

## **Critique of Modernist Discourse in Zygmunt Bauman**

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### **Abstract:**

Western modernity represents a historical stage that arose from the difficult intellectual transformations experienced by Western thought, beginning with the European Renaissance in Italy and beyond, as well as humanism, with the aim of breaking away from the old order and from the Church, which had placed God at the center of the universe and marginalized man. From this point, a new mode of thought emerged, one that believed in reason, science, and progress, and carried many aspirations, especially during the Enlightenment, to achieve human happiness. Yet the crisis of modernity, its failure, and the collapse of the moral and value system led man to engage in a process of reconsideration, as concepts changed and solidity turned into liquidity, in the terms of the Polish philosopher Zygmunt Bauman, who examined the transformations and manifestations of solid modernity into liquid modernity.

**Keywords:** Modernity, Solidity, liquidity, violence, fear

### **Introduction:**

The profound transformations that reshaped the West over the past three centuries affected nearly every sphere of social and human life. The religious and epistemological shift in Europe produced a profound rupture within the dominant intellectual and doctrinal framework, establishing a clear break between the exhausted medieval order and the emerging modern one. This rupture paved the way for the spread of industrialization and technology, enabling the West to reach unprecedented levels of prosperity and technological advancement. Concurrently, a significant shift occurred in the hierarchy of values: as the influence of the Church's defenders and the adherents of medieval constants waned, belief in humanity's will and capacity to transform the world and rebuild it anew gained ground.

Europe's transition from the age of darkness and intellectual stagnation to the Age of Enlightenment is widely regarded as a scientific and intellectual revolution that began at the dawn of the seventeenth century the very period that witnessed the birth of modern science. This transformation started when Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) challenged the Church's doctrine concerning the immobility of the Earth and presented his famous theory of the Earth's rotation and the planets' revolution around the Sun. This theory served as the most powerful impetus for early modern thinkers such as Galileo (1564–1642) and Giordano Bruno (1548–1600). The process was later completed by eighteenth-century philosophers, who added the essential foundation to the edifice of science, affirming that there could be no doubt about humanity's ability to explain the phenomena of the universe, adapt them, control nature, and employ it for human benefit beyond the limitations of Church doctrine, which had fallen into sterile imitation. According to Henri Poincaré, this intellectual

and rational momentum of the eighteenth century established a structure of human and social perfection that remained a lasting hope for humanity. Thus, modernity with all its rational, democratic, individualistic, and liberal elements and manifestations became both a new vision of reality and a program for reforming it according to novel convictions. These convictions enabled humanity to create and possess all the means necessary to live in complete prosperity.

The first signs of a gradual distancing from spiritual, religious, and moral values began to emerge. Western man, absorbed in his own modernity, became estranged from himself under the technical demands of the age. This paved the way for secular ideas that stressed the necessity of separating religion from worldly affairs, as religion was increasingly viewed as an epistemological obstacle to progress and development. The industrial environment became the dominant force shaping his life, imposing new, interconnected, and complex patterns of living. A qualitative transformation took place in Western society, dictated by the very nature of modern life a life now defined by the imperatives of technology, industrialization, and globalization. These forces soon became the ideal civilizational model and the global order that the West imposed on other civilizations, driven by its conviction that modernity is a civilizational necessity and an unavoidable destiny. Thus emerged what has been called "the last man" and "the end of history" (Fukuyama), alongside the triumphal spread of capitalism, liberalism, and socialism.

The West began to search for a distinctive mode of survival in order to build a comprehensive world order, even if colonialism and domination were its methods, and exclusion and elimination the values that necessitated the creation of a global empire. This empire legitimized a total invasion of minds, thoughts, and history, aiming to transform the world into a small global village. Hence came the warning against falling into a clash of civilizations and cultures (Samuel Huntington). In this way, the modernist mind turned into a technical, instrumental, and self-centered rationality, producing a consumer society that believes in the machine.

