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Metaphorically Speaking
—Metaphors as Methodological and Moral Signifiers of the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman

Abstract: Zygmunt Bauman is known to be one of the leading social theorists and commentators in contemporary sociology whose theoretical or diagnostical analysis of phenomena such as globalisation, community, identity, genocide, individualisation or modernity warrants his status as one of the most widely read sociologists of our time. However, Bauman throughout his work also develops an often overlooked methodological stance based to a certain extent on metaphorical reasoning. Throughout this piece, the authors focus attention on Bauman's metaphorical cornucopia and how it is informed by a deep-seated moral commitment. Apart from performing the function of methodological devices unveiling a selective and subjective, yet deeper, understanding of the social world, the metaphors also reveal the inherently moral core of Bauman's sociological endeavour.

Keywords: metaphor; creativity; morality; imagination; methodology; hermeneutics; dialectics

> "I believe that Aristotle was as creative as Sophocles, and Kant as creative as Goethe. There is not some mysterious ontological difference between these two ways of writing"
>
> Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*

> "Apart from the seminal image, indeed a plethora of images, all the dogged adherence to method imaginable is destined to futility and barrenness"
>
> Robert Nisbet, *Sociology as an Art Form*

The Metaphorical and Iconic Imagination

According to Solomon Asch (1955: 30), "we have been speaking in metaphors all our lives," and many other scholars have pointed to the ubiquity of metaphors in

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people's quotidian practices and the importance of metaphoricity in more abstract and academic reasoning (see, for example, Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Miall 1982; Ortony 1979). For some, however, this is apparently truer than for others—especially when speaking of utilising metaphors in social scientific writings. In the work of Zygmunt Bauman, metaphors have pervaded his analyses through the years, and in recent years this tendency has gradually been intensified. Bauman is a metaphorical thinker who deploys metaphors to highlight fundamental aspects of the social world—social stratification, historical transformation and forms of sociation—not being captured in the same imaginative fashion by more conventional sociological methodology.

Zygmunt Bauman's sociology *is* different from conventional sociology, as many accomplished commentators throughout the years have been keen to notice. They have all stressed the unorthodox or alternative angle of Bauman's way of writing and practicing sociology and also his rather relaxed stance towards scientific methodology— a matter normally seen as dead serious by those sociologists C. Wright Mills (1959) described as 'technicians.' Bauman is *not* such a technician. Let us therefore recall the wonderful words of Peter L. Berger stating that "in science as in love a concentration on technique is quite likely to lead to impotence" (Berger 1963: 24). Such impotence, however, is absent from Bauman's heterodox and humanistic sociology. Contrary to technical sociology, in his work, as in the work of many of the classical sociologists, "ideas [come] into being through processes like imagination, vision, and intuition— processes that have greater relation to the thoughtways of the artist than to those of the scientific data processor or technician" (Levine 1995: 65). Far from insinuating that Bauman rejects conventional sociological methodology as such, we want to pinpoint his insistence on expanding the content of the methodological toolbox in order to sharpen and supplement our comprehension of human experience. In this way, Bauman's sociology is indeed different from the norm. Thus, Tony Blackshaw (2006) recently described Bauman as a 'poet-intellectual,' Dennis Smith (1999) characterized him as an 'accomplished sociological storyteller,' Peter Beilharz (2000) insisted that his sociology was 'awesome' and 'different,' while Keith Tester (2004) noticed the particular 'literary edge' to and simultaneous slipperiness of his work. Tester, for example, went on to characterise Bauman's oeuvre in the following way:

> Although Bauman is a sociologist, he is a sociologist of a peculiar kind. He believes that disciplinary boundaries are to be treated with suspicion and even ignored in the search for a more all-embracing and relevant knowledge of the social world (Tester in Bauman & Tester 2001: 7).

This does not suggest, however, that Bauman is a systematic thinker seeking an all-embracing abstract system or detailed model capable of capturing the complexity and enormity of human experience. On the contrary, as he himself recently revealed in personal correspondence on his own peculiar perspective and his 'shift of loyalty' throughout the years—from systematic sociology in the early years in Poland to a more eclectic stance later in life:

> Like most young adepts of social analysis, joyfully unaware of the complexity of their task, I flirted once with the idea of an all-embracing, all-accounting-for and all-explaining system of knowledge, composed as a series of points and sub-points and narrated in a compact story with the clear beginning and even clearer

end—but the dream of ever building such a system did not last long, the conviction that its merits justify the effort dried up even faster, and the enthusiasm for the project gave way to outright resentment. I came to understand my task as an on-going conversation with human life experience, and the last thing I soon began to expect in that experience was the kind of systemness, cohesion, comprehensiveness, iron-clad logic and elegance one sought, and occasionally found, in philosophical argument … I guess that my works justify my filing among the least systematic thinkers on record, since in their descriptions the merit of 'conceptual clarity' can be conspicuous solely through its absence.

Perhaps Bauman in this confessional self-dissection overstates his own unsystematic and alternative approach to investigation and understanding social life, especially because his metaphors are indeed, if anything, illustrations of 'conceptual clarity,' as we shall discover below. It is however true that he gradually replaced the search for an all-embracing, coherent system with iron-clad logic and elegance with, amongst other things, metaphorical decoration and other more poetically inspired and creative appliances. As Stefan Morawski recalled, "Bauman in his Polish period was striving towards a fully-fledged systematic outline of the sociological subject-matter and method of investigation … whereas, from the late 1970s on, he declares and practices an ostentations farewell to the search after any system of knowledge" (Morawski 1998: 32). Consequently, his work today lingers, not uneasily as one should perhaps think, but rather comfortably between social science and literary exposition. In his whole way of diagnosing society and describing the plight of people inhabiting it, his work often comes closer to the novel than to the conventional sociological exposition. Thus, apart from describing the intrinsic ambivalence of human living, his work also oozes of ambivalence—ambivalence between sociological interpretation and literary decoration.

