

Babel

Zygmunt Bauman, Ezio Mauro

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Zygmunt Bauman, Ezio Mauro : Babel before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Babel:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. One more excellent contribution to sociological analysis of the realityBy BebkaBauman never fails to challenge our minds. One more excellent contribution to sociological analysis of the reality, which we experience today.5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Two great mindsBy julesinroseI am not an academe. For this reason, I can not give this book anything but three stars. If I had been trained in deciphering this sort of text and steeped in its language, I expect I'd rate it higher. My three stars are a bit of (falling

on deaf ears) protest. I am fascinated by the ideas of Zygmunt Bauman, yet I find his writing to be consistently difficult and frustrating. But of course; it was not meant for the masses, and what a pity that is. Ezio Mauro doesn't help in this matter. I just read a passage aloud to a friend, for I found it totally relevant to the times we find ourselves in, and found myself verbally editing out large swaths of asides and parenthetical thought. My friend said, "How can you stand reading that academic nonsense?" Well, I can, albeit slowly and with difficulty, and find the ideas thought provoking, certainly not nonsense, but one could say they are to an outsider. I know I'm probably missing quite a bit. I find this so frustrating! Thinkers like these are needed so desperately, yet their writing leaves out the vast majority of readers. I am not going to comment on the ideas within this book. The synopsis did that for you already. I quite enjoyed this dialog in spite of my difficulty and ignorance. I do believe I would have rather listened than read this. For the majority of us "regular people," this would be quite a challenge - a slog, really - but one filled with insights and even excitement, as it is always enjoyable to be engaged with great minds. If only a great editor could take over and make this more accessible - maybe then we'd have less followers of idiots (one can only hope).

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Bauman Looks for Hope in the Liquid World By Clarissa's Blog This is Bauman's most recent book, and as has been his habit in recent years, it's organized as a dialogue with a conversation partner Bauman finds interesting. (In this case, it's Ezio Mauro, an Italian journalist). Bauman doesn't advance any radically new ideas here and, instead, is developing the conclusions he offered in his *Liquid Modernity* and *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*. Everybody is disappointed with democracy, concludes Bauman, because the only form of democracy we know exists within the confines of a nation state and depends on the capacity of national governments to resolve the issues that matter to citizens. National governments can no longer do that, though. The problems we face are engendered outside of national borders and can't fully be solved within them. The Zika virus, international terrorism, the refugee crisis, ISIS, the climate change, the global economic crisis, huge migratory flows no matter how much some like to fantasize about their nation-state having caused all these problems and, consequently, being able to solve them, deep down we know that this fantasy is stupid. None of these issues will be solved unless there appears some entirely new form of global coexistence that nobody is even trying to imagine right now. People are terrified that the nation-state democracy is failing and are acting out against it out of fear and disappointment. Turning to reality TV stars to play the role of politicians is a collective way of signaling that we don't take nation-state politics seriously any more because it offers us nothing of value. Turning elections into a farce is a way of showing the finger to the collapsing system of state management. The welfare state is dying in Europe and in the US. What is welfare state? Why did it come into existence? As we know, in a capitalist society nothing happens that does not serve the needs of capital. The whole point of the welfare state was to make it easier for capital and labor to get together. Capital was in need of fairly healthy, clean, literate, socialized, nice-looking, stable labor that would show up for work in a reliable way. The welfare state arose to make sure capital had unfettered access to such labor. So what happens when capital no longer needs fairly healthy, neat, stable labor that will show up every day? Of course, the welfare state dies. And what happens with the formerly neat, clean, regularly showing up labor? It begins to filter towards the bottom of society where the perennially excluded by the job market reside. Throughout the book, Bauman and his interlocutor struggle to find hope in the liquid world that is at the mercy of the unstoppable flows of fluid capital. I'm giving the book 4 stars because I found the articulation of these struggles to be wordy and lacking in substance. Otherwise, it's an interesting addition to the corpus of the great philosopher's work but definitely not the book to start your acquaintance with Bauman.

We are living in an open sea, caught up in a continuous wave, with no fixed point and no instrument to measure distance and the direction of travel. Nothing appears to be in its place any more, and a great deal appears to have no place at all. The principles that have given substance to the democratic ethos, the system of rules that has guided the relationships of authority and the ways in which they are legitimized, the shared values and their hierarchy, our behaviour and our life styles, must be radically revised because they no longer seem suited to our experience and understanding of a world in flux, a world that has become both increasingly interconnected and prone to severe and persistent crises. We are living in the interregnum between what is no longer and what is not yet. None of the political movements that helped undermine the old world are ready to inherit it, and there is no new ideology, no consistent vision, promising to give shape to new institutions for the new world. It is like the Babylon referred to by Borges, the country of randomness and uncertainty in which no decision is final; all branch into others. Out of the world that had promised us modernity, what Jean Paul Sartre had summarized with sublime formula *le choix que je suis* (the choice that I am), we inhabit that flattened, mobile and dematerialized space, where as never before the principle of the heterogenesis of purposes is sovereign. This is Babel.

About the Author Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017) was Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Leeds. Ezio Mauro is an Italian writer and journalist and Editor-in-Chief of *La Repubblica*.