Then emerged the postmodern current (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Lyotard, Habermas, and the Frankfurt School with its successive generations), announcing the failure of modernity because it had not fulfilled its promises, had lost its solidity, and had brought disasters that disappointed humanity. These disasters produced crises that generated widespread disillusionment. As a result, modern humanity began to live in a state of anxiety, tension, fear, and instability, driven by the accelerating rhythm of electronic expansion, the spread of digital rationality, and the dominance of a consumerist syndrome. This was profoundly reflected in the moral, ethical, and epistemological systems of the West.

For this reason, the Polish philosopher Zygmunt Bauman launched a sharp critique of solid modernity and postmodernity, proposing the concept of liquidity and describing our current era as the age of liquidity. Accordingly, this research paper aims to clarify how Bauman criticized modernist discourse a discourse he himself had previously presented in light of the changes imposed by modernity and globalization on social life, as humanity came to realize that previous concepts characterized by solidity had turned liquid. Bauman expressed this transformation in his book *Liquid Modernity*. This leads us to ask: What are the manifestations of Western modernity? How did it produce a crisis-ridden human reality? How did we move from solidity to liquidity in the age of postmodernity? And what possible ways out does Bauman consider capable of overcoming this wave of liquidity?

For methodological reasons, I adopted the critical analytical method to examine Bauman's ideas concerning the turning point of modernity and the transformation of value-based and epistemological concepts from solidity to liquidity, as well as the extent of their impact on individuals and their social relations especially since modern individuals have come to feel fear, insecurity, instability, and alienation from themselves and their society. This is because modernity deviated from its path and exhausted its enlightening energy, which was originally meant to achieve human happiness and well-being. Thus, we are faced with a new critical thought, distinct from that of postmodern philosophers, which diagnoses the crisis of philosophical thought in order to restore confidence in the modernist mind, away from any ideological proposition.

## **1. The Crisis of Western Modernity and the Emergence of Liquid Modernity:**

The term "modernity" is one of the most common and widely circulated terms, not only in philosophy but also in other fields of knowledge such as literature, art, sociology, and politics. These and other disciplines have received the term and its function with varying meanings; each field approaches the concept of modernity according to the meaning that ensures harmony with its own basic categories and consistency within its epistemological framework and system. However, philosophy retains the right not to say the monopoly to embrace the term and undertake the task of highlighting its contents, clarifying its epistemological foundations, and, most importantly, identifying the points of problematization and questioning within it. If the term "modernity" appears to be of such importance, it requires a pause to regulate and define its concept.

Despite the remarkable prevalence and widespread use of the term "modernity" within intellectual and philosophical circles, the question "What is modernity?" continues to be raised without receiving a definitive answer. In other words, arriving at an accurate definition and a precise determination of its meaning remains difficult. This is mainly due to the complexity, ambiguity, and dynamism of the concept, which make it difficult to pin down, since it belongs to the field of cultural phenomena. Defining and delineating such phenomena is an extremely intricate task, because the concepts involved and the dates suggested for their beginnings and endings often overlap, conflict, or even contradict one another. Whatever is said about a cultural phenomenon, and whatever analyses or theoretical approaches are applied to it, they remain but mere shadows of that phenomenon<sup>1</sup>. This has placed modernity within a conceptual maze that may cause it to lose its specific meaning, since it is difficult to understand in itself, being one of the concepts that resists conceptualization<sup>2</sup>. This shows that modernity is neither a historical event nor a clearly defined period, but rather the outcome of a long history filled with events. Domenech states: "Modernity is not a concept for analysis; there are no laws of modernity, but only features of modernity. More than that, there is no theory of modernity<sup>3</sup>." These features are governed by the dialectic of constant change: "The difficulty of defining the word modern lies in the fact that the passage of time changes its meaning<sup>4</sup>." It is a form of escape from and rejection of the old, together with a continuous search for the new. This is affirmed by François Châtelet when he says that modernity is an activity focused on current concerns, capable of keeping pace with the changes and developments that the age continuously experiences in other words, adapting to ongoing social and historical transformations<sup>5</sup>.