According to Bauman, there is no necessary, unbridgeable or fundamental opposition between distinguished specimen of social scientific description and great works of literature. Both, at least ideally, seek to obtain "the breath of vistas, the at-homeness in all compartments of the treasury of human thought, the sense of the many-facetedness of human experience and sensitivity to its as-yet-undiscovered possibilities" (Bauman in Bauman & Tester 2001: 24). When asked which books inspired him the most throughout his sociological trajectory, surprisingly he does not mention any of the stalwarts of sociology from his years of intellectual maturation such as Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merton or George C. Homans. They are only conspicuous through their absence. Rather, the likes of Italo Calvino, Robert Musil and Honoré de Balzac are frivolously and unexpectedly drawn from the magicians' hat. It is therefore unsurprising that in all the areas classically listed by Robert Nisbet (1976/2002) on the relationship between social science and literature, or 'sociology as an art form,' as he specifically called it, Bauman's work scores well above average. He creates 'sociological portraits' (vagabonds, tourists, strangers, etc.), he guides us through equally wonderful and wicked 'sociological landscapes' (gated communities, global frontierlands, nowherevilles, etc.), and he describes certain understandings of 'progression' (solid modernity, liquid modernity, etc.). Metaphors play a vital part in all of these areas and we shall return to these metaphors more substantially later. Suffice to say, Bauman's sociology is inspired by and in turn inspires what Herbert Read (1937) classically described as 'iconic imagination,' consisting of creativity, intuition and sub-

jective feeling as opposed to objective measurement, statistical documentation or logical inference. Not surprisingly, such iconic imagination or 'iconic augmentation' in Paul Ricoeur's (1979) apt words has found itself between a rock and a hard place within conventional (positivistic) sociology traditionally suspicious of metaphors and related phenomena as rhetorical and polemical devices revealing not 'reality out there' but merely the selective and subjective worldview of its creator. Such devices blur and potentially undermine the sacred demarcation between science—statistics, abstract reasoning and rules of logic aimed at *measuring or mapping* the world—and art—creative, poetic and intuitive ways of *sensing or feeling* the world. Bauman's iconic and metaphorical imagination, as we shall see, therefore challenges much of what counts as 'science' in contemporary sociology.

In the following, we wish first to introduce briefly to Zygmunt Bauman's 'methodology' of which the metaphors constitute an increasingly important part. Second, we will discuss metaphors as a methodological aspect of sociological thinking and comment on the way metaphors have been received and perceived by scholars within the field of social science before commencing with a compact exposition of Bauman's own metaphors. Finally, we will draw attention to the pros and cons of this kind of 'hybrid sociology' oscillating somewhere between sociology and literature. The aim of the article is primarily to introduce to Bauman's metaphors and hopefully thereby inspire to metaphorical thinking in sociology.

Bauman's Methodological Trinity

Zygmunt Bauman is primarily known, read and interpreted as a provider and constructor of theoretical argumentation of almost paradigmatic character within topics such as modernity, genocide, globalisation, identity or community, etc. In these and other substantive areas he has excelled by providing in-depth analyses based on reading and observing from the vantage point of the intellectual in the ivory tower. In this way, Bauman's work qualifies as archetypal of what Walter Korpi (1990) metaphorically labelled 'pegasus' sociology—the grandiose and sweeping diagnoses of the transformations of society based on rather abstract theorising. On a more earthly level, in a realm inhabited by 'tree lovers,' 'stub sitters' and 'moles,' actual empirical work is carried out based on careful methodological reflections. Bauman, however, hardly ever explicitly describes his methodology—it has to be read or excavated between the lines. According to Tony Blackshaw, Bauman is in fact utterly unconcerned with methodological matters:

> Despite the paradigmatic significance of Bauman's special way of practicing sociology, students will find nothing written about its ways and means in the pages of the introductory textbooks. One reason for this is that Bauman himself has had very little to say about issues of methodology. And if you were to ask him about the place of methodology in his sociology he would not be interested (Blackshaw 2005: 53).

However, no theory without methodology, and therefore Blackshaw's ascertainment is a bit hasty. Rather, in order to buttress or substantiate his overall theoretical analyses, Bauman operates with a certain methodological stance. Although he has

never written extensively on the issue of research methods or methodology (see scattered observations on methodology in Bauman 1990; Bauman & May 2001), when it comes to these matters, he already early on expressed scepticism regarding the reliability and validity of a number of available methods aimed at capturing lived experience (see Bauman 1966). His primary objection was that many research methods are incapable of capturing real life experience of those investigated, and he concluded that "there are no methods without deficiencies and every method causes certain methodological difficulties for the researcher" (Bauman 1966: 43). Therefore, his is not a principled but pragmatically oriented and relaxed position to methodology— research methods must expand our understanding of the world in order to warrant our use of them. As he stated many years ago:

> As far as research methods are concerned, their merits and shortcomings can be reasonably judged solely in the light of the volume and competence of the information they lead to. The choice of cognitive methods always is, or should be, secondary to the choice of problems one thinks important enough to be investigated (Bauman 1967: 406).

