitesimally, away from a strict fidelity to sentence structure and towards a (very) slightly more free translation that is, I think, closer to the intentions underlying the original words. This came about, in part, because of my experiences, in between finishing the work on the previous volume and starting this one, translating parts of *A Life in Fragments*, Zygmunt Bauman's memoirs, which was the first time I have translated his writing in collaboration with other people, rather than alone (though I have always been fortunate enough to benefit from the fantastic help of our brilliant and sensitive copy-editor, Leigh Mueller). The significant challenges of that book gave me the opportunity to re-evaluate and recalibrate my sense of where to find the balance between strict accuracy and accessibility, and I hope it has been to the reader's benefit.

I started translating Bauman's works in 2014, when he was still alive. My first project was a book of conversations between him and Stanisław Obirek, *Of God and Man*. This was an excellent place to begin, not only because the style of the book was conversational and approachable, but also because I could count on both Bauman and Obirek to go over the final product and make any changes or corrections they wished. The same was true of my next project, *Bauman/Batka*. The confidence I gained from these early forays and Bauman's seal of approval on them proved crucial in the more challenging projects that followed – more challenging both because

he was no longer there to check my work, and because the texts were themselves more formidable, being academic writing, much of it from the 1960s and 1970s.

I approached the task very much in a spirit of humility, aiming to be as transparent a cipher as possible. I am not an expert in sociology, or in Bauman's thought, or in translation. I've done this work largely by happenstance – it's been a kind of long-running side project that I have performed as much out of a sense of duty and desire to bring these texts to an English-speaking audience as anything else. I was flattered to be asked to join the launch of the first volume, as if I might have some added insights into the texts alongside those of the four brilliant editors. And to my pleasure, I started to have the glimmers of a feeling that I might indeed know a thing or two about Bauman's writing (and, it should be added, translating Dariusz Brzeziński's excellent book, *Zygmunt Bauman and the Theory of Culture*, a few years ago also helped!). His style, and the ways it changed over the years, has become familiar to me, and I feel more comfortable, and confident, carrying it over into English. Though I still wish he were here to check my work, and, even more, to chat over drinks.

Though written many years ago, these essays by Bauman seem startlingly relevant to the present day. I am so glad that they will be able to find new readers – that the work may continue.

Editors' Introduction: Theory and Society in the Sociological Imagination of Zygmunt Bauman

Tom Campbell, Dariusz Brzeziński,
Mark Davis and Jack Palmer

Zygmunt Bauman's contributions to social theory are renowned. Any reader of sociology is familiar with *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Bauman 1989) and *Liquid Modernity* (Bauman 2000), but the breadth of Bauman's work straddles a vast *oeuvre* that far exceeds these two well-known books. Peter Beilharz (2020: 122) once described Bauman as 'famously eclectic, intellectually promiscuous even'. Indeed, the breadth of Bauman's reading encourages such an interpretation. This has made situating Bauman in relation to broader intellectual currents challenging – a difficulty made harder still as his Polish writings remained (largely) untranslated, unknown to the English reader. We have important assessments of his work but the pictures these assessments provide remain partial – a partiality often due to a lack of access to important and foundational Polish texts (Davis 2008; Tester 2004; Beilharz 2000). The character of Bauman's English-language monographs (at least since the 1980s) is weighted towards the *doing* of social theory – cultural sociology as praxis – rather than *positioning* his concepts in relation to the history of ideas. To echo his fondness for metaphor, and as he used to say, Bauman was a bird not an ornithologist (Bauman 2014).

By restoring the intellectual context of his interventions, we hope to make evident that Bauman's social theory was not one crafted in isolation but, rather, developed from his dialogue with the work

of other writers. Within this volume – the third in our series – a number of texts are reproduced in which Bauman is paying tribute to key interlocutors and influences. These texts on other thinkers matter, since they contain some of the most revealing passages about the principles underpinning Bauman's own thinking. Having now completed work on three volumes that provide access to important but unknown and hard to find writings, including texts previously only available in Polish and previously unpublished manuscripts, we are better able to assess Bauman's intellectual development vis-à-vis the main theoretical currents of his day.

