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The Four Faces of Human Suffering in the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman—Continuity and Change

"I don't care who's right or who's wrong.
There has to be some better way for people to live"

Grace Kelly, *High Noon*

"The justification of the neighbour's pain is the source of all immorality"

Emmanuel Lévinas, *Useless Suffering*

Abstract: In this piece, the authors detect and delineate an often neglected core concern within the sociology of Zygmunt Bauman—social suffering. They trace this concern with suffering from the early year writing within a Marxist framework focusing on the working class through middle periods concerned with the Holocaust, Jews, strangers and the Other to the later years and the preoccupation with the victims of consumerism. The authors document how social suffering has remained a significant leitmotif in Zygmunt Bauman's sociology but suggest how his writings on misery and suffering paradoxically point to a world of human possibility and responsibility.

Keywords: social suffering, Zygmunt Bauman, sociology, solid modernity, liquid modernity, possibility.

A World of Suffering: From Solid Modernity to Liquid Modernity

In the film adaptation of John Le Carré's amazing novel *The Russia House*, one of the main characters in conversation observes how "all victims are equal. But none is more equal than others." By this the character Barley Blair, brilliantly played by Sean Connery, meant to suggest how victimhood, affliction and suffering in contemporary society (the film concerns military espionage in the former Soviet Union during the Cold War) is simultaneously a matter of universality on the one hand and diffentiality on the other, thereby insisting that although all people may suffer to various degrees and in various forms, their experience of suffering is something quite different. This observation strikes a cord with the writings of Zygmunt Bauman. His work may be seen as a contemporary parable of human suffering and how this has changed historically from solid modernity to liquid modernity. Somehow his parable of suffering tells us that although everything else may have changed, something still remains the same—

suffering. His parable, however, also tells us how the faces of suffering have changed over time.

Ever since the early years of living and writing in Polish, Bauman's work has centred on how people from different domains of human experience have been subjected to multifarious sources of suffering. In the early years the human faces of suffering described by Bauman were Polish youth, dissidents and in general the citizens of enforced Communist and innovation-deadly rule (see Tester & Jacobsen 2005). Upon arrival in the United Kingdom in the early 1970s, Bauman's concern with suffering continued to inform his analyses now in the shape of those unable to get a job, the strangers, the Jews and workers suffering in the era of solid modernity in exiled circumstances, concentration camps or in the dark satanic mills of capitalist industrialisation. Later, in his compelling *Gegenwartsdiagnose* of liquid modernity, the face of suffering became more pronounced and personified in the 'wasted lives' of the underclass constituted by single mothers, the indolent, college drop-outs, asylum seekers, refugees, drug addicts and the poor. Due to the persistence and continued centrality of the topic of suffering in the work of Bauman throughout almost half a century, we suggest that his work should be regarded as a paramount contribution to the 'sociology of suffering,' a disciplinary development still with a missing agenda but with so much promise. Despite often being overlooked, Bauman's sociology is continuously—although in different guises and often in roundabout ways such as heteronomy, mortality, strangers, the Holocaust, globalization, individualization, community, love and freedom—concerned with the causes and consequences of human suffering. As Iain Wilkinson recently observed: "I contend that the character and direction of the moral debates that are to be found in Bauman's work are incisively influenced by his style of writing about human suffering" (Wilkinson 2007: 241). Wilkinson, however, went on to contend that Bauman's writings are incapable of providing a substantial platform for *thinking with suffering*. We disagree—we actually believe, and intend to document below, that Bauman's writings are infused with manifold ways of understanding, confronting and indeed also thinking *about* and not least *with* suffering. Bauman's sociology, in short, *is* a sociology of suffering.

Zygmunt Bauman and Social Suffering

Alain Finkielkraut, following his mentor Emmanuel Lévinas, accurately labelled the recently passed century a 'century of useless suffering' and Eric Hobsbawm once characterised the selfsame century a 'century of extremes.' The extremes of this recently passed century—which we only now, as the Owl of Minerva, come to understand—may be described and measured by the extensity, intensity and immensity of human betterment and improvement, but it may also be described and measured by the extensity, intensity and immensity of the amount of apparently useless suffering caused, and in the ability and often also readiness to inflict pain on or bring suffering to others. Although modernity, at least in principle, was bent on eradicating human suffering from the surface of the earth, modernity also, as Bauman shows throughout many of

his books, made possible some of the most unimaginable and abhorrent inhumanities ever seen. It is this suffering, made possible through and by modernity (solid as well as liquid)—by modern mentality, modern culture, modern science and the modern state, Bauman has described and made visible in most of his books. In this way, he has performed the role as the prime sociological chronographer of the 20th and early 21st century and has coined the story of the passage from one century to another, and from one modernity to another, through the experience of human suffering.

In a by now classic conversation between Zygmunt Bauman and his two Leeds-based colleagues Ian Varcoe and Richard Kilminster, he unveiled how his two main preoccupations throughout his lifelong practice of sociology continuously had been the struggle to come to grips with 'culture' and 'suffering.' As he stated, after refusing to accept any intellectual epithet or membership of a specific school of thought (in true Bauman-style, ideas are valuable in themselves, not because they belong to or stem from some specific paradigm or tradition):

> There were actually two things with which I was concerned throughout my writings, throughout my academic life. One was the working class, standing for the downtrodden or the underdog, for suffering in general. For a long time there was the sign of identity between the two: the working class as the embodiment of suffering. That was one topic, and the other was the topic of culture (Bauman in Kilminster & Varcoe 1992: 206).

Whereas the explicit concern with culture, at least on the surface of it, decreased in Bauman's writings throughout the years, the concern with suffering is still very much part and parcel of his work—actually one could claim that it remains a main distinguishing mark. However, his preoccupation with the working class, or the working poor, as the embodiment of suffering, as mentioned in the quotation above, has changed fundamentally throughout the years as we will attempt to show below. Bauman has continuously broadened his perspective from a focused or selective view on those suffering to include the suffering of ever more groups of people falling victim to the twists and turns of social development.

One might suggest that despite Bauman's fluctuating and changing perspective on the theme of suffering, it has consistently remained focused on what has been termed 'social suffering.' What is 'social suffering'? Social suffering is suffering redeemed from religious connotations or moralistic monopolization—it is a description of the social roots and origins and also the social repercussions of social, economic, cultural and other conditions. Thus, the notion of 'social suffering' insists that suffering is a social phenomenon, that suffering has social causes and social consequences. It is also suffering that signals an intimate connection between society and suffering and it can be defined as collective as well as individual human suffering associated with life conditions shaped by powerful social forces (see *Daedalus*, 125 (1) 1996). These powerful social forces may be personified by evildoers such as Nazi doctors or other perpetrators of inhumanities or by amorphous forces such as globalization or individualization. The gist of the matter is that suffering is instigated by of inflicted upon some by some others, whether wilfully or and unintended consequences of thoughtless or callousness. However, in most descriptions and analyses of social suffering, the *experience* of the victims rather than actions and abuse on behalf of the guilty parties

remains the principal focus. As Iain Wilkinson explained, in understandings of social suffering "an explicit attempt is made to have us reflect on the ways in which individuals actively *experience* the social significance and moral meaning of their physical afflictions, material deprivations and loss" (Wilkinson 2004: 114). So also in Bauman's preoccupation with social suffering.