Modernity means unsettling and undermining inherited cultures, affiliations, and beliefs, and severing the link with everything deemed irrational and unscientific, so that humanity may live fully in a present that it considers superior to the past. This is the view adopted by the German philosopher

Jürgen Habermas, author of the article “Modernity: An Unfinished Project,” when he says: “Modernity always expresses the consciousness of an age that renews itself and understands itself as the result of a transition from the old to the modern<sup>6</sup>”. Modernity signifies emancipation from the theological past and its replacement with the present, along with the affirmation of a present that embodies the values of rationality, individualism, freedom, equality, and democracy. These are the characteristics we attribute to modernity, and which Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) defines as follows:

- 1- The new awareness of the universal, the total, and the global, beginning with the discovery of the New World.

- 2- The emergence of individualism and the rise of the capitalist movement.

- 3- Critical rationality through scientific discoveries that demonstrated humanity’s ability to control nature, society, and the individual. Modernity laid the foundations of free rational thought and declared the independence of the human subject under its promises of democracy and justice. Alain Touraine says: “The idea of modernity is closely linked to the idea of rationality, and denying one of them means abolishing the other<sup>7</sup>.” Reason is a central category on which modernity insists to the point of identification with it. Therefore, absolute belief in it produced the following:

- **Rationalization of Scientific Thought:** This began with the epistemological revolution of the modern age and is still continuing. It was represented in the distancing of science from all ideological and political conceptions in order to adopt proof and experiment.

- **Rationalization of Political Thought:** This took place through the regulation of a set of values and laws that clarify duties and rights, as well as the relationship between the people and the ruler (authority). It began with Machiavelli (1469–1527), who studied the political phenomenon as an independent science, which led to the separation of the state and its institutions from metaphysical legitimacy (the beginnings of secular thought).

- **Rationalization of Religious Discourse:** This began with Luther’s reforms, and the new religion became science and technology.

- **Rationalization of Historical Discourse:** This occurred through the will to dominant knowledge, beginning with the Renaissance.

Modernity presented modern and contemporary man with promises of progress, development, and freedom, to the extent that he could no longer place his belief in anything other than reason. Reason became the primary source of legitimacy, truth, and its own results. Yet, at the same time, modernity placed him in a state of existential anxiety and fear connected to his values and his fragmented self within a technical and industrial society ruled by instrumental reason. As a result, philosophies emerged that proclaimed the failure of Western modernity, such as the nihilistic philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, Derrida, and Deleuze, along with pessimistic philosophies of history, most notably those of Albert Schweitzer and Oswald Spengler, who declared that the West was heading toward decline and regression. It therefore became necessary to move beyond the grand narratives or philosophical systems on which the West had long depended. Accordingly, postmodern thought appeared as an attempt to rescue man from the destructive consumerist tendency implanted by neoliberalism. Values were lost and dissolved within the domain of reason, while individuals in modern European society experienced alienation and estrangement. At the very moment when postmodern thought was taking shape namely during the 1960s and 1970s another critical perspective developed simultaneously: the thought of the Polish philosopher Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017),

who was deeply concerned with reconstructing the project of Western modernity, or what he calls "solid modernity." He therefore introduced a different philosophical discourse aimed at saving modernity from nihilistic philosophies (or what is known as postmodernism) through what he calls "liquid modernity."

Returning to the self and to man in all his value-related, moral, religious, or spiritual dimensions has become a sacred demand in light of a society invaded by globalization, which has abolished all forms of difference between peoples, civilizations, and cultures, and has submitted to the logic of a single pattern that eliminates diversity and difference among civilizations. Bauman therefore offered a radical critique of all the foundations, assumptions, and principles of Western modernity, declaring that modernity changed many solid concepts and categories, making them liquid. As a result, what we call liquid fear, liquid love, liquid culture, and liquid life emerged. Bauman says: "The idea of progress has turned into a bitter reality and an extreme determinism, after it had been one of the most prominent manifestations of optimism and great hope for achieving permanent happiness for all. It has come to symbolize a permanent threat, so that one feels neither comfort nor tranquility; rather, it warns of permanent hardship and difficulty and prevents any moment of rest. The idea of progress no longer suggests great hopes and beautiful dreams, but has come to indicate suffering from insomnia and nightmares of fear of falling behind those perceived as more advanced"<sup>8</sup>.