Bauman was always a voracious reader, a reader of the sociological tradition, of its intersection with its neighbouring disciplines and, of course, with literature. Despite writing on the history of social thought throughout his life, Bauman is not well known as a major commentator on social theory's intellectual history. The Papers of Janina and Zygmunt Bauman at the University of Leeds, however, is full of correspondence with peers, and pages of personal reading notes on Social Theory's great works. The archival material illustrates the centrality of dialogue throughout Bauman's life.¹ Bauman practised the art of dialogue through reading and writing. In *This Is Not a Diary*, Bauman (2012) refers to himself as a 'graphomaniac', confessing that a day when he had not written was a day wasted. Reading was entwined with his graphomania, as he recalls in *My Life in Fragments* (Bauman 2023b): writing and reading found a union in thinking.

Bauman's standing as a thinker is largely derived from the books he published during the last thirty years of his life and devoted to analysing the contemporary perils of humanity. Throughout his career, there are important interventions dealing with individual thinkers – for example, 'Antonio Gramsci: or Sociology in Action', reproduced in English for the first time in this volume (pp. 13–31), and the essay 'The Phenomenon of Norbert Elias' (Bauman 1979). Bauman also authored 150 book reviews dealing with significant works in contemporary social theory and studies of the classics (Palmer et al. 2020). As a letter from Richard Bernstein recalls, these review essays were not the most faithful to their subject matter, with Bauman often using the work of others as a platform for his own ideas.² Nonetheless, Bauman's powers as a commentator on the history of social thought are underappreciated. This volume attempts to correct this, illustrating how Bauman was in a continuous dialogue with both the history of social thought and its most contemporary practitioners. We suggest he can be better understood as a participant rather than a bystander in certain intellectual debates where his

contributions were previously less well known. Bauman was deeply committed to *being a humanist*, and this commitment characterized how he engaged with the thought of others. In bringing together into a single volume those texts where this engagement takes place, we hope to have cast new light on how Bauman believed the vocation of sociology should be practised.

BECOMING A HUMANIST

Bauman's academic formation begins in communist Poland after the Second World War. His earliest writings were shaped by the official Marxism of the day, and his membership of Poland's Communist Party (e.g. Bauman and Wiatr 1953).³ By 1964, culture became the definitive concept of Bauman's analysis (Bauman 2021a). Across this period, he completed his move from a more traditional Marxist-Leninism towards a revisionist form of Marxism (Brzeziński 2022). This change flowed from his interest in Open Marxism – represented by his teacher and mentor from the University of Warsaw, Julian Hochfeld (Hochfeld 1958) – its central tenet being to maintain a dialogue with non-Marxist thought (Kelles-Krauz 2018). Such an open dialogue with a wide variety of intellectual influences comes to characterize Bauman's entire career. Stanisław Ossowski, also a professor of sociology at the University of Warsaw, is likewise a key early influence.⁴ As a critic of Stalinism, Ossowski had been banned from teaching and publishing, but in the wake of the Polish October,⁵ and the de-Stalinization that followed, Ossowski was reinstated (Brzeziński 2022; Wagner 2020). A humanistic form of sociological inquiry was advocated by Ossowski, which demanded of the intellectual a radical independence, even a 'disobedient spirit' (Ossowski 1998; Kurczewski 1988). Bauman's predisposition to be a disobedient spirit, and his openness to theoretical traditions beyond Marxism, form the spine of his humanism, which was richly added to as he discovered writers with whom he shared this temperament. In the mid-1960s, such figures as Camus, Gramsci and Mills were essential discoveries, having a sustained impact on the ethical heartbeat of his sociology.

Mills visited Warsaw in the late 1950s delivering lectures at the Polish Academy of Science, based on *The Sociological Imagination* (Mills 2000).⁶ Encountering Mills is key in the formation of Bauman's humanism, as Mills becomes a keystone reference for Bauman going forward. Bauman describes this in a conversation with Keith Tester:

I myself, together with others wishing (and hoping) to humanize our native brand of socialism, read Mills' *The Sociological Imagination*

and *The Power Elite* as the story of our own concerns and duties. We did not ask for whom that particular bell tolled. There was a lot that I learned from Mills' books and what I learned was not primarily about America. (Bauman and Tester 2001: 27, 28)

In 'Mills: The Issue of Sociological Imagination' (1961) (pp. 1–12), Bauman contrasts Mills's sociology to competing approaches offered by the general theory of Talcott Parsons and the empirical sociology of Paul Lazarsfeld.⁷ Bauman deploys Mills to critique both perspectives, arguing that sociology should be engaged in debates on the social issues of the day. An early lesson that Bauman takes from Mills is that those engaged in sociology should consider the vocation of the discipline, beyond the day-to-day priorities of the university. Lengthy discussion of Mills appears in other papers reproduced in this volume too – Bauman (1987) (pp. 73–81) and Bauman (2006) (pp. 147–69) – illustrating Mills's sustained influence upon Bauman.

From the late 1950s, Bauman was associated with the Polish revisionist school of Open Marxism. In the 1960s, like so many Marxist revisionists, Gramsci performed a vital role in the formation of Bauman's thought. Gramsci showed Bauman that there were other ways of *being* a Marxist – new paths were found beyond the Stalinist and official Marxist ones of the day. Encountering Gramsci accelerated Bauman's existing revisionism, and allowed him to hold steadfast to what was precious in Marx's legacy. In conversation with Tester, Bauman notes:

In a paradoxical way Gramsci saved me from turning into an anti-Marxist, as so many other disenchanted thinkers did, throwing out on their way everything that was, and remained, precious and topical in Marx's legacy. I read good tidings in Gramsci's Prison Notebook [*sic*]: there was a way of saving the ethical core, and the analytical potential I saw no reason to discard from the stiff carapace in which it had been enclosed and stifled. (Bauman and Tester 2001: 26)⁸

Mills is deployed by Bauman in contrast to Gramsci vis-à-vis the purpose of sociology. For Bauman, Mills and Gramsci both shared a belief that theory was able to provide a historical orientation. In Mills, Bauman saw the intellectual as lonely and central to any possibility of change; whilst in Gramsci, the historical orientation provided by the intellectual is just to perform the 'role of initiator instead – the initial catalyst in relation to the main actor in history, which is the mass movement' (p. 30). For Bauman, Gramsci offers a vision of the role of the sociologist that focuses on 'organizing experience, motivation, and actions' (p. 31). The final paragraph of

this important piece outlines the vision of the human that Gramsci offers; Gramsci is a sustained influence on Bauman's philosophical anthropology: 'Above all the reader will find in Gramsci a vision of the human world that is the most optimistic of those currently advanced, saturated with faith in the creative potential of the human and constructed with the singular aim that those creative forces be developed and stirred to action' (p. 31).

Despite his sometimes dark analysis of society and the perils we face, Bauman maintained hope in the creative potential of humans – a hope drawn from Camus, Gramsci and Mills as illustrated by Bauman's remarks on the formative role of Gramsci in relation to the spirit of existential humanism that he encountered in Camus's *The Rebel*:

I suppose it was from Gramsci's Prison Notebook [*sic*] which I read a year or two after absorbing Camus' cogito 'I rebel, therefore I am', that I learned how to rebel armed with sociological tools and how to make sociological vocation into a life of rebellion. Gramsci translated for me Camus' philosophy of human condition into a philosophy of human practice. (Bauman 2016: 233)

This Camus–Gramsci–Mills axis orientated Bauman's work in a humanist direction over the coming decades, with this thread remaining clearly detectable across the many forking paths his writing followed.

In 'Creative Personality and Adaptive Personality' (1965), abridged and translated in this volume (pp. 32–42), Bauman finds another humanist, Abraham Maslow, concerned with enhancing human creativity and agency. Best known for his 'hierarchy of needs', Maslow's psychology draws upon both phenomenology and existentialism, which remain touchstones in Bauman's later work.⁹ Maslow's belief in the potential of humans to make their shared world a better place clearly resonated with Bauman, who wished to be able to say the same for sociology. Learning from Maslow, he cautioned sociologists against spreading an image of the human that deepens our fears and anxieties. Acknowledging that it may be naïve, Bauman imparts a vision of sociology that aims to ennoble us, that might help to cure our ailments, that allows us to understand the social sources of the problems we face. Despite being criticized for the pessimistic tone of his analysis, it is *hope*, a vision of humanity where they can affect change, that underpinned Bauman's theorization of society. The humanistic interpretation of the existentialists and phenomenologists would

become methodologically important after his often-overlooked detour via Lévi-Strauss's structuralism.