As a consequence, Bauman's sociology is per definition information-centred or problem-oriented. It works under the assumption that it is more advisable continuously to ask pertinent questions than to provide definitive answers. His methodological toolkit therefore consists of the trinity of 'sociological hermeneutics,' 'dialectics' and 'metaphors'—all characterised by a constantly probing, never satisfied and until-further-notice nature. Without descending into detailed delineations, 'sociological hermeneutics' in his work consists of the dual desire to 'defamiliarise the familiar' and of linking events or lives unfolding to the larger social figurations within which they take place, while his 'dialectics' are aimed at disclosing and, if possible, transcending the omnipresent contradictions and polarities of the variegated human experience of the world—for example, order versus chaos, dependency versus freedom, morality versus indifference (see Jacobsen 2004a). Combined with these two methodological gadgets, the use of 'metaphors' in recent years, however, has proved to be one of Bauman's preferred ways or 'methods' of dissecting and describing the human condition—in all its stratified, complex and multifarious appearance.

Despite his methodological reflections and sociological templates, Bauman contrary to many colleagues within the discipline of sociology in his later work never ventures into conceiving sophisticated models, flow charts, diagrams or matrices and only sporadically uses statistics or other substantial empirical material to support his analyses. Nor does he construct an iron-clad logical system intended to capture the most infinitesimal or intimate and the most magnified or universal features of human experience. Accepting Bauman's sociological analysis, in short, boils down to a matter of belief, acknowledging the better argument or the power of persuasion. In one of his books he described his specific methodological strategy as a 'detectivistic adventure,' meaning that "in owing to the nature of all detection, it is bound to rely on conjectures as much as it does on the unassailable power of deduction, and much as it would wish to rely on the hard evidence of induction" (Bauman 1992: 8). Most of Bauman's books can be regarded and read as such detectivistic adventures relying on a methodological mixture of guesswork, deduction and the occasional grain of induction additive.

In order to persuade or capture the attention of the reader, Bauman's primary scalpel in dissecting social reality is language, metaphorical language. Strangely though, in Bauman's textbook in sociology, *Thinking Sociologically*, the word metaphors is not mentioned even once. Actually, no parts of the book are devoted to actual methodological concerns, although the first and last chapters contain certain considerations on how to comprehend the social world (Bauman 1990). One suspects that it is actually only recently that Bauman himself became aware of his metaphorical imagination in the same way that it was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s he specifically began speaking of the aforementioned 'sociological hermeneutics.' In fact, Bauman's metaphors are closely connected to the sociological hermeneutics. Both change our immediate and ingrained sense of things at the same time as they sharpen our perception of reality. By transmogrifying the world we perceive, they allow us to see the world in a new and improved perspective. But whereas sociological hermeneutics—in a manner similar to C. Wright Mills's (1959) 'sociological imagination'—intensifies our ability to penetrate the actual workings of the world (e.g. that individual troubles are intimately linked to structural or figurational factors), metaphors allow us to see the world in a different and sometimes even distorted light. Therefore, metaphors belong to or exemplify Bauman's aforementioned favourite sociological strategy: defamiliarisation. Defamiliarisation consists of making the obvious non-obvious, looking at life from unexpected and unexplored angles, constructing the well-known as strange, but "most importantly, it may open up new and previously unsuspected possibilities of living one's life with more self-awareness, more comprehension" (Bauman 1990: 15). Metaphor is the archetypal strategy of such defamiliarisation. Metaphors, however, come in many different guises, as we shall see. For example, Philip Wheelwright (1962) distinguished between two types of metaphors—*epiphors* and *diaphors*. Whereas the former creates new meaning through outreach and extension—by assuming a usual meaning for a word and then applying this word to something radically different—the latter constructs new meaning by juxtaposition or synthesis—by combining heretofore unrelated realms of experience or words in a new and unexpected way. In both cases, familiarity is turned into something strange at the same time as the unfamiliar is being familiarised. Bauman's metaphors thus bridge this differentiation between epiphors and diaphors—they *both* create new meaning by applying unexpected terminology (e.g. describing the new poor as 'vagabonds') to account for the familiar and well-known *and*, in the process, allow us understand social phenomena or human experiences that may at first appear incomprehensible to us (e.g. shedding light on the fact that relative poverty in contemporary society is a matter of mobility, or rather lack of mobility).

Metaphors as 'Methodology'

Ever since the ancient Greek philosophers roundly attacked 'fanciful' and 'fine' language, metaphors have been in bad standing in social thought, and ever since Thomas

Hobbes deemed metaphors and other 'senseless' and 'ambiguous words' *ignes fatui* ('foolish fire') and as one of the four cardinal abuses of language, only a few maverick thinkers have dared venture into this realm of senselessness and ambiguity. More recently, positivist heirs to the work of Greek philosophers and the work of Hobbes have seriously questioned the scientific value and merit of metaphors (Ortony 1979: 1), although recognising the rhetorical or artistic importance of metaphorical language, as when Aristotle stated that "ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh" (Aristotle in Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 190). As a consequence, realist or positivist methodology—relying on either a rationalist or empiricist ontology/epistemology—has vitiated a recognition of the vital importance to human cognition and especially scientific reasoning played by metaphors.

Therefore, metaphor has been much maligned and belittled as a device fit for utilisation anywhere outside of its 'native home' of literature and poetry. As Andrew Goatly asserts, philosophers ranging from Aristotle to Thomas Hobbes and John Locke "have often wanted metaphor strictly confined to literature, rhetoric and art, because of its supposed dangers to clear thinking" (Goatly 1997: 1). Ted Cohen asserts that such 'classical' disdain for metaphor has been highly influential: "The works of many twentieth-century positivist philosophers and others either state or imply that metaphors are frivolous and inessential, if not dangerous and logically perverse" (Cohen in Sacks 1979: 3). Yet, in recent decades—and especially since George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) convinced us that "human thought processes are largely metaphorical"—metaphors have become more 'acceptable' in academic circles as a means for describing and making sense of the world that we live in. Keith Tester has observed that Bauman has been at the very forefront of this relatively recent fusion of social science and poetry/literature. Tester argues that "Bauman is one of the most deliberate of sociological stylists. For him language and prose are not simply functional tools. Certainly, a sentence, paragraph, essay or book is a means of communication and therefore of conversation between the reader and the writer …But the conventions of academic language can be an obstacle to this end" (Tester 2004: 12). Thus, by merging the scientific/academic with the artistic/creative, Bauman has continuously sought to transcend this obstacle and played with the possibility of infusing imaginative language and poetic reasoning into the realm of sociology.

With regard to Bauman's own use of metaphor, it is interesting to consider how Nelson Goodman has explored the supposed 'opposition' and incompatibility between metaphorical language and literal language. Goodman argues that while metaphorical language differs from the literal use of language, this does not mean that metaphors are less practical or comprehensible. Of metaphor Goodman asserts: "Far from being a mere matter of ornament, it participates fully in the progress of knowledge: in replacing some stale 'natural' kinds with novel and illuminating categories, in contriving facts, in revising theory, and in bringing us new worlds" (Goodman in Sacks 1979: 175). This is surely what has motivated Bauman's use of metaphor. With delicacy and precision, Bauman uses metaphor to open our eyes to aspects of reality that have hitherto gone beyond our notice.

This brings us on to the question: What functions do metaphors fulfil for the practicing sociologist such as Zygmunt Bauman? A key quality of metaphors is their ability to create *instantaneous identification* on behalf of the reader—one immediately recognises what the author means or intends by applying or suggesting a specific metaphor. One gets inside his head, as it were, and sees what he wants us to see. However, one also almost immediately recognises the inherent absurdity in the metaphorical juxtaposition of, for example, comparing society to a machine, a battlefield or a game (see Rigney 2001). By way of words, and combination of words, metaphors create worlds that do no exist. For example, Erving Goffman's (1959) famous dramaturgical metaphors of 'front stage,' 'back stage,' 'props,' 'impression management,' 'performers' and 'audiences' as well as C. Wright Mills's (1959) militaristic metaphors of a 'military-industrial complex,' 'NATO intellectuals,' 'military metaphysics' and 'crackpot realists' created a similar imagery arsenal of understandings as that of Bauman. But contrary to the root metaphors of military strategy employed by Mills and the performative or theatrical metaphors deployed by Goffman organising a multitude of social phenomena around one single unit-idea—military or theatre—Bauman's metaphors constitute less of a systematic and coherent whole and appear much less consistent and much more loosely structured and eclectic. His metaphors may analytically be divided into three overall descriptive areas capturing aspects of previous or contemporary social life—'personal metaphors' dealing with the different types of people inhabiting our liquid modern world (such as 'vagabonds,' 'tourists' and 'players'—to be contrasted with the 'pilgrims' inhabiting solid modernity), 'societal metaphors' dealing with the historical transformation of society (from 'solid' to 'liquid' modernity'), and finally 'utopian metaphors' dealing with how human society is always ahead of itself, how humans always strive towards the horizons of tomorrow but also how contemporary utopia is no longer a hoped-for-utopia but rather a lived-through-utopia (for example, his metaphors of 'gamekeeping,' 'gardening' and 'hunting utopias'). Apart from these overarching metaphorical descriptions, Bauman's work also contain a cornucopia of other metaphorical images (see Jacobsen & Marshman 2007).

Bauman's Metaphors

What, then, are Bauman's most significant metaphors? How do they aid our understanding of contemporary social and cultural arrangements? As mentioned, Bauman's main metaphors relate, broadly speaking, to 'types'/archetypes: types of society ('solid'/modern, 'liquid'/post-modern), types of people ('weeds,' 'tourists and vagabonds,' 'flawed consumers'), and types of 'utopia.' The use of metaphor therefore allows Bauman to trace the progression or trajectory of modernity and to diagnose the disorders, dreams and desires which have characterised and afflicted each stage of modernity. Thus, Bauman moves from an analysis of the 'wild' uncultivated society of the premodern era (the era of 'gamekeepers,' when the natural 'God-given' state of things was passively accepted, without intervention or interference), to the era of

solid modernity, whereby the desire for an ordered, 'civilised' society led to 'garden-ing' or 'social engineering' and to the pursuit of the perfect world/utopia. Bauman's gardening metaphor was used to maximum effect in his appraisal of the Holocaust as the 'natural' (for modernity was intrinsically anti-nature) and inevitable product of modernity. Bauman observed that modern society was managed like a garden. By following a strict plan/design, a perfect garden/society could emerge; one that was purged of wild, undesirable elements. The 'gardeners' of modernity, of which the Nazis were the very best/worst example, were armed "with a vision of harmonious colours and of the difference between pleasing harmony and revolting cacophony; with determination to treat as weeds every self-invited plant … with machines and poison adequate to the task of exterminating the weeds" (Bauman 1989: 57). In the era of solid modernity it was the Jews who were defined as weeds that were unable to be "incorporated into the rational order, whatever the effort" (Bauman 1989: 65). Such 'weeds' were fit only for extermination. Here we encounter the *danger* of metaphors when in the wrong hands. The term 'weed' was as much a euphemism as a metaphor. The Nazis used such metaphorical language to remove the Jews from the sphere of moral consideration and human obligation. This links to Bauman's powerful work on *adiaphorization*, on the social production of indifference. Bauman cautions us that such indifference happens in stages; first a group of people are 'classified' as other, then they are cast-out of our moral/social order: they are not 'people like us,' the normal rules governing the 'moral' treatment of others do not apply to them. Bau-man asserts that once such people have been removed from sight morally (through categorisation and demonisation) and physically (in the era of solid modernity by re-moving them to concentration camps and in the era of liquid modernity by confining them to refugee camps and the no-go-areas of social housing), the bureaucracy and industrial techniques honed in solid modernity are more than equal to the task of removing them from the world, *full stop*.