Criticism and confidence in science are the points of strength that distinguished Western modernity, so modernity was reduced to the values of reason and science. This reason, which gave man freedom, individuality, and self-realization, became, at the same time, a means of control and domination. Man moved from the domination of the old religious theology to the domination of technical theology, from which even being itself did not escape, as it affected individuals' behaviors and the relationships of subjects with one another. It turned man into a moving machine that had lost all its spiritual and moral values, and his dignity was shaken when it lost its place in history, especially after the two world wars and the damage they caused to the environment and to man, as embodied by the Jewish Holocaust of Auschwitz, the erosion of the family institution, and man's alienation from himself<sup>9</sup>.

There is a crisis shaking modernity and the Enlightenment project from within—a crisis revealed by the natural sciences, especially physics, quantum theory, the idea of probability versus determinism, and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. This crisis is due to technological rationality, which has become a closed system that cannot be transcended or controlled. Thus, philosophies appeared that predicted the collapse of the Western Enlightenment project, the most important of which was the philosophy of Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) in his work *The Decline of the West*, written after the First World War. Spengler raised a fundamental question: Did the West err in excluding religious, spiritual, and moral dimensions from social life?

Technology is the cause of the crisis that shook modernity and abolished human values. This is the view adopted by the Canadian thinker Jane Jacobs (1916–2006) in her work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, published in 1961, where she says: "The urban spaces created by modernity were clean, materially organized, and efficient, but socially and spiritually they were closer to death, and the noise and bustle that characterized the nineteenth century alone kept contemporary urban life alive"<sup>10</sup>.

Modernity strayed from its course, failed to fulfill its promises and values, and frustrated the expectations of Western man, to the point that its principles came into conflict with reality. Crises



began to besiege it from all directions, and the declaration of its death became possible, paving the way for the birth of a new era: the age of postmodernity, which destabilized all the values of modernity and which Zygmunt Bauman describes as the age of liquid modernity par excellence.

Before examining Bauman's critique of the values and principles of solid modernity, it is important to note that solid modernity transformed into liquid modernity within a consumer society. In such a society, individuals live amid the disintegration of social relations due to the fluidity of values and religious and spiritual emptiness, which leads to the fragmentation of identities and the spread of fear, insecurity, and instability. In this context, Bauman found himself facing two different currents regarding the identity of this age. Some view it as an absurd and chaotic movement based on fragmentation and ambiguity, while others regard it as a more expansive progressive movement. Nevertheless, this age can be defined through the words of Gianni Vattimo (1936–2023): postmodernity is mainly linked to two fundamental transformations: the end of European domination over the world, and the growth and development of media and communication, which opened the way for local, subcultural, and marginal cultures <sup>11</sup>.

The postmodern condition is characterized by the rejection of metaphysics and the dismantling of fixed, absolute foundations what are often called systems or grand narratives in favor of plurality and difference. This is precisely what Gianni Vattimo, one of the most prominent philosophers of postmodernism, calls "weak thought." In this condition, tolerance, non-violence, democracy, dialogue, and multiple interpretations prevail in place of certainties. These are the ethical outcomes of weak thought, which was profoundly nourished by the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche diagnosed the crisis of European consciousness and criticized the components and foundations of Western modernity. As Jürgen Habermas (1929–) states: "Nietzsche's critique of modernity was followed in two directions: the suspicious researcher who seeks to reveal the will to power and the formation of self-centered reason finds his successors in Bataille, Lacan, and Foucault; while the experienced critic of metaphysics, who calls for a special knowledge and redraws and reconstructs the philosophy of the subject, finds his heirs in Heidegger and Derrida" <sup>12</sup>.

Nietzsche overturned the hierarchy of Western values and morals and unveiled all the mythical halos surrounding modernity. These halos, he argued, were mere idols created to prove the weakness of man a man who lives in a society dominated by the nihilism to which modernity has led. Nietzsche says: "When I came into this world, I found it sitting on old assumptions, confident that it had known everything, distinguished the sphere of life, and interpreted it. Therefore, I commanded people to destroy everything old, and to stand before every decrepit doctrine laughing and mocking their teachers, saints, poets, and the saviors of their world" <sup>13</sup>.