THE STRUCTURALIST PROMISE AND THE LEGACIES OF BAUMAN'S '68

Bauman publishes on structuralism during the height of its intellectual influence,¹⁰ and his move beyond the structuralist paradigm is contemporary with the most esteemed post-structuralist thinkers. Bauman is sometimes positioned as an unsystematic thinker, similar in character to that sociological *flâneur* Georg Simmel, though his Polish pre-exile work is more systematic. He should also be understood as part of a broader Marxist revisionism that we know is never completely abandoned.¹¹ Reconnecting Bauman's intellectual biography to the structuralist and Marxist currents of the 1960s is essential, however, for understanding the approach to writing sociology that he takes in the decades that follow. It is worth considering that, in the same way that May 1968 is seen as an axial point in French thought, the tumultuous year of 1968 and the particular personal consequences of the Polish '68 for Bauman and his family should also be seen as a turning point in his intellectual project.¹² The shift in his theoretical project after arriving at Leeds in 1971 is clear, his work continuing to develop over the next years away from this earlier structuralist influence. His theory of society at this time is an attempt to go beyond the limitations of structuralism, whilst maintaining the spirit of Marxist revisionism. Bauman's place as one of the most prominent sociologists of the last sixty years is without question – achieved first from the margins of Central Europe, then as an outsider within British sociology. His relationship to broader theoretical currents and established schools of thought is less appreciated. We have endeavoured to add to the understanding of Bauman's work by illustrating for the reader how embedded he was in the main intellectual movements of his day, showing a greater coherence to Bauman's approach to theorizing society than has often been assumed.

Bauman was an early adopter of structuralism, a wide-ranging project with its origins in the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure. There was deep engagement with Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology, for example, in *Sketches in the Theory of Culture* – a great lost work from structuralism's intellectual apex.¹³ Beilharz (2020: 72) and Tester (2018: 107) both recognize Bauman as having a structuralist period, but both the significance of this period and the path he trod to overcome it have perhaps been otherwise underestimated. The similarity of Bauman's path out of structuralism (his formation

of 'sociological hermeneutics') to contemporaneous moves made by post-structuralists such as Jacques Derrida can be seen by the restoration of Bauman's place in the history of ideas, one of the tasks of this introduction.¹⁴

Like its more famous francophone cousin, Bauman's Polish structuralism became intimately entangled with the year 1968. Within French intellectual history, May '68 is often positioned as ending the dominance of the structuralist paradigm (Ross 2008; Dosse 1997). The year 1968 was a tumultuous one globally, with the assassination of Martin Luther King, the invasion of Czechoslovakia following the Prague Spring, and student protests in many cities, including Paris and Warsaw. The year looks very different depending on whether it is viewed from Paris, Prague or Warsaw (Judd 2006). Yet the personal character of 1968 for the exile of Bauman and his family is an axial point also within Bauman's thought. Like his more famous francophone contemporaries Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, Bauman is an intellectual responding to the political turbulence of 1968 from a position of being immersed in structuralism. An affinity to Derrida is the clearest connection here, as Bauman's theoretical reference moves from Saussure and Lévi-Strauss to writers within the phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions. Derrida too is well known for his analysis of Saussure, animated by phenomenological concepts derived from Husserl and Heidegger. Both Bauman and Derrida were contemporaneously mining Husserl, Heidegger, and different branches of what we might call 'post-Heideggerian phenomenology'. Bauman (1978) has a sustained engagement with Husserl, Heidegger and Schutz in *Hermeneutics and Social Science*, and Arendt, Jonas, Levinas and Derrida himself later become frequent references.

Made stateless during an anti-Semitic purge by the Polish government in 1968, Bauman took up a post at the University of Tel Aviv. There, we discover in the Papers of Janina and Zygmunt Bauman at the University of Leeds, he worked on a proposal for a Centre in Cultural Semiotics signalling the continuing influence of structuralist concepts on his thought. Reproduced from this period is the article 'Uses of Information: When Social Information Becomes Desired' (Bauman 1971) (pp. 43–56). Bauman is then appointed, in 1971, as Professor of Sociology at the University of Leeds. Divorced from Polish sociology, his work censored in Poland, and with much of his writing inaccessible to his colleagues in Britain,¹⁵ one can see how the image of Bauman as an isolated thinker emerges.¹⁶ Bauman's inaugural lecture at Leeds, 'Culture, Values and Science of Society' shows the centrality of structuralism to his thinking at this juncture