Thus, social suffering in Bauman's work is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it relates to *structural suffering*—suffering imposed on people from above, as it were, from anonymous, abstract and amorphous structural conditions and merciless forces such as individualization, globalization and adiaphorization. This signals a trickle-down effect from structural macro conditions to shape, limit or fundamentally threaten people's lives and livelihood at the micro level. On the other hand, it also relates to *relational suffering*—suffering imposed by specific and identifiable groups of people on other equally specific and identifiable groups of people, e.g. in the shape of stigmatization, marginalization or downright murder. This type of suffering is located more at the meso or micro level of analysis. In this way, suffering—its causes and consequences—in Bauman's analysis is, at one and the same time, abstract and concrete, intangible and flesh and blood.

In the subsequent parts of this piece we will seek to explore and illustrate the changing content yet remaining concern of Bauman's understanding and analysis of social suffering. We suggest that that one can detect a changing personification and embodiment of suffering throughout the four phases of his writings that may be denoted *the Marxisant phase* (the 1970s), *the Modernist phase* (the 1980s), *the Moral phase* (the 1990s) and *the Mosaic phase* (the new millennium) (see Jacobsen 2004) and which roughly covers the last four decades of his writings since the early years of exile in Leeds. These four phases of his work—which are analytical constructs, not ontogenetic facts—all deal with suffering in different ways and with different and distinct human 'faces' as exemplifications of suffering as we will show below.

Face One: The Flawed Producers in Crisis-Ridden Capitalist Society

Upon arrival in Leeds in the early 1970s, Bauman carried with him a baggage of Marxist revisions and a critique of the 'actually existing Socialism' that had eventually forced him into exile (Smith 1999: 45–47). Despite this critique, he was still very much concerned with many of the topics traditionally associated with Marxist analyses such as injustice, working class struggle and alienation. These themes had also been a preoccupation throughout his academic career in Poland during which he, amongst other things, wrote on the topic of alienated and disillusioned youth as exponents of suffering in a stagnating post-Stalinist Polish society (see Tester & Jacobsen 2005). Thus, Bauman's first major pieces published in English thematically followed the traditional Marxist track by dealing with the status of the working class, but he also expanded on it by taking up more substantially the miserable situation of those parts of the working class that Karl Marx himself labelled the *lumpenproletariat* ('raggedy proletariat') in late capitalist societies. These are those groups ejected from the

production line and who, either by design or default, are resigned to live life in the shadow of 'normal' society.

In his book *Memories of Class*, some sort of a sequel to *Between Class and Elite* published ten years prior, Bauman proposes an understanding of late capitalism in which he views the present as a challenge to and perhaps also an end of class as we know it. The historical background of the book is the economic crisis of late capitalism—so often spoken of in the 1970s and early 1980s and culminating in Britain in the 'Winter of Discontent' in 1978–1979 with subsequent violent riots in Brixton, Toxteth and other areas—constituting the bedrock of Bauman's argument. This was a period characterised by increasing structural unemployment, rapid inflation, turbulence in the consolidation of the welfare state system coming under increasing attack by the Thatcher government, decline of the labour movements and the notion of post-industrialism striking root. Bauman's thesis in the book is that capitalism has undergone two major systemic crises—the first escalating with the transformation from premodern rural feudalism in which the exploitation and enslavement of workers in the disciplinary factories of solid modernity began, and the other taking place in the latter part of the 20th century in which society is gradually transformed from a society of producers to a society of consumers with ever new grievances and deprivations occurring. Thus, *Memories of Class* simultaneously looks back as well as into the future regarding the consequences of this recent development—and towards the end of the book by focusing explicitly on the plight of the new poor and marginalized.

The book can be read as a revision of or corrective to conventional Marxist class theory with its primary focus on two antagonistic classes, the capitalists and the proletariat, confronting each other in the control over the sphere of production by expanding the focus also to include the consequences of those marginalized the most in late capitalist society, those unable to get or hold on to a job. What had happened throughout the 20th century is that the workers, the proletariat, had been incorporated into the capitalist system instead of confronting it as a counter-force and in the process their status as suffering had been softened. Therefore, deprivations were now beginning to flourish elsewhere. As Bauman states: "One can say that the field of the most dramatic inequalities, conflicts and unresolved problems has shifted in late capitalist society from the disrupted 'no-man's land' between the two powerful industrial class protagonists towards the deprived sectors of social life" (Bauman 1982: 191). His book depicts the causes and consequences of such a shift from class antagonism, working class suffering and potential revolutionary overthrow of capitalism to the permanent impoverishment and marginalization of those left at the bottom of the social ladder. Who are the specific victims of this development? According to Bauman, in times of economic turmoil, institutional inertia yet also rising expectations, it is

> the black, women, the young, the old—all sorts of notoriously socially powerless and politically unprotected people—[who] are least likely to be offered better paid and more secure positions. They are m ore than others exposed to the threat of unemployment; their discrimination becomes, so to speak, self-perpetuating (Bauman 1982: 170).

We already here see the embryonic seeds of Bauman's later more substantial analysis of the 'wasted lives,' the 'underclass' and the 'flawed consumers' living life in the shadow of contemporary welfare capitalism (Bauman 1998a, 2004).

Moreover, in such a crisis climate, we witness the revival of the 'work ethic,' later described more substantially by Bauman in *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (Bauman 1998a), stating that the inability or unwillingness to work and thereby contribute to society is anti-social but also self-inflicted. This revived work ethic is expressed through

> blowing the dust off the old recriminations against the poor as indolent, dishonest, improvident, indifferent to the 'needs of society,' naively following unscrupulous agitators and otherwise responsible for their own miserable plight—accusations only barely concealed in the vituperations against welfare scroungers, unemployed basking in the Spanish sunshine and the denizens of 'dangerous quarters' preferring mugging to work (Bauman 1982: 183).