Based on this, the factors of the decline of Western modern civilization according to Nietzsche can be identified as follows:

- The dominance of ideologies such as liberal movements, which are no different from Christianity in their role in the decline of the West. Nietzsche says: "If God was previously for sale, trade has now become the spirit of all its values" <sup>14</sup>. In addition, democracy dismantled the network of social relations under the slogan of freedom, and socialism also sought to establish what was called the single state, but it ended in a state of chaos.
- The emergence of the manufacturing economy or technical development, which made reason instrumental and turned the individual into a machine that lost his freedom and autonomy.

- The dominance of positivist science, where man lost his dignity and freedom.
- The decline of modern historical sciences, because they made divine providence the driving force of history and its becoming, and abolished human will, leading to nihilism as the final stage of the decline of modernity. It is a positive moment for philosophical reconstruction indeed, a productive moment. As one commentator notes: “It is the origin of postmodernity, for it is the one most possessed by the philosophical obsession with lost being and triumphant nihilism after the death of God”<sup>15</sup>. Man can overcome this stage through the will to power, which enables the creation of the higher man one capable of bearing his own responsibility, determining his destiny, and shaping his future. This is why Nietzsche announced the death of God.

Nietzsche has been discussed in some detail because he represents one of the most significant philosophers who shaped Bauman’s intellectual background. Bauman deeply diagnosed the human condition in the age of modernity and globalization, viewing it as a new, shifting, and rapidly changing condition that follows what the machine produces within a consumer society. This is what he refers to as the values and foundations of solid modernity in the age of globalization, which contributed to weakening the authority of the state and led the Western individual to lose the feeling of security and stability, living instead in a state of fear, tension, and insecurity. Postmodernity, or liquid modernity, is therefore a stage experienced by man, one that enables the self to regain its meaning and restores value to the human being, who had dissolved within the products of instrumental reason.

The position of contemporary French philosophical thought specifically the philosophers of difference toward Western modernity is a distinctive critical position that combines philosophy and language, producing new concepts unfamiliar to the field of modern philosophy, such as deconstruction, rupture, madness, and sex. These are terms that belong to the age of postmodernity, after the Enlightenment, and rely on new methods such as the archaeological method of Michel Foucault (1926–1984), which he used to reconsider the assumptions of Western culture and modern thought through his famous work *History of Madness in the Classical Age*. In it, Foucault demolished the foundations of Western reason and abolished what is termed self-centeredness. Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) says: “Foucault works to violate the Western epistemological tradition and destroy the foundations of classical rationality”<sup>16</sup>.

This position was adopted by the Frankfurt School across its different generations, as it introduced into contemporary philosophy what became known as the age of critique of Enlightenment, or the critique of modern or instrumental reason. This critique reached its peak in major works such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) by Horkheimer and Adorno, which is regarded as the philosophical manifesto of the school and a foundational text in the critique of Enlightenment. It was also expressed in other individual works, including Horkheimer’s *Eclipse of Reason*, Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*, and Herbert Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man*. The central question, therefore, is: Why did humanity fall into a new form of barbarism instead of advancing toward a genuine human condition? <sup>17</sup>.

Enlightenment reason achieved its opposite and retreated from the values it had preached, such as freedom, progress, and equality, because its feature was domination and control by all material means in order to preserve self-interest. This pushed it into a myth even more dangerous, namely the myth of technology, despite the fact that modern and contemporary Western reason had closed its doors to myth. Marcuse says: “Technological rationality was able to establish a logic of domination, and by

achieving a kind of terrifying balance between the duality of freedom and oppression, production and destruction, progress and regression”<sup>18</sup>. Thus, man became one-dimensional through the logos of technology, which abolished human freedom and obliterated his identity in an industrial capitalist society governed by globalization, in which the alienation of the self from itself and from society is manifested. This is what led Bauman to critique modernity.

## 2- Critique of Rationality:

Bauman attempted to identify the pitfalls of modernