tion of trust or distrust comprises the background variables. Sztompka restricts independent variables to the realm of social structure. (They include normative coherence, social stability, transparency of the social organization, familiarity of the social environment, and accountability.) The mediating variables are personal aspects of social actors (i.e., social mood and collective capital and their manifold subcategories). The culture of trust constitutes the dependent variables that become the background variables for the next cycle of "social becoming."

These formulations allow Sztompka to offer a promising set of hypotheses about the interactions of democracy and trust in Chapter 7 that he can then apply to his Polish case. At the discussion's heart are two paradoxes of democracy: (1) "the more there is institutionalized distrust, the more there will be spontaneous trust" upon which a democracy depends (p. 140); and (2) "the extensive potential availability of democratic checks and controls must be matched by their very limited actualization" (p. 146). From these paradoxes he argues that autocracies inevitably try to institutionalize trust directly, and, thereby, they inadvertently foster a culture of distrust, while democracies, via their institutionalization of distrust, provide the grounds for a culture of trust.

If (unlike me) closely argued theoretical discourses are not your cup of tea, you may be relieved to reach Chapter 8. Sztompka's analysis of the Polish case inspires confidence that the preceding pages' concepts, typologies, and hypotheses have significant empirical potential. Not only does he provide intelligent and plausible explanations for deteriorating trust in Poland from 1976 to 1989 and the burst and then decline of trust that followed the fall of the communist regime, but the framework also is handy for explaining the upsurge of a culture of trust since the mid-1990s (a phenomenon Sztompka candidly admits he did not expect).

In the Preface, Sztompka acknowledges that he felt pressed to get his work into print because of rapid developments in the field. This haste shows from time to time. On occasion one feels that one is reading outlines for two or three books. Moreover, there are points at which I felt unpersuaded by the theoretical arguments. In particular, I am not sanguine over how the causal status of cultural variables is treated, and I am skeptical that Sztompka has transcended rational choice models rather than just cobbled some ad hoc culturalist assumptions onto an essentially individualist-instrumentalist framework. But stimulating doubts is the mark of a book that makes important contributions: It advances knowledge and gives us tools with which to disagree. Using these criteria, Piotr Sztompka has succeeded admirably.


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Zygmunt Bauman remains an elusive figure in the landscape, or market place, of American sociology. Once when I asked if he would come to the ASA Convention, he answered, characteristically, "Why? For I have neither anything to sell, nor am I looking to buy . . ."—this old European perspective in itself may be enough to marginalize his work. He does not play the game.

There is more. Bauman's work shifts, it ducks and dives, changes audiences and priorities. It makes you work. More again, it shifts substantially from 1987 via Legislators and Interpreters, in its attention to the postmodern—a change of emphasis that is here symbolically rectified, as it is modernity that contains the postmodern and not the other way around. But more again, as Bauman ages, grows, and persists in writing, he has shifted addressee. Bauman's early English language writing from Between Class and Elite in 1972, always self-consciously addressed the social scientific community. A leading book like his 1989, Modernity and the Holocaust, was specifically addressed not to historians or to those in Holocaust or German studies but to sociologists in particular. In the last several years this again has changed. After several books of essays, such as Life in Fragments and Postmodernity and Its Discontents, Bauman now aspires more directly to a popular audience, to public influence, by writing little
books on larger themes. First there was Globalization in 1998, then Work, Consumerism and the New Poor, 1998, then In Search of Politics, 1999, and now Liquid Modernity, to be followed by Community.

So the strategy has changed, the voice become more direct, the argument more open, yet thematically continuous with the project that preceded it. The structure of Liquid Modernity is straightforward. First, Bauman opens a larger excursus on his key or metaphor, the idea that liquidity replaces solidity as the symbol of our times. Second, a series of substantive themes act as perspectives on the topic of liquidity: chapters follow on emancipation, individuality, time/space, work, and community. An afterthought follows on writing and writing Sociology. For in all this Bauman, elsewhere imagined as the prophet of postmodernity, follows in what he sees as the footsteps of C. Wright Mills and Richard Sennett. If Bauman does not play the game, he does remain committed to the vocation and to the idea of its public culture.

Why liquid modernity? Bauman’s attraction to the postmodern generated endless confusion. It had two main aspects. First, the idea of being after modernism and after communism, indicated new possibilities, since foreclosed. Second, Bauman always insisted that the point was less to be postmodern than to take the postmodern seriously; either it was an attitude, or else a cultural phenomenon begging explanation. The idea of liquid modernity now fills the gap, or the level. High modernism was inflexible, solid—think of Fordism, of that lost world that many of us grew up in and thought would last forever. Of course, Bauman insists, modernity has always been a process of melting the solid, only high modernism established a new twentieth-century solidity in place of what it destroyed in the nineteenth. Modernism melts, only to institutionalize again, so the message is distinct from that of the Communist Manifesto or Marshall Berman. Modernism becomes the new traditionalism. Modernity becomes permanent revolution but still within individualized lifepaths; the society of individuals replaces that of classes, which replaced that of estates—thus the strength of tribal passion for dreams of lost community. Life politics replaces class politics, and social movements lose their way, except in the pluralized form of the assertion of global responsibility, as in WTO demonstrations. The challenge of individualization is compulsory performativity, self-construction, self-promotion. Restlessness becomes obligatory, either in privilege, for tourists, or in squalor, for vagabonds. Mills’ diction is practically reversed: Social problems only figure as personal worries open to momentary personal resolution. This remains a culture of narcissism. But differently, the private now invades the public, as in Clinton v. Lewinsky. A surfeit of uncertainty goes together with deep desires for certainty at best, safety at least. Yet security remains a legitimate human need, and a precondition if not a cause of human development and flourishing.

Bauman closes this volume with his reiteration of the necessity of sociology as a vocation. He discusses various other insider/outiders, like Juan Goytisolo and Jacques Derrida, for whom “home is on the crossroads.” Modesty forbids that Bauman should include himself here, but this is what he is, an insider/outsider in Poland, in Britain, in sociology. He is the stranger that comes and goes, and stays; his hope has not been to build an empire of followers, but to speak and to keep moving on. If this irritates sociologists, so much the better; if it should reach a broader audience, then better again.


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Whitney Pope’s theory of freedom, which is “equally a theory of community, of decentralisation, and of authority” (p.183), is a direct continuation of his interest in Tocqueville. Although Pope is aware that his theory is little more than a framework and requires development, he has chosen instead to analyze what has been done in various historical societies and large organizations to promote freedom and avoid tyranny. After a compact presentation of Tocqueville’s view on freedom as a basic value with sources in community, decentralized administration, the law, and authority, Pope moves on to demonstrate the theory’s value and explanatory power in five