The work ethic, having experienced its first heydays during the dawning years of capitalism, is once again aimed against those living in what Bauman later described as the 'involuntary ghettos,' those on the dole, those in tenements or housing estates, the welfare spongers and the like. They are stigmatized and blamed for their own misfortune—through the strategy described by William Ryan as 'blaming the victim'—and they have lost their previously respected function in society as 'a reserve army of labour' waiting in the wings to join the active workforce. Today, the chances of ever rejoining the workforce are extinguished. In such a society, now more consumerist than productionist, being unable to produce is one thing but also being unable to consume is quite another, although they are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing experiences. Being doomed to observe the more fortunate lives of others becomes a mark of deprivation and Bauman observes how "the age-old wisdom of the rich, 'money does not bring happiness,' has always had a hollow ring for the poor" (Bauman 1982: 19).

The face of suffering in this phase of Bauman's writings is that of what could be termed the 'flawed producers'—those left behind by or superfluous to production in times of economic crisis. Their situation is regarded as self-inflicted and self-perpetuating and Bauman talks of 'cumulative deprivation'—how one type of social exclusion, almost in Luhmannian manner, automatically leads to another. In the 'war against equality,' advanced by the vociferous critics of the welfare state, the losers are those unable or unwilling to participate in the game of production and consumption and who are accused of 'sponging' on welfare benefits. First, it leads to the exclusion from producer society, later—or almost instantaneously—follows the exclusion from consumer society, of which Bauman speaks at the end of the book. As Bauman summarises: "Pauperisation becomes the fate of the groups which are to a larger degree, if not fully, dependent on the increasingly depressed areas of social life" (Bauman 1982: 187).

According to Bauman, *Memories of Class* was "a farewell, not to the working class, but to the identity between the working class and the problem of injustice and inequality" (Bauman in Kilminster & Varcoe 1992: 206). The book first contains an analysis of the working class victims of capitalist disciplinary power in the factories and

finally an analysis of those barred from participating in production and consumption altogether. Thus, his analysis towards the end of *Memories of Class* anticipates one of the themes that became a trademark of his writings some ten-fifteen years later, namely the topic of consumerism, but also the diagnosis of the rise of a new underclass later to be elaborated in more detail in other books. As Bauman observes on his shift in perspective on suffering during these years: "Gradually, the victims of economic injustice began to appear to me as a particular case of a much wider, more ubiquitous and stubborn phenomenon of the 'stranger'" (Bauman & Tester 2001: 53). But before the arrival of the stranger as the embodiment and personification of suffering in his writings, however, the Jew for some time took centre stage.

Face Two: The Jews and Modern Adiaphorized Genocide

Towards the end of the 1980s, Bauman's perspective on suffering—inspired by his reading of his wife Janina's account of Jewish suffering—shifted from the working class and the flawed producers as the personification of suffering to the Jews as the embodiment of the trials and tribulations of modernity, culminating in Bauman's relentless critique of modern adiaphorized mass murder in *Modernity and The Holocaust* (Bauman 1989). This also marked a shift from a Marxisant phase to a phase preoccupied with the nature and consequences of modernity in his writings. During this phase, Bauman (re)discovered his own Jewish background through an incisive analysis and critique of the murderous tendencies of solid modern totalitarianism and how modernity—through processes of 'adiaphorization' (the emptying of actions of moral content and consideration and the mediating of acting through chains of command and technological means making no one responsible)—caused not only civilised progress but also decivilised suffering for and murder of millions of people, especially the European Jews.

Hannah Arendt's famous statement that being Jewish was merely part of the 'factual data' of her life reflects the fact that in many ways she only consciously embraced her ethnic identity because of her experience of anti-Semitism and totalitarianism. Bauman's wife, Janina, also suffered as a Jew, and she too observed that it was that suffering that put her in touch with her identity. Like many European Jews from assimilated families at that time, Janina experienced her Jewishness in the light of the Holocaust. Her memoirs *Winter in the Morning* from 1986 deals with her teenage-years in the Warsaw ghetto and the uncertain and insecure periods of hiding from the Nazis. In 1944, while still in hiding and continually in fear for her life, Janina experienced something of an epiphany regarding her sense of belonging: "I belong to the Jews. Not because I was born one or because I share their faith—I never have done. I belong to the Jews because I have suffered as one of them. It's suffering that has made me Jewish. I belong to people who have been murdered or who are still struggling to escape death" (Bauman 1986: 181). One might also speculate that it was the reading of Janina's experiences during the Holocaust that inspired Zygmunt to write *Modernity and the Holocaust*. He acknowledges the impact the book had

upon his thought: "Having read Janina's book, I began to think just how much I did not know—or rather, did not think about properly. It dawned on me that I did not really understand what had happened in that 'world which was not mine'" (Bauman 1989: vii). Thus, Bauman's interest in the Holocaust was crystallized by reading of the suffering of his wife and her family, yet it also related to his more general concern regarding what becomes of people once they have been categorized as 'superfluous.' In many ways, Bauman's interpretation of the Holocaust was heavily influenced by Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Arendt 1966). Certainly, Bauman and Arendt converge on the issue of how dangerous it is to accept anti-Semitism as the only explanatory factor that one needs to engage with in order to understand the horrors of the Holocaust. Arendt had stated: "In view of the final catastrophe, which brought the Jews so near to complete annihilation, the thesis of eternal anti-Semitism has become more dangerous than ever" (Arendt 1966: 8). Similarly, Bauman regards as a barrier to understanding "the widespread tendency to consider anti-Semitism as cut from one block, as a well-nigh timeless accompaniment of history, itself rooted in a virtually extra-temporal and extra-territorial prejudice" (Bauman 1998c: 144).

Arendt and Bauman also share the belief that the Jews were the paradigmatic victims of modern genocide because of social and political circumstances surrounding their indeterminate nature, rather than simply because of gentile hostility toward their 'essential' Jewishness. According to Bauman, a major reason why the Jews were singled out for destruction could very well be explained by the fact that they pointed to the impossibility of order—the most prized phenomenon of solid modernity—and this impossibility eventually turned deadly for millions of Jews (Bauman 1995a: 213–214). Arendt had already stated of the unique status of European Jewry:

> They did not form a class of their own and they did not belong to any of the classes in their countries. As a group, they were neither workers, middle-class people, landholders nor peasants. Their wealth seemed to make them part of the middle-class, but they did not share in its capitalist development … In other words, although their status was defined through their being Jews, it was not defined through their relationship to another class (Arendt 1966: 13).

Arendt was thus interested in the social and political factors that accounted for continual Jewish estrangement from the mainstream of society rather than being satisfied with explanations relating to innate difference or extra-historical antipathy. In *Modernity and the Holocaust*, and also in his more detailed evaluation of the problem of so-called 'allosemitism,' Bauman also warned that: "Longevity of historical phenomena always tends to encourage non-historical explanations" (Bauman 1998c: 145). Like Arendt, Bauman asserted that the ways in which the Jews sat astride all of the traditional barriers in solid modern society marked them out as 'ambivalence incarnate' (Bauman 1998c: 146). He outlined some of the reasons behind their ambiguity—and thus also their subsequent suffering:

> A numerically tiny nation, negligible as a military power, one of the many petty pawns the ancient empires passed from one to another as they rose and fell in rapid succession—and yet a nation imbued with the sense of grandeur, of being chosen, of being the hard centre of the world and of history; indeed so convinced of its centrality that it looked at the rest of the universe, natural and human, as resources God uses in his special relationship with the chosen people to reward them for their piety or punish them for their misdeeds (Bauman 1998c: 147).

This, of course, is not an unproblematic overview, though it must be read as pertaining to non-Jewish perceptions and misconceptions; firstly concerning the ways in which Jews were thought to perceive themselves, and secondly relating to stereotypes of a monolithic, essential Jewish identity.

Bauman's writing on the Jews and the Holocaust also reflects his own experience, and that of his wife, as Polish Jews. They were, so to speak, doubly stigmatised—as Jews and as Polish Jews. The Baumans's experience of anti-Semitism culminated in their enforced exile from Poland in 1968, and they witnessed the bizarre phenomenon of a hatred that persisted even in the absence (and indeed, after the near-total annihilation) of its supposed instigators. Bauman argues that it was not the image of the 'backward' *Ostjuden*, nor even the stereotype of the Christ-killing Jew that most inflamed Polish anti-Semitic sensibilities. Assimilation amounted to the chief crime, blurring as it did the boundaries between different 'categories':

> The real ogres were, however, the Jews attracted by the indubitable splendours of Polish culture, those responding with goodwill and enthusiasm to the invitation to join. It was they who became Kafka's *odradeks* —mongrel creatures of unclassifiable identity, neither strangers nor 'our own,' eluding all straightforward assignment and by the same token discrediting in advance the order yet to be installed (Bauman 1998d: 335–336).

Bauman and Arendt also converge on the issue of human superfluity which was exemplified by, but not limited to, the Jews of Europe in the era of solid modernity. Here, Arendt's belief that totalitarianism rendered some categories of humans superfluous is echoed in Bauman's work on the threat posed to certain postmodern individuals even after the ordering-systems of solid modernity have been largely abandoned. Arendt asserted of totalitarianism and the concentration camp environment:

> The totalitarian attempt to make men superfluous reflects the experience of modern masses of their superfluity on an overcrowded earth. The world of the dying, in which men are taught that they are superfluous through a way of life in which punishment is meted out without connection with crime, in which exploitation is practiced without profit, and where work is performed without product, is a place where senselessness is daily produced anew (Arendt 1966: 457).

She cautioned, however, that human superfluity and 'disposability' would outlast the particular conditions of Nazism and Stalinism. When human lives are evaluated on the basis of utility rather than on any innate, inalienable 'worth,' Arendt argues that 'solutions' like the Holocaust or Stalin's gulags then become 'rational' choices: "Totalitarian solutions may well survive the fall of totalitarian regimes in the form of strong temptations which will come up wherever it seems impossible to alleviate political, social, or economic misery in a manner worthy of man" (Arendt 1966: 459). Also Bauman concludes that in liquid modernity anti-Semitism/allosemitism has all but lost "the unique position it occupied in premodern times and throughout modern history" (Bauman 1998c: 155). In liquid modernity, Bauman states that the Jews "are neither the most convenient nor the most obvious target for self-assertive actions; other groups, more conspicuous and closer to home serve the purpose better" (Bauman 1998c: 154). As we shall see later in Bauman's work on the 'human waste,' beggars, asylum seekers, immigrants, etc., are the new 'weeds,' the *Unwertes Lebens*,

of liquid modernity. 'Totalitarian solutions' may yet be utilized to deal with such problematic human material.

Face Three: The Others and the Strangers

As we have seen above in the discussion of Bauman's work on the Jews and anti-Semitism, he situated much of the antipathy towards the Jews in relation to their *otherness*, being more convinced by the idea of allosemitism than by anti-Semitism. Bauman's shift in perspective from a concern with Nazi inhumanities to the Jews to descriptions of the postmodern world also marked an expansion of his perspective of suffering. Iain Wilkinson has claimed that "a 'postmodern' generation of affluent sociologists is held to be so preoccupied with the cultural anxieties of consumer societies, that they give no thought to the plight of a global society where the majority are engaged in a daily battle for the basic means to survive" (Wilkinson 2004: 114). Despite his marked 'postmodern' outlook throughout most parts of the 1990s, this description far from catches the complexities of Bauman's concern with suffering because he continuously has been preoccupied with connecting the coming of consumer society with the dark side of its coin—those left behind, those unable to partake in the cornucopia of the consumer feast. In our postmodern or liquid modern world, Bauman argues that the idea of the 'stranger' or the 'vagabond'—whom he contrasts with the 'tourists'—has become a locus for fear and concern as much as racial differences used to unsettle those in the pre-globalization era of solid modernity. Bauman's work has in recent years been much concerned with the question of 'mixeophobia,' the fear of ambivalence, and 'proteophobia,' of the disquiet caused by the other, the stranger, who is seen as unpredictable and dangerous, as a *mobile vulgus*. Proteophobia is not fear of otherness or difference *per se*; it is rather the fear of those who cannot easily be categorized and who sit uneasily astride the barriers invented to keep things apart (Bauman 1991). Bauman affirms that the stranger or the Other who does not "fall easily into any of the established categories, emits therefore contradictory signals as to the proper conduct—and in the result blurs the borderlines which ought to be kept watertight and undermines the reassuringly monotonous, repetitive and predictable nature of the world" (Bauman 1998c: 144). The strangers and the Others become a threat to social order and must be kept under constant surveillance or otherwise incarcerated in order not to pollute our orderly world. He outlines the two strategies most commonly deployed in solid modernity in order to get rid of the unwanted Other—either 'anthropophagic' or assimilatory strategies aimed at making the strangers and Others similar to us thereby eradicating and erasing their otherness, or through 'anthropoemic' strategies aimed at excluding and expelling those different from the desired ideal by incarcerating or sequestrating them. In liquid modernity, the days of the deliberate deployment of these two strategies may according to Bauman be over, although to those destined to vegetate in refugee camps or dilapidated housing areas, it may still very much seem the same.