In keeping with this, Bauman's work on postmodernity/'liquid modernity' has been dedicated to providing a voice for the new 'weeds;' the poor, the socially excluded, essentially those flung to the margins of society by the unstoppable march of global capitalism and consumer society. In liquid modernity, the poor are classified as deviant and without purpose. Beggars, homeless people, drug-takers and illegal immigrants all find themselves grouped into one category—'the underclass'—and in the process they are stigmatised and criminalised. Bauman asserts that this happens for a rea-son: "Linking poverty with criminality has another effect: it helps to banish the poor from the universe of moral obligations" (Bauman 1998a: 77). Bauman's metaphor of liquidity also captures the sense of a world where all of the 'solids' have indeed 'melted into air.' Bauman's thought here is obviously informed by Marshall Berman, who has observed that the collapse of solid modernity "pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish" (Berman 1991: 15). This is a world where nothing can be relied upon to last or stay the same. Such liquidity has of course been brought about by globalisation, which is such a dominant theme in Bauman's work. The collapse of the 'institutions' of the solid modern era—of nation, state and territory—led to the emergence of a world

disorder where only the global elite may feel at home. As Bauman asserts: "Liquid life is a precarious life, lived under conditions of constant uncertainty" (Bauman 2005: 2). Here Bauman's metaphors of 'tourists' and 'vagabonds/flawed consumers' come into play. Bauman uses these metaphors to shed the harshest light possible on the inequalities which define liquid modernity. For the rich, and even the 'comfortably-off,' for the 'secure' (those with a 'rightful' place/citizenship in a given state), globalisation and its attendant consumer-led society offer numerous opportunities. These people are 'tourists,' even if they don't travel anywhere; the world is 'open' to them, it is their oyster and it offers them "the true or imaginary pleasures of a sensation-gatherer's life" (Bauman 1997: 92). For the poor, the socially excluded 'vagabonds' and 'flawed consumers,' the liquid modern world is a prison, not a playground. Vagabonds are typified by the ever-on-the-move (involuntarily) asylum-seekers and refugees. Bauman reminds us that it is the poor who face the consequences of liquid modernity. In our fluctuating, fast-moving, fragmented world, not everyone enjoys the same degree of choice and opportunity. As Keith Tester asserts, Bauman uses the vagabond/tourist metaphor to underline the fact that "not everyone imitates the movement of capital and the liquefaction of bonds through *choice*. Some people have that fate forced upon them" (Tester 2004: 180). From Bauman's metaphorical imagery of tourists and vagabonds one can glimpse the hidden 'truth' about contemporary society—that mobility is the major stratifying factor in liquid modernity. Therefore, Bauman's 'personal metaphors' illustrate the oscillation or rather stratification between freedom of choice and the experience of being tied to locality. It is a frontal attack on the assumption that the self-conscious, motivated and reflexive individual may choose to do whatever he or she wants and Bauman asserts that "the common metaphor of the motivated individual as the key to understanding of the human world—including our own, thoroughly personal and private, thoughts and deeds—is inappropriate" (Bauman 1990: 14). What goes for his 'personal' metaphors, is also evident in the 'societal' and 'utopian' metaphors that all reveal the lopsidedness of his work, the relics of Marxist thinking at the heart of his perspective, the fact that stratification, inequality and injustice is a perpetual problem of human existence.

Furthermore, in Bauman's metaphorical description of the different types of people inhabiting the social world he comes close to revealing the 'double hermeneutic' or 'sociological hermeneutics' informing his work in that the lived experience of individuals or groups of people first of all must always be seen and interpreted against the backdrop of more comprehensive and complex structural configurations, and secondly, that his metaphors are reflections or interpretations that are organically related to the world—the lived experience or cognitive capacity—of other human beings. Thus, on such metaphors or categories of people, the novelist, the sociologist and 'ordinary' people apparently hold something in common, as also Peter Berger insisted: "The categories [the sociologist] employs in his analyses are only refinements of the categories by which other men live" (Berger 1963: 33). Therefore, Bauman's own definition of sociology as 'an ongoing dialogue with human existence' is vividly illustrated in his metaphorical predilections, whether personal, societal or utopian.

Moral Metaphors

Metaphors—whether in the hand of Nazi propagandists proclaiming certain lives *unwertes Leben*, of liquid modern politicians queuing to talk of 'the new underclass' or of practicing sociologists seeking to describe contemporary human condition— are not merely neutral, descriptive or 'innocent.' They are highly moral and charged with moral connotations, as also Susan Sontag (2001) observed in connection to the dominant metaphors of illness in general and specifically those recent metaphors associated with AIDS. And George Lakoff revealed that metaphors are

> inextricably tied to our embodied experience of well-being: health, strength, wealth, purity, control, nurturance, empathy, and so forth. The metaphors we have for morality are motivated by these experiences of well-being, and the ethical reasoning we do is constrained by the logic of these experiential [sources] for the metaphors (Lakoff 1999: 331).

Thus, metaphors are not merely poetic, superficial, ornamental or decorative devices intended either to adorn reality or to present literal descriptions of how things actually 'are.' Metaphors are also potentially agenda-changing social acts (see Agger 2000) aimed at presenting an image of how the world 'ought' to be or 'should'/'could' be. Therefore, metaphors play a crucial role in Bauman's practice of moral sociology. He uses metaphors in order to develop and practice critical social thought. This might be said to fit very well with the utopian strand in Bauman's work; with the idea that humanity could/should embrace the open-ended possibilities rather than surrendering to the idea that things 'are as they are' and 'there is no alternative' (Jacobsen 2004b, 2006). Bauman's metaphors are intended to make us see and think more clearly about what *is* happening, but also about what *could* happen. His metaphors make us reconsider the world around us. They are inherently *moral*, they give voice to the voiceless, they recall us to our inescapable human and moral responsibility for the 'other.' Keith Tester gets to the very heart of what Bauman attempts and achieves through his unique mix of critical theory and literary or poetic devices: "Sociology— just like the novel as understood by Kundera and, it might be added just like poetry— means recovering the world and, from out of what is recovered, creating something that did not and could not exist before; an ethically responsible humanity" (Tester 2004: 20). Bauman's moral metaphors fit well within the category of what Wayne C. Booth has termed 'weapon metaphors' (Booth in Sacks 1979: 51). Booth observes that such metaphors are often used to good effect in the courtroom, they 'take the side' of the underdog. Weapon metaphors, like Bauman's moral metaphors, have a way of impacting on the individual, of awakening our sense of indignation at the injustice and inequality that surround us. Such metaphors are "weapons designed to win adherents and destroy enemies" (Booth in Sacks 1979: 57). Therefore, Bauman uses metaphors not in the service of grandiloquence or adornment, but to aid understanding, and also implicitly as a call to action/moral responsibility. As Ted Cohen observes, the use of metaphor can sometimes have a 'loftier' purpose than mere linguistic elegance: "Sometimes there is a wish to say something special, not to arouse, insinuate, or mislead, and not to convey an exotic meaning, but to initiate explicitly the cooperative

act of comprehension which is, in any view, something more than a routine act of understanding" (Cohen in Sacks 1979: 7). Thus, Bauman writes of 'weeds' and 'flawed consumers' to point out the dangers, horribly realised during the Holocaust, that still exist today: "People get cast in the underclass because they are seen as totally useless—something the rest of the world could do nicely without. They are, indeed, blots on an otherwise pretty landscape, ugly yet greedy weeds, which add nothing to the harmonious beauty of the garden but suck out a lot of plant feed. Everyone would gain if they vanished" (Bauman 1998a: 66).

Bauman's metaphors—as the metaphors of most other critical social thinkers or novelists—do not intend or aspire to mirror the 'real' world out there. Often they are conscious distortions of reality—ways of making us more sensitive to reality than any statistics, surveys or documented social analysis might possibly achieve. Bauman uses his metaphors not only as methodological devices aimed at creating analytical comparisons—his metaphors also contain an unmistakable moral edge, a moral indignation of the way certain groups of people are treated in and by society. The very wording of his metaphors reveals their moral status making it immediately and instantaneously clear to the reader what it feels like to be cast into the categories of social reality—we would all like to be tourists, few would cherish the life of a vagabond. Therefore, metaphors are also mental constructs—or 'cathedrals in the mind,' as Kathleen Forsythe (1986) eloquently proposed. As such cathedrals, metaphors belong to the 'architecture of thought' underpinning our very perception and conception of the world. They constitute the cognitive and moral backbone of our *Weltanschauung*:

> Because our conceptual system is not something we are normally aware of, we have failed to account for its metaphorical nature in our discussion of truth and meaning. Yet its pervasiveness suggests a central and basic role in the underlying architecture of thought. Metaphor can create new meaning, create similarities and so define a new insight and new perception of reality. Such a view has no place in the dominant objectivist picture of the world (Forsythe 1986).

By using metaphors, Bauman objects to such an objectivist picture of the world that is incapable of going behind the scenes or reveal the underlying 'truths' about social life. Therefore, metaphors are by their very nature subjective interpretations rather than factual descriptions of the 'objective' reality of the world 'out there.' Unlike philosophy, which according to Ludwig Wittgenstein 'leaves everything as it is,' Bauman's sociological metaphors contain a transformative capacity. Thus, he aims for 'humanisation *through* metaphors' (contrary to Susan Sontag's (2001: 4) 'liberation *from* metaphors'). Bauman's humanisation strategy is twofold. First, Bauman humanises the world by describing it from the vantage point and experience of the human individual, whether tourist or vagabond. For example, when he talks of globalisation, he is talking of its 'human consequences' (Bauman 1998b). Second, he always points to the undiscovered human potential and the unlimited possibilities waiting to be uncovered by humanity beyond the confines of common sense. So because humanity, in the understandings of Ernst Bloch and Zygmunt Bauman alike, is always about chasing the future, it is always also *not yet*. Tony Blackshaw elegantly saw through Bauman's metaphorical imagination and its moral, utopian and humanistic underpinnings when stating:

Bauman recognizes that metaphors are useful tools in writing sociology because in their stubborn explicitness they force the reader to interpret them …In Bauman's hands, metaphors become much more than simply explanatory devices, however, as they provide him with a means for giving voices to the socially excluded … It is through these kinds of metaphors that Bauman transforms sociology from a medium through which sociologists largely read and write for each other, into a political and ethical forum for witnessing the unsettling—sociology as a kind of willed engagement with Otherness … Through the blizzards of metaphors he forces us to do what we cannot do in real life—enter the world of the Other (Blackshaw 2005: 76–79).