(Bauman 2021b), and this engagement continues in 'The Structuralist Promise' (Bauman 1972b). As Tester (2018: 107) recognizes, this text 'was indebted to Lévi-Strauss's anthropology'. Bauman's more explicitly structuralist texts (1968a, 1973) nevertheless provide a heterodox reading that emphasizes process. For example, his structuralist account of culture is diachronic in character, rather than the synchronic form that structuralism typically takes. This analysis, by emphasizing process, is already showing nascent signs of post-structuralism. When Bauman reflected back on this work in 2017, he saw Lévi-Strauss as providing a path from structure to *structuralization*. Tester (2018: 108) outlines how Bauman's relationship towards the structuralist promise becomes more nuanced as he considers this in relation to his commitment to human values:

as Bauman's reflections on the 'structuralist promise' developed[,] the commitment to human values so strongly stressed in the Leeds Inaugural became more obviously pronounced. The emphasis on 'the totality of human activity' was linked to a stress on human creativity as a 'knife against the future' seeking to open up action in the 'living space of human beings'. This is the nub of the argument of *Culture as Praxis* ... In other words, despite the promise of structuralism, it had to be handled very carefully or else it would deny the possibility of human creative action in favour of a focus only on the structured 'living space of human beings'. Or, to put the same point in different terms, it might too easily emphasize the 'not in the circumstances of their own choosing' over and above the 'men and women make history'.

Bauman is reconciling what remains of the structuralist promise, so often anti-humanist, with the humanist impulse, the disobedient spirit, that he derived from Camus–Gramsci–Mills. Tools derived from phenomenology and hermeneutics help him to achieve this, and Bauman's sociological hermeneutics can be considered a humanist rendition of the problems the post-structuralists strove to answer. Rather than Bauman's move to an increasingly processual understanding of culture being influenced by the aforementioned post-structuralists, he was responding contemporaneously to the same theoretical challenges, to a world changed by the political and personal events of '68. Bauman's project was not derivative of the francophone superstars; he was drinking from similar wells – coming to conclusions which, if not identical, are adjacent. For Tester, Bauman takes hermeneutics 'in a sociological direction': 'Intentions are desubjectivized and instead made into contextually available choices in unchosen circumstances. The choices are informed by

intentions, and to be able to interpret social phenomena is also to be able in principle to understand the contextual intentions behind them. This point applies to the social phenomenon of the sociological work itself' (Tester 2018: 109).

Bauman's move from a structuralist account of culture influenced by Lévi-Strauss to a humanist but desubjectivized sociological hermeneutics bears similarities to moves made by contemporaneous thinkers immersed in structuralism, such as Derrida. Derrida's innovations began by analysing structuralism with the assistance of key phenomenologists, such as Husserl and Heidegger. It is tempting to see Bauman as making steps forward similar to Derrida's, as Bauman moved from a theory of culture influenced by Lévi-Strauss to a sociological hermeneutics of culture attentive to what remained of the structuralist promise. Perhaps this move was more solitary than it might have been, with his professional networks shaken by the trauma of exile. In turning from structuralism to hermeneutics and phenomenology, therefore, Bauman found a unique approach to practising sociology that would remain central to his project for the rest of his life.

The focus of Bauman's writing during his short time in Israel moves to reflect on the Polish '68 anti-Semitic purge and questions of Eastern European Jewry. 'Uses of Information: When Social Information Becomes Desired' (reproduced in this volume, pp. 43–56) pre-empts some themes later returned to in his *Modern Trilogy*¹⁷ – the relationship between power and knowledge and modernity's bureaucratic style of reasoning. For Bauman, information is crucial in the pursuit of certainty, order and stability. 'Information is a measure of the "uncertainty" of a situation' (p. 45) – access to information is related to power, since power is proximity to the sources of uncertainty. Social science information becomes desired as a mechanism of 'control over input and processing of information is the most powerful armament in the intra-organizational power struggle' (p. 50). Bauman illustrates this through Kafka who 'forecast just what this possibility could mean and he did it well in advance of sociologists'. Bauman continues:

The nightmare of 'K.' in *The Trial* consists not in physical suffering, not even in fear of severe and painful punishment, but in a total lack of knowledge of the intentions of the other side. Indeed, the opponent is sinister exactly because [they are] unpredictable.... A monopolistic access to information concerning some field makes the monopolist invulnerable, at least in the limits of the field in question. (p. 51)

This is the perfect planning model of a 'centralized' system, which Bauman contrasts with decentralization. In the former, 'The top organ does not just predict, but manipulates and shapes the future, while lower organs have no rule whatsoever over their own behaviour' (p. 51). The tension between centralization and decentralization is 'a struggle for power' (p. 53). Stalinism is presented as exemplary of the centralized system's perfect planning model.