While we no longer seemingly live in times receptive to ideas of totalitarian utopia and the order-building endeavours through anthropoemic or anthropophagic strategies, while globalization has effectively obliterated any distinction between 'inside' and 'outside,' we still rely on the notions of 'us' and 'them. As Bauman asserts: "This is why the arrival of a stranger has the impact of an earthquake … The stranger shatters the rock on which the security of daily life rests. He comes from afar; he does not share the local assumptions" (Bauman 1995b: 53–54). While we are no longer seeking to build a Nazi-style, well-ordered garden utopia, in which the weeds are eradicated and annihilated once and for all, the stranger remains a constant threat to all 'orders' to any notion of 'purity.' Indeed, the liquid modern environment heightens rather than dissipates the fear of the stranger: "In a world constantly on the move, the anxiety condensed into the fear of strangers saturates the totality of daily life—fills every nook and cranny of the human condition" (Bauman 1995b: 55). In the liquid modern, post-9/11 climate, refugees, fugitives, foreigners and asylum seekers increasingly become the archetypal scapegoats/strangers:

> In addition to representing the 'great unknown' which all strangers embody, the refugees bring home distant noises of war and the stench of gutted homes and scorched villages that cannot but remind the established how easily the cocoon of their safe and familiar (safe because familiar) routine may be pierced or crushed (Bauman 2002b: 295).

Bauman asserts that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 2001 destroyed any meaningful sense of 'inside' and 'outside' in terms of citizens of liberal democracies being insulated from the threat of terrorist attack. He argues that 9/11 revealed the extent to which life in the liquid modern world has become a 'frontier-land.' Despite the futility of our attempts to make good our 'barriers,' we remain ever more concerned with keeping the 'outsiders' out. Never mind that 'they' have been forced into the life of a 'vagabond' because of the inequalities of global capitalism or by distant 'ethnic conflicts.' Fear, rather than sympathy, meets those driven into exile. We no longer live in times where the 'trinity' of territory, nation and state, dominate; nevertheless, the world is still divided into either citizens protected by human rights on the one hand or the stateless, homeless others on the other. With reference to Arendt, Bauman observes that as soon as one is no longer a citizen of a given country, it becomes almost impossible to assert one's human rights:

> On the earth sliced into estate properties of sovereign states, the homeless are without rights, and they suffer not because they are not equal before the law—but because there is no law that applies to them and to which they could refer in their complaints against the rough deal they have been accorded or whose protection they could claim (Bauman 2002b: 285).

Although we may have learned a thing or two from the solid modern Holocaust experience, something seems still to remain the same in liquid modern proteophobia and mixeophobia: "The modern era had been founded on genocide, and proceeded through more genocide. Somehow, the shame of yesterday's massacres proved a poor safeguard against the slaughters of today" (Bauman 1995a: 182). Today, the victims are no longer exclusively the Jews, the archetypal Others, but everybody oozing of otherness and strangeness.

Face Four: The Human Waste of Liquid Modernity

The idea of human 'superfluity' or 'weeds' is one which underpins much of Bauman's work on liquid modernity. Increasingly, Bauman asserts that as a result of globalization and the weakening of the human bonds of solidarity, among other reasons, ever larger numbers of people are becoming quite literally *useless*, *wasted and expendable lives*. The poor, asylum-seekers, college drop-outs, single mothers and ex-convicts all stand outside of the ideal liquid modern order of consumers because they are 'flawed consumers.' They may share the same aspirations as the societies in which they live, but they are seen as 'upstarts' lacking the means—read: the money—to participate or contribute meaningfully: "Superfluous people are in a no-win situation. If they attempt to fall in line with currently lauded ways of life, they are immediately accused of sinful arrogance, false pretences and the cheek of claiming unearned bonuses—if not of criminal intent" (Bauman 2004: 41). What happens to these superfluous and useless people? First of all, they are physically isolated in involuntary ghettos—out of sight and out of mind of the rest of society. Second, they are made responsible for their own misfortune and thus barred from complaining, asking for help or even demanding solidarity or moral concern from those lucky enough to escape such misfortune. Finally, they are informed that they are alone in their suffering when being told that their suffering is *their* suffering, *their* problem, *their* fault. In an increasingly individualized society, suffering obviously becomes an individual and private matter unable to coagulate into collective action, common concern or shared identities. As Bauman asserts: "Present-day miseries are not synchronized; to each door catastrophe knocks selectively, on different days, at different hours … Our sufferings divide and isolate: our miseries set us apart, tearing up the delicate tissue of human solidarities" (Bauman 1999: 53–54).

Whereas Bauman's previously delineated interest in the Holocaust and anti-Semitism related to the threat posed by those deemed to be 'weeds' in the perfectly-ordered garden-society of the era of solid modernity, his more recent work's focus relates to 'human waste' rather than human weeds (see Marshman 2008; Junge 2008). Instead of being predicated upon racial difference and a more 'classical' definition of the 'insider' and 'outsider' dichotomy, one's eligibility to join the dominant social order, and one's 'utility' within it, is now decided by other more utilitarian criteria. Bauman states that our new 'dream of purity' relates to our purity as a consumer, rather than the purity as producers or of blood or the ties of soil. Those without the means or the desire to define themselves through consumption are the 'flawed consumers': "They are the new 'impure,' who do not fit in the new scheme of purity. Looked upon from the now dominant perspective of the consumer market, they are redundant—truly the 'objects out of place'" (Bauman 1995b: 58).

This categorization as 'redundant' and superfluous to the needs and drives of consumer society results in the criminalization of poverty itself, the stigmatization of those who lack the ability or means to enjoy the distractions and opportunities open to the dominant group of fully-fledged consumers. The presence of the flawed consumers offends the citizens of liquid modernity just as the presence of the 'polluting'

weeds offended the architects of the racially-ordered society of solid modernity. This leads for calls for 'law and order' or 'something to be done': "The immediate proximity of large and growing agglomerations of 'wasted humans,' likely to become durable or permanent, calls for stricter segregationist policies and extraordinary security measures, lest the 'health of society,' the 'normal functionings' of the social system, be endangered" (Bauman 2004: 85). Thus, immigrants who do not benefit the economy of their host societies, asylum-seekers forced into the role of vagabonds, single mothers 'sponging' on the budget of the local council, homeless people and beggars who trouble the conscience and spoil the shopping trips of citizens remade as consumers and others who find themselves defined as 'marginal' become a 'problem' to be solved, a presence to be concealed. Deportation, refugee camps or prisons are increasingly deemed to be the only 'solution' for the human waste: "If it is cheaper to exclude and incarcerate the flawed consumers to keep them from mischief, this is preferable to the restoration of their consumer status through thoughtful employment policy coupled with ramified welfare provisions" (Bauman 1995b: 58). Once more, one is aware of the influence of Arendt on Bauman, particularly when one considers Arendt's premonitory assertion made forty years before the conditions outlined intensified to their current liquid modern state: "The danger of the corpse factories and holes of oblivion is that today, with populations and homelessness everywhere on the increase, masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous if we continue to think of our world in utilitarian terms" (Arendt 1966: 459). Liquid modernity is a world in which human uselessness is defined, and indeed defended, in such utilitarian terms.