The Wrong Way Through the Telescope?

Zygmunt Bauman's metaphors are only one—but admittedly one rather exceptional—example of his generic literary or iconic imagination. His sources of inspiration, his essayistic style of writing, his choice of syntax and vocabulary, his condensed language, his narratives of social transformation and his predilection for depicting universes of ambivalence all testify to Bauman's literary edge. He is therefore a living proof that Austin Porterfield was right when half a century ago emphasizing: "Though we may assume the utmost need for scientific appraisals of social processes, relations and structures by the anthropologist, psychologist, and sociologist which meets the tests of sound scientific procedure, there are still contributions that literary analysis can make to the sum of social knowledge" (Porterfield 1957: 424). Bauman's work is one such example of the contribution of literary analysis, or perhaps rather literary style, to sociology. Several years ago, Peter Laslett (1976) confronted or contested the idea—particularly prevalent at that time but today almost eradicated from the agenda of sociology—that sociology might benefit from such literary insight or style. He suggested that using literature as a substitute for empirical evidence of actual events was equivalent to 'looking the wrong way through the telescope,' seeing not what the world actually looks like but instead mirroring what the author sees or wants us to see. Despite his admiration for the great works of literature, Laslett therefore proposed caution and moderation in using literary insights as evidence in sociology.

Bauman would probably not disagree with Laslett. However, he would most likely suggest that all methods—including literary techniques such as metaphors as well as statistical analysis—should be applied with moderation, should not stand alone and should be used only if beneficial for sharpening cognition or problem-solving. To suggest that Bauman's metaphors ought to be tested against objective reality would be absurd and amounts to a misunderstanding of their multifarious uses. As mentioned above, Bauman's metaphors are a way of mirroring his *experience* of the world—all of a sudden, through the tales of tourists and vagabonds, we all sense how it must feel to live life at the bottom or top of society. At the same time the metaphors are a way of expanding our sense of proportion or experience of reality, as Pieter Nijhoff stated: "When Bauman, in his writing, contaminates the purity of analytical lines with terminology from other branches … he is demonstrating in a stylistic way that our reality is multitudinous" (Nijhoff 1998: 97). This 'contamination,' however, is creative insofar as the metaphors also perform the function as a means of grasping and reducing the inherent complexity of a world that is by its very nature as infinite

as it is unintelligible. In this way, Bauman's metaphors—in Eugene Miller's (1979) terminology—belongs to a 'constitutive' not 'verificationist' tradition. It constitutes a *perspective* on the world that cannot, and probably should not, be tested, in the same way that it would be utterly senseless to test the empirical validity of the experiences of the principal characters in works of fiction. However, because Bauman informs us that his works are in fact works of *sociology*, we may, naturally, ask about his understanding of the type of sociology he is practicing. Bauman would probably leave such an interpretative task and valuation entirely to the reader himself/herself.

As we mentioned earlier, metaphors—together with a host of other literary techniques—have been regarded with ill-concealed contempt from many quarters of the academic community, especially those defending scientism and rigorism in research. Bauman is well aware of the potential criticism his use of metaphors might warrant from other scholars, past and present. In personal conversation he asserted:

> Were they still around and stooped to read my writings, ancient sages [he specifically mentions Plato] would be among those 'some' inclined to call my use of metaphors frivolous … One uses metaphors, the ancients believed, as mere adornments of speech; as trinkets one could rather do without for the sake of clarity … The sole purpose metaphors might serve, they insisted, was for the speaker to entreat and charm the listeners, to gain their applause, and obtain approval that is prompted by whipped up emotions instead of being solidly founded in alerted and watchful reason.

Naturally, this does not Bauman's explain appreciation of metaphors, and he went on to say:

> This is not, however, what metaphors do; or at least not the only task they may perform. In case of an unfamiliar experience in need of an adequate conceptual net to be caught and examined, metaphors render enormously important service: they serve imagination and comprehension. They are the indispensable scaffoldings for imagination and perhaps the most effective tools of comprehension.

However, we need to remember that metaphors do not reveal the whole truth, let alone the half truth, of the events or experiences of the real world. They are, as Laslett insisted, necessarily merely a partial vision of the world and reveals as much about their human originator or creator as they reveal about reality. In this way, metaphors are like most other pieces of art and, therefore, as Oscar Wilde famously remarked in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* on artistic portraits (something quite similar to many sociological metaphors),

> every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself (Wilde 1890/2000: 9).

Or, as Bauman himself commented in personal communication on this 'problem' of representation and subjectivity in metaphors:

> Metaphorical juxtaposition is an act of selection and discrimination: some features are drawn into limelight, some others cast in shadow ('bracketed away'). While the first kind of traits is assigned prime importance, the other traits are obliquely ascribed lesser relevance—and it is on the first that the attention is focused explicitly or tacitly … Each metaphor is for that reason 'reductionist'—partial or even partisan. This is however, I believe, a feature of all cognition.

