

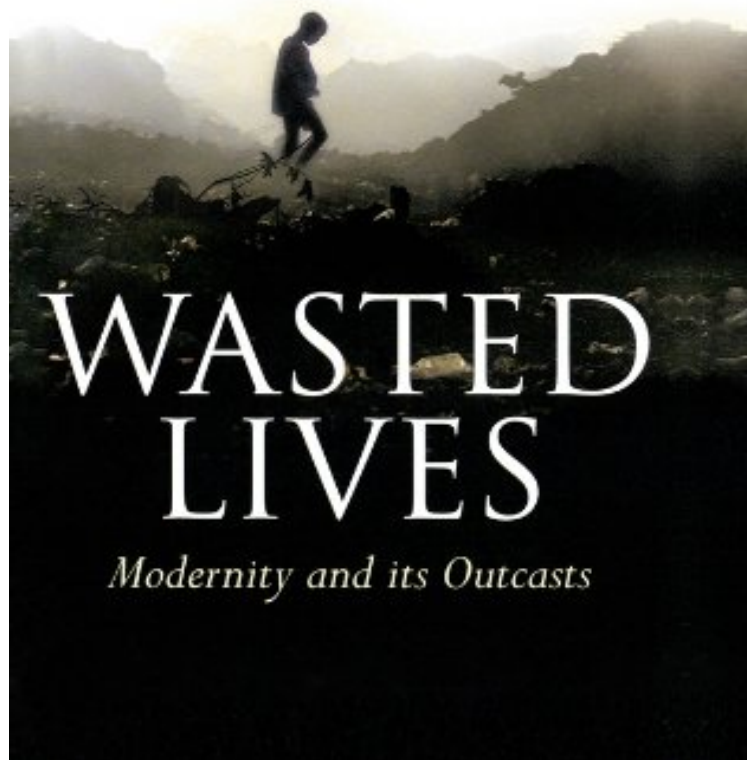
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Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts

Zygmunt Bauman

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Zygmunt Bauman : Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts:

12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. One of the most important books written in the last 100 yearsBy Adam LuoranenDystopian science-fiction visions of the future are nothing new. Non-fiction treatises of an uncertain but almost certainly unpleasant future awaiting humanity are nothing new. Zygmunt Bauman, at first glance, seems to

be just another sociologist who happened to write some books about the effects of modernity on human beings. What makes his reading so vitally relevant is that there are few people in the world who can so seamlessly unite sociology, economics, politics, psychology, ecology, geography, history, and anthropology the way Bauman does. All of these fields are of course related, and yet they are usually studied rather separately. Few people can claim expertise in all of them, and a person who can think, speak, and write authoritatively on all these subjects at once in a manner that is quite lucid and understandable by any "average" person is among the most precious of treasures of humanity. Bauman's ability to convey his vivid ideas concisely makes him yet more valuable. This book is less than 150 pages long, but easily contains more key ideas than most books two or three times as long. The book reads quickly, but the ideas stay with you long after the reading is done. Bauman is a man of ideas, and has that most rare and precious gift of non-fiction writers: The ability to come up with a new idea on nearly every page and thus write a book full of ideas, instead of doing what most contemporary non-fiction writers do, which is very nearly the opposite: Come up with one good idea and somehow pad it out to fill a 300-page book. I've read several books by Bauman, and almost everything he has written is of surpassing importance, but this book is arguably the most important he's written, and therefore probably my favorite among them. What, after all, could be more important for us as human beings than the sustainability of human existence and human society, having a place and a culture where we can actually belong, where our lives are meaningful rather than irrelevant? The core ideas trotted out throughout this book--that the planet is overpopulated, that people need to cut down on waste, that the modern market economy dehumanizes individuals and thus in turn whole societies--are not new, but part of what makes Bauman so important is that he is neither a fanatic waving his arms around and screaming about how the end is near, nor does he try to pacify our concerns. His writing is consistently intelligent, analytical, and informed, and while it's clear that Bauman is not totally unbiased, neither does he go for the easy out of trying to rouse people to some vague cause; at every turn, Bauman simply admonishes us to think and be aware. Like all of Bauman's work--and perhaps like most, if not all, thoughtful discourse--this book is quite tangential, beginning with a lengthy reminiscence on the nature of "waste" itself and the reasons why waste is an integral part of modern society, and indeed, any "planned" or "designed" organization before moving on to the more pressing issues of how waste is impacting our present-day societies, cultures, and ecology. The book contains occasional excursions which dwell on a specific idea which is not intrinsically related to the subject matter at hand, but which helps to illuminate the mindset that Bauman is approaching the surrounding ideas with. My only criticism of the book is that Bauman offers little in the way of solutions. Indeed, the book openly acknowledges the seeming impossibility of finding locally-generated solutions to global problems. Is our future genuinely hopeless? This idea, always a possibility, maintains an undercurrent of dread throughout the entire book (and indeed, almost everything that Bauman has written), but it's clear that as terrifying as our fear of the unknown future may be, the consequences of ignoring that future are probably even more disturbing. I wholeheartedly give this book my highest recommendation to anyone who is tired of nervous hand-wringing and ready to confront the uncertain future of the human race with both wisdom and courage. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. I almost quit reading it...but....By Ryan C. Nagy I almost quit reading this book after the first chapter. I initially found it full of language that was overly general and that was "fuzzy" in the sense that it was abstract and could have multiple meanings. And at times, the author does make strong statements of his personal belief as if they were fact. But even so, this book is haunting and mind opening in a way that few are. Bauman's writing and ideas takes one out of the normal, habitual frame of reference that many of us have and help us consider the world and human institutions and behavior in a new light. This book has changed my sense of reality more than a bit and I am glad that I bought it and read it. I will be reading more of his work. Ryan 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wasted Lives NOT a Wast of Time By Miguel A. Franco Great read. Easy to read but rich information. I really enjoyed the 3rd chapter.

The production of 'human waste' - or more precisely, wasted lives, the 'superfluous' populations of migrants, refugees and other outcasts - is an inevitable outcome of modernization. It is an unavoidable side-effect of economic progress and the quest for order which is characteristic of modernity. As long as large parts of the world remained wholly or partly unaffected by modernization, they were treated by modernizing societies as lands that were able to absorb the excess of population in the 'developed countries'. Global solutions were sought, and temporarily found, to locally produced overpopulation problems. But as modernization has reached the furthest lands of the planet, 'redundant population' is produced everywhere and all localities have to bear the consequences of modernity's global triumph. They are now confronted with the need to seek - in vain, it seems - local solutions to globally produced problems. The global spread of the modernity has given rise to growing quantities of human beings who are deprived of adequate means of survival, but the planet is fast running out of places to put them. Hence the new anxieties about 'immigrants' and 'asylum seekers' and the growing role played by diffuse 'security fears' on the contemporary political agenda. With characteristic brilliance, this new book by Zygmunt Bauman unravels the impact of this transformation on our contemporary culture and politics and shows that the problem of coping with 'human waste' provides a key for understanding some otherwise baffling features of our shared life, from the strategies of global domination to the most intimate aspects of human relationships.

"This is a rather brilliant, dense and chaotic meditation on ideas of waste in our time of what Bauman terms "liquid modernity" ... A sparkling and highly suggestive read." The Guardian

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017) was Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Leeds and the University of Warsaw.