Painting Portraits of Human Misery

As Robert A. Nisbet once contended in his *Sociology as an Art Form*, sociologists—despite their often distanced attitude towards the poetic or aesthetic—also paint 'sociological portraits' that, in many ways, resemble those portraits painted by the artists, although sociologists prefer to call them 'ideal types,' 'role types,' 'typifications' or something equally dispassionate and academically abstract. Nisbet, however, noted one important difference between sociological and artistic portraits: "It may be said that portraits done by the artist are more likely to emphasize individual characteristics—attributes unique to a given human being—whereas the portraits which come from sociology are more given to emphasizing traits which large numbers of individuals in a certain class or occupation exhibit commonly" (Nisbet 1976/2002: 69). This is also an apt characterization of Bauman's portraits—his depiction of suffering always centres on the misery experienced by classes, groups or 'races' rather than on individual experiences, although he in all likelihood recognises the insightful importance of the timely words of Ludwig Wittgenstein that "*no* torment can be greater than what a *single* human being may suffer … The whole planet can suffer no greater torment than a single soul" (Wittgenstein in Bauman 2001: 210). Another important difference is that whereas the artists' portraits are intended to be decorative and perhaps even aesthetically pleasing, the sociologists' portraits are, however, often rather

prosaic, distanced and abstract analytical constructs. Not so with Bauman's portraits. As we have shown above, most of his portraits depict human suffering and are painted with a trained and always sympathetic eye to the many different facets conjuring up human suffering throughout different epochs or different segments of modern society and they are always—despite their metaphorical meanderings—conceived and invoked with as much analytical precision as moral apprehension.

Undoubtedly, part of what makes Bauman's work so unique and valuable lies in his sympathetic engagement with the suffering and the marginalized. Just as he was one of the first sociologists to deal meaningfully and substantially with the subject of the Holocaust, so too is he one of the few to truly address human misery and its manifold causes and consequences with so much consistency and clarity. He is also one of the few sociologists that so incontrovertibly have declared that he—without leaving analytical clarity aside—sides with the suffering. Ian Wilkinson has asserted that "while sociologists have an elaborate range of languages at their disposal for conceptualizing the misery of the human condition, generally speaking, they do not address their inquiries to the experience of suffering" (Wilkinson 2005: viii). However, as we have sought to illustrate above, Bauman's work has been characterized especially by his continued engagement with the issue of suffering. Given the unmistakable influence of Emmanuel Lévinas on Bauman's thought, a meditation upon the fate of the 'outcast' seemed inevitable. In "Time and the Other," a series of two lectures given in 1946 and 1947, Lévinas had stated: "In suffering there is an absence of all refuge. It is the fact of being directly exposed to being. It is made up of the impossibility of fleeing or retreating … The whole acuity of suffering lies in this impossibility of retreat" (Lévinas in Hand 1996: 40). One could argue that Bauman's work constitutes an attempt to encourage us all to recognize suffering as *our* responsibility, to offer refuge and retreat to the suffering Other, rather than simply turning our backs or turning away. Bauman's perspective seems to urge us to take up and embrace the 'inter-human' perspective envisaged by Lévinas:

> The inter-human, properly speaking, lies in the non-indifference of one to another, in a responsibility of one for another, but before the reciprocity of this responsibility, which will be inscribed in impersonal laws, comes to be superimposed on the pure altruism of this responsibility inscribed in the ethical position of the *I qua I* (Lévinas 1998: 100).

This is a *being-for* which is motivated by selflessness rather than self-interest. Such altruism and responsibility would surely decrease the likelihood of inhuman events like the Holocaust, a subject that Bauman as we have shown has devoted much attention to. The experience of the Holocaust, articulated in the testimony of those who survived those paradigmatically 'dark times,' can surely be counted as some of the starkest portraits of human misery and suffering ever recorded. The literature of the Holocaust—but also of other horrendous attempts at annihilating human beings—attests to the negative possibilities of our reaction to the Other and of the ultimate end-result of the Other's classification *as other*. The suffering of those imprisoned in places like Auschwitz represented a new and unimaginable form of existential torment. Just as Primo Levi asked, somewhat rhetorically, whether such stories of

suffering represented "stories of a new Bible?" (Levi 2004: 72), he also proposed that a 'new language' would be required to both articulate and comprehend the experience of Auschwitz:

> Just as our hunger is not that feeling of missing a meal, so our way of being cold has need of a new word. We say 'hunger,' we say 'tiredness,' 'fear,' 'pain,' we say 'winter' and they are different things. They are free words, created and used by free men who lived in comfort and suffering in their homes. If the Lagers had lasted longer a new, harsh language would have been born; and only this language could express what it means to toil the whole day in the wind, with the temperature below freezing, wearing only a shirt, underpants, cloth jacket and trousers, and in one's body nothing but weakness, hunger and knowledge of the end drawing nearer (Levi 2004: 129).

Here we see the Western Judeo-Christian tradition of suffering profoundly altered. As Bauman asserted, the liquid modern pursuit of happiness at all costs is something relatively new. We did not always believe that it was the search for happiness that motivated all human action, accepting that suffering could make life 'purposeful.' Penitence and suffering were seen as elevating and ennobling, even from a less 'devout' or overtly religious standpoint, reason and rationality affirmed that suffering was simply an inescapable part of life. Bauman asserts: "To cut a long story short: for most of human history happiness was not the self-evident purpose of life. If anything, the contrary assumption prevailed. Suffering and pain were seen as permanent companions of life" (Bauman 2002a: 138). This idea of suffering as redemptive was incontrovertibly challenged by the events of the Holocaust—in the same way as Theodor W. Adorno insisted that 'writing poetry after the Holocaust was barbaric'—and as Lévinas asserts: "The disproportion between suffering and every theodicy was shown at Auschwitz with a glaring, obvious clarity. Its possibility puts into question the multimillennial faith. Did not Nietzsche's saying about the death of God take on, in the extermination camps, the meaning of a quasi-empirical fact?" (Lévinas 1998: 97). For what 'sin' could possibly require 'expiation' on a scale like that witnessed at Auschwitz, Sobibor, Majdanek or Chełmno? The suffering of the Jews and other persecuted minorities during the Holocaust did not elevate or ennoble, it debased both humanity and the very idea of God. Levi has written that the suffering inflicted on the Jews during the Holocaust served a similar 'purpose' to that which Bauman outlined in his *Modernity and the Holocaust* thesis. This was not redemptive suffering or divine justice; this was suffering designed to destroy the individual's very humanity, so that the killers may think that they still retained *their* humanity even as they murdered others: "One is truly led to think that, in the Third Reich, the best choice, the choice imposed from above, was the one that entailed the greatest amount of affliction, the greatest amount of waste, of physical and moral suffering. The 'enemy' must not only die, but must die in torment" (Levi 1995: 96). Levi continues: "Before dying the victim must be degraded, so that the murderer will be less burdened by guilt" (Levi 1995: 101). Following this lead, Ian Wilkinson has asserted in relation to Hannah Arendt's take on the Holocaust:

> What appears to her to be totally without precedent is not so much the shocking numbers of people massacred under these conditions but, rather, the fact that this took place as part of a systematic attempt to destroy them as juridical, moral and individual human beings. The terrible originality of the 'evil' of

totalitarianism lies in its ambition to render all people equally *superfluous*, so that the very category of 'being human' is violated and destroyed to the point of utter meaninglessness (Wilkinson 2005: 86).