Intellectuals become significant when particular forms of knowledge serve the interests of power, by surveying the field of uncertainty and rendering it stable, predictable, orderly (Bauman 1987b). Social science information grew in significance when it became useful to the project of social engineering. The ingenuity of this analysis may not be apparent to the contemporary reader as the relationship between social science and systems of control is so well trodden through Foucault's analysis of power. 'Uses of Information' was, however, published in 1971, four years before *Discipline and Punish* was published in France. Once again, Bauman is working on intellectual problems that are shared with the post-structuralists – there is something in the air. Bauman's own engagement with Foucault begins in 1983 with 'Industrialism, Consumerism and Power', and he remains a frequent interlocuter from then on, as Bauman develops the critique of order that characterizes his celebrated account of modernity.

'Uses of Information' also foreshadows his later piece on 'How to be a Sociologist and a Humanist?' (pp. 147–69). The significance of intellectuals is again affirmed as they can endeavour to keep the future open to indeterminacy and uncertainty, rather than being foreclosed by the perfect planning of social engineers. This perspective of the future being open explains his hostility to futurology and forecasting in 'Is the Science of the Possible Possible?' (pp. 57–72), and has a thematic affinity with 'Do We Need the Theory of Change?' (pp. 117–34) and *Socialism: The Active Utopia* (Bauman 1976). It also maintains the spirit of disobedience, of rebellion, the vocation of the intellectual that Bauman derives from Camus, Gramsci and Mills. 'The Limitations of Perfect Planning' and 'Uses of Information' see Bauman producing a nascent analysis of Stalinism.¹⁸ It is noteworthy that his humanist sociology appears to be written well aware of the long shadow of the social engineers (represented *in extremis* by the Stalinists). Bauman will revisit his critique of perfect planning in his Modern Trilogy with his critical account of modernity as gardening culture.

WHAT REMAINS OF THE STRUCTURALIST PROMISE? THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS

In 1971, Bauman arrives at the University of Leeds. He becomes interested in, but not uncritical of, what he calls anti-positivist sociology, an umbrella term for sociologists exploring ethnomethodology, phenomenology and existentialism. A common influence on all these approaches is Martin Heidegger. Whilst Bauman has been consistently engaged with thinkers for whom the shadow of Heidegger remains prominent, such as Arendt, Derrida and Levinas, this exploration of anti-positivist sociology allows Bauman to move on from his structuralist period by developing his 'sociological hermeneutics'. Heidegger (1993) had famously distanced himself from his francophone acolytes (Sartre, etc.) in his Letter on Humanism. Bauman, forever the humanist, does not give in to the anti-humanist temptation of structuralism, laying the ground for his future engagement with Levinas (Bauman 1993).

Bauman retains a keen interest in the concept of the possible – a concept that has a sustained exposition in the lecture 'Is the Science of the Possible Possible?'.¹⁹ No, Bauman says, the science of the possible is not possible. A sceptical tone to futurology is taken, prefiguring his later warnings on engaging in prophecy. The possible is a key concept in Bauman's later work, central to his analysis of the temporal character of modernity. The possible defies the scientific concepts of causation, truth, law and determination. Bauman situates his argument in a brief history of Western attitudes to the future. He refers to medieval scholastics who posited 'a neat line between the facts open to man's scrutiny and the universe of truth visible only to God's eye', arguing this division long preceded Christianity. Overall: 'There is no place, therefore, in the well-ordered universe, for the category of the possibility' (p. 58). Possibility is a tenuous category, weaker than predictability; probability leads from the unknown to the certain. Possibility is uncertain, and uncertainty is pre-scientific; it is uncertainty itself which propels the scientific orientation. There is a resemblance here to arguments that are revisited in *Socialism: The Active Utopia*. From here on, possibility is a central theme for Bauman, with Tester (2004) describing Bauman as a 'sociologist of possibility'.

The 'active' function of utopia corresponds to the 'activistic' image of man, drawn from Bauman's reading of humanist writers. This is a processual philosophical anthropology. Critical sociology, in Bauman's (1976) definition, is an activity which redeems this activistic function of man by providing 'a sovereign vantage point from which to render the existing order questionable and gnaw at