In this way, Bauman indirectly admits that metaphors function as polemical devices or linguistic adornments conceived in order to convince, persuade or snare the reader into believing or accepting a selective or reductionist view of the world. As also Daniel Rigney remarked, "metaphors are notoriously seductive" (Rigney 2001: 5). This is where and why 'Bauman the novelist' merges with 'Bauman the sociologist.' Austin Porterfield once differentiated between the 'literary man' and the 'scientist' (sociologists, psychologists, etc.) by stating on their inherently different approaches to investigating and describing the world:

> Unlike the literary man, the sociologist or the psychologist does not directly implicate the raw data of human experience in communicating scientific principles, but presents concepts and laws by which the data of experience is organized. His symbols consist of concepts as organizing ideas rather than in literary modes of expression. The scientist must ring a concept bell to get the desired response. The literary man rings a 'Bell for Adano' to portray a concrete situation (Porterfield 1957: 423).

This is exactly where Bauman sits astride conventional archetypal differentiations between scientists and artists or literary men: His 'concept bell' is simultaneously also his 'Bell for Adano' (with reference to John Hersey's Pulitzer Price winning novel later famously adapted for the screen). For him, there is no necessary contradiction between the two. Obviously, social science and literature are not identical, but they have close affinities and share common concerns. Bauman's conceptual and poetic metaphors are examples of blurring or bridging the realms of social science and literature with the pros and cons following such a daring endeavour.

Hybrid Sociology

In the foregoing, we have merely outlined selected aspects of Zygmunt Bauman's methodology by focusing specifically on his metaphors. Bauman's metaphorical cornucopia is, however, much more detailed, subtle and pervasive than our sketchy presentation justifies. Detailing and exemplifying his sociological hermeneutics or his dialectics would require examinations of their own. George Steiner (1971) once humorously stated that today "dialectics have become binary." Bauman's dialectical thinking, as part of his aforementioned methodological arsenal, is not binary but seeks transcendence of diametrically opposed experiences of life. However, at first sight one may legitimately argue that another of Bauman's methodological features, the metaphors, appear somewhat static and binary—vagabond *versus* tourist, globals *versus* locals, gamekeepers *versus* hunters, solid *versus* liquid modernity, etc.—and that transcendence is lost in oppositional thinking. However, when coupled with sociological hermeneutics and dialectics, Bauman's metaphors seek to transcend and transform our commonsensical and doxic assumptions about the apparent inevitability, naturalness or immutability of the world we inhabit, its history, its direction, its possibilities and our positions within it. Therefore, is makes no sense, at least only analytically, to separate Bauman's metaphors from his sociological hermeneutics or dialectics.

To dismiss Zygmunt Bauman merely as a constructor of theoretical or diagnostical argument with no methodological preferences or predilections is to miss the

point. Between the lines—and practiced with surprising consistency and passionate originality—Bauman is also a methodologist, although he would probably deny it. Bauman, in his own words, sits astride the stubborn barriers meant to keep things apart. His hybridization of the sociological and the poetic imagination penetrates much of what is taken for granted or at face-value in contemporary sociology. We therefore regard Bauman's work as fundamentally cross-disciplinary or, rather, post-disciplinary. His work is to a large extent a hybrid between social science and literature. This is also reflected in his (metaphorical) understanding of the nature of disciplinary boundaries and their inevitable porosity:

> Sociology is an ongoing dialogue with human experience, and that experience, unlike the university buildings, is not divided into departments, let alone tightly sealed departments. Academics may refuse or neglect to read their next door neighbour's work and so carry on unscathed the conviction of their own separate identity, but this cannot be said of human experience, in which the sociological, the political, the economic, the philosophical, the psychological, the historical, the poetic and what not are blended to the extent that no single ingredient can salvage its substance or identity in case of separation. I would go as far as to say that however hard it may try, sociology would never win the 'war of independence' (Bauman in Bauman & Tester 2001: 40).

This does not mean that Bauman either underestimates or diminishes the specific qualities or necessities of sociology or that he sheds his sociological allegiances. As he continues:

> The discursive formation bearing the name of sociology is porous on all sides … I believe that this is sociology's strength, not weakness. I believe that the future of sociology is assured precisely because it comes nearer than any other academic discipline to embracing human experience in its entirety (Bauman in Bauman & Tester 2001: 40).

Because sociology is bent on 'embracing human experience in its entirety,' methodological myopia necessarily means stagnation. Therefore, Bauman's sociology can be seen as a challenge to or showdown with conventional sociological methodology. His metaphors propose a way of discovering and looking at the world anew, whereby they "sharpen our senses and open our eyes to new horizons beyond our immediate experiences in order that we can explore human conditions which, hitherto, have remained entirely invisible" (Bauman & May 2001: 11). In this sense, his metaphors, and his literary edge or poetic persuasion more generally, comes closer to the 'context of discovery' than to the 'context of justification.' As Robert Nisbet remarked on the mutual status of these two realms or stages of knowledge—something which, unfortunately, hasn't changed since Nisbet's original formulation thirty years ago:

> Countless works in the social sciences reveal the inability of their authors to bear in mind the crucial difference between what may properly be called the *logic of discovery* and the *logic of demonstration*. The second is properly subject to rules and prescriptions; the first isn't. Of all sins against the Muse, however, the greatest is the assertion, or strong implication, in textbooks on methodology and theory construction that the first (and utterly vital) logic can somehow be summoned by obeying the rules of the second. Only intellectual drouth and barrenness can result from that misconception (Nisbet 1976/2002: 5).

By stirring the stagnant waters of sociological methodology, Bauman's sociology *can* be read as an iconoclastic confrontation with or critique of the barrenness

and drouth characterising much of what counts as common sense or convention in contemporary sociology. He commits no sins against the Muse.

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