As has already been discussed, Bauman's thought has been heavily influenced by Arendt when dealing with human suffering. Of equal importance to the much-visited themes of suffering and culture, Bauman's abiding concern has related to the processes by which certain people become superfluous, and what happens to them as a consequence of this superfluity, solid modern or liquid modern. His ultimate conclusion, after engaging with suffering and misery on such a scale, related to the human potential for evil, a potential that we must police vigilantly lest the 'unthinkable' should happen again:

The most morally devastating lesson of Auschwitz or the gulag or Hiroshima is not that we could be put behind barbed wire or herded into gas chambers, but that (under the right conditions) we could stand on guard and sprinkle white crystals into chimney ducts, and not that an atomic bomb can be dropped on *our* heads, but that (under the right conditions) *we* could drop it on other people's heads (Bauman 2006: 66).

Throughout his writings, Bauman traces and paints portraits of the reality of or potential for evildoing and its accompanying human suffering from the Holocaust up to contemporary liquid modern marginalization and stigmatization. Despite the somewhat sombre and defeatist tendency of such depictions, Bauman's portraits of suffering are neither tales of doom nor prophesies of despair. Just as there is potential for suffering and misery, so there is potential for goodness and hope.

Painting Portraits of Human Possibility

Above we have presented four faces of human suffering from Bauman's sociological gallery; portraits of human beings exposed to inhuman circumstances or indecent conditions in solid and liquid modernity alike. Whereas the faces of suffering may have changed throughout Bauman's writings, his substantial focus on those suffering has remained. But how do we alleviate their suffering? This is also a question that concerns him. Bauman's answer to a large extent relies on Lévinas's notion of 'the Face'—in the unconditional and unreciprocated responsibility for the Other. As he explained in *Postmodern Ethics*: "Morality is the encounter with the Other as Face" (Bauman 1993a: 48). This unconditional moral responsibility, if put into action and practiced instead of merely being preached, may lead to less cruelty and less suffering. However, we need to be wary not to think that the unconditional moral responsibility for the 'Other as Face' is transformed into or monopolised by iron-clad recipes or programmatic policies for 'doing the good': Bauman thus contended:

There is no recipe, no rules, no scientific methods of stopping inhumanity in its tracks … We ought to be wary of those who offer patented 'solutions' to the 'problem.' There are only heuristic, not algorithmic, guidelines that we can follow. And these are: respect for freedom, and above all of freedom to be different; tolerance for the otherness of beliefs, ideals, ways of life; solidarity with human suffering; and relentless promotion of the idea that moral responsibility for the other's fate rests forever with every moral subject, who can be neither expropriated from what is his, nor forgiven for giving it away (Bauman 1993b: 33).

Later in his writings, after apparently for the time being leaving behind the inconsequentiality of such abstract philosophical reasoning, Bauman sought—so far unconvincingly, as we see it—to move from this micro realm of human proximity and moral responsibility to the macro political level of global injustice and economic redistribution (Bauman 1998b, 1999). In either case, the concern has been to point to the as yet undiscovered and unproven possibilities that may relieve or eradicate the suffering experienced by those at the bottom of society.

Whether micro or macro level, solid or liquid modern, suffering is indeed a central point of departure for most of Bauman's writings. One might say that his work is permeated with stories of suffering—of outcasts, outsiders, sequestrated, marginalized and downtrodden people. But they are also stories of courage, of sacrifice, of the potential to do good and of hope. In his *Anathemas and Admirations*, Emile M. Cioran posed the existential but also rather defeatist question: "Since the only things we remember are humiliations and defeats, what is the use of all the rest?" (Cioran 1998: 190). Bauman's answer to such a question—vociferously activist rather than nihilistically defeatist—would be that the meaning of 'the rest' exactly is to be found in our willingness and ability to relieve the suffering from their plight and, if required, sacrifice ourselves in the process. Bauman quotes his wife Janina for the observation that "the cruellest thing about cruelty is that it dehumanises its victims before it destroys them. And that the hardest struggle is to remain human in inhuman conditions" (Bauman 1986: ix). The fact that *some* succeeded in mustering their moral responsibility, and so remained human in inhuman conditions, points to the possibility of life beyond or life released from suffering.

Although cruelty and inhumanities may seem utterly without any justifiable purpose whatsoever, suffering is, therefore, not all useless. The existence of suffering makes possible the ability of doing good, of sacrificing oneself, of standing out from the rest, of taking up the unconditional responsibility for the Other as Face that so many others may decide to leave aside or neglect. As Bauman pinpointed as one of the primary lesson learned from the Holocaust was not *how many* people actually did help others or chose morality over mere survival, but that *some* did (Bauman 1989). The fact that *some* did testify to the impossibility of a world surrendering entirely to evil, inhumanity and despair, and thus in suffering, the seeds of courage, of magnanimity and of morality reside. Since human beings according to Bauman are morally ambivalent, the fact that some carries out or engage in evil deeds such as violence, abuse or even murder also bears witness to the existence and potential of the other side of the coin—the moral responsibility for the Other as Face. The continued existence and persistence of evil should not cause resignation—it is rather a clarion-call to us all that we can do it better. Therefore, it points to human possibility—the possibility of a life beyond evil and suffering. This does not make evil good—but it makes the existence and perhaps even the inevitability of evil but also its eradication a matter of human choice, human intervention. It does not mean that we should accept suffering, evil and wrongdoing. Actually, it means that we should do our utmost and pull ourselves up by our bootstraps to eradicate it from our world. Silence, that inarticulate constituent of common sense and adamant defender of the naturalness, inevitability and

unchangeability of the status quo and thus also of suffering, is the worst of enemies when fighting suffering and evil. It is here sociology as a continuous inquisitive and iconoclastic dialogue with human experience may ultimately discover its own raison d'être:

> The price of silence is paid in the hard currency of human suffering. Asking the right questions makes, after all, all the difference between fate and destination, drifting and travelling. Questioning the ostensibly unquestionable premises of our way of life is arguably the most urgent of the services we owe our fellow humans and ourselves (Bauman 1998b: 5).

The worst sin is to avert one's eyes, to do nothing, to silently accept, to allow suffering to remain suffering. Bauman is merciless in his critique of the bystander mentality—whether solid or liquid modern—allowing suffering to take place unnoticed or without any interference let alone any moral scruples (Bauman 2002a: 201ff). To the question 'Am I my brother's keeper?,' his answer is a resounding and unequivocal 'yes.' This, in Lévinas's terms 'inter-human responsibility,' is not merely the concern of ordinary people. To the important role of sociology in making sure this answer, this resounding 'yes,' this responsibility, is not forgotten or silenced, he remarks in *Liquid Modernity*:

> Whoever willingly or by default partakes of the cover-up, worse still, denial of the human-made, non-inevitable, contingent and alterable course of the nature of social order, notably of the kind of order responsible for unhappiness, is guilty of immorality—of refusing to help a person in danger. Doing sociology and writing sociology are aimed at disclosing the possibility of living together differently, with less misery or no misery: the possibility daily withheld, overlooked or unbelieved (Bauman 2000: 244).

Thus, in Bauman's sociology of suffering, sociology itself is at stake.

Responsibility Beyond Reciprocity

In the above we have presented the four faces of human suffering in the sociology of Zygmunt Bauman—the flawed producers from the working-class, the Jews, the strangers and the Others, and finally the new underclass of flawed consumers and wasted lives. Our presentation has aspired to be a tentative account of how Bauman understands, depicts and thinks with and about suffering and how he presents a substantial sociology of modern and liquid modern suffering. Moreover, we have shown how he has consistently and consequently been engaged not only in describing but also in seeking to relieve the suffering from their misfortune through his sociological portraits. As has been observed of his overall perspective:

> Bauman's sociological and moral mission is always, categorically and unconditionally, to side with the weakest members of society and to show us, the better off part of the planet, that our moral obligation must be equally unconditional and unwavering if human suffering is to be avoided or annihilated (Tester & Jacobsen 2005: 24).

Returning to John Le Carré's novel *The Russia House* which initiated this piece, we quoted one of the main-characters, Barley, for stating: "We have to save each other, because all victims are equal. And none is more equal than others." In the above

we have attempted to illustrate how all victims are at one and the same time equal and unequal throughout Bauman's writings. In the aforementioned film, Barley's observation commences with the words: "It's everyone's duty to start the avalanche." Staring an avalanche is also Bauman's ambition in his moral sociology, although he would possibly prefer using the term 'responsibility' rather than 'duty' because the former signals an unspoken ethical demand resting on human choice while the latter concerns contractual and formal obligations. Contrary to many popular philosophies of life particularly prevalent in today's liquid modern world, Bauman's understanding of the moral responsibility for the Other as Face is exactly and explicitly *not* a matter of contractual agreements or duty-bound obligations—it is a matter of choice—and he sides with Lévinas who incisively stated in *Ethics and Infinity*:

> The intersubjective relation is a non-symmetrical relation. In this sense, I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it. Reciprocity is *his* affair … I am responsible for a total responsibility, which answers for all the others and for all in the others, even for their responsibility. The I always has one responsibility *more* than all the others (Lévinas 1985: 98–99).

Central to Bauman's Lévinas-inspired conception of morality as a bulwark against suffering, reciprocity is the concern of the Other, not an expectation of the I or the Self. The Other is the recipient of *my* help and it is exactly the weakness and suffering of the Other which makes the I or the Self strong, which makes *me* responsible. We see wonderful examples of the workings of this notion of non-reciprocity and unconditional responsibility and its wide-ranging consequences in the film adaptation of Catherine Ryan Hyde's book *Pay It Forward* from 2000 which, contrary to many contemporary films focusing on 'pay back,' is concerned with the inherent goodness in being and doing for the Other, the 'pay forward'-mentality. This is not merely a matter of abstract contemplation—it is a matter of concrete action that points to a moral pathway beyond being-with or being-beside the Other. It is a moral mentality and activity that is encompassed in what Lévinas termed 'diaconia'—the unreserved and unrestrained will to end or eradicate the suffering of another human being (Lévinas 1966). As a consequence, one cannot separate the Lévinasian *being-for* from *doing-for*. Bauman himself wonderfully wrote how this diaconic responsibility for ending suffering may ultimately turn out to be a matter of life and death: "No principle or norm can claim to be moral as long as it justifies the death of anOther, let alone the murder of anOther—in the same way as no principle or norm can claim to be moral, if it implies that my responsibility for the Other stops short of the gift of my life" (Bauman 1992: 210). We could replace the words 'death' and 'murder' with the less dramatic term 'suffering' if we are to extend this principle into the realm of everyday experiences in which the death or murder of the Other is fortunately occurring less often than the suffering of the Other. But, in short, Bauman's message is that no norm or principle, no ideology or scheme of action, can claim to be moral as long as it justifies the suffering of the Other or aspires to efface the Face of the Other.

In Bauman's Lévinasian account of a non-reciprocal morality, he, perhaps unknowingly, also follows an important lead from Alvin W. Gouldner (1973) who once proposed an alternative to the predominant 'Something for Something' principle

governing so much of present-day human conduct and so many state policies and strategies. Whereas 'Something for Something' is a norm of reciprocity stating duties and clarifying mutual expectations, the alternative principle, 'Something for Nothing' based on a norm of beneficence, asserts that helping others and attempting to alleviate their suffering is not a matter of formal obligation, duties or 'justice.' It is a matter of paying forward rather than paying back, a matter of self-sacrifice rather than feathering one's own nest. In short, it is a matter of doing good—sometimes even at the expense of one's own well-being. This is a lesson that may sound rather hollow or downright hilarious to the *homo consumens* of the liquid modern era, as described by Bauman, concerned solely with stimulating and satisfying their own privately pursued needs and ends. However, it is a message that becomes all the more urgent and important in times significantly not receptive to it. As Leszek Kołakowski once contended on the immanent possibilities of ideas when advanced in times not yet ready for them: "It may well be that the impossible at a given moment can become possible only by being stated at a time when it is impossible" (Kołakowski 1969: 92). So we are still able to hope even against hope.

As we have attempted to show above, what we may learn from Bauman's moral sociology of suffering is that suffering is not utterly useless—suffering, in the last instance, makes the unconditional ethical demand sound ever more penetrating, it pledges us to stand up and out among the rest, it makes us responsible, it makes us active, and it ultimately makes us moral human beings. Thus, Bauman ends his afterword to *Postmodernity and Its Discontents* by offering a corrective comment or extension to Albert Camus summarising his perspective on suffering:

> 'There is beauty and there are the humiliated'—Albert Camus noted in 1953 in *Retour à Tipasa*. 'However difficult this may be, I would not like to be disloyal to the first or to the others.' One could only add to this profession of faith that the attempt at selective disloyalty would be doomed, as there can be hardly any beauty without solidarity with the humiliated (Bauman 1997: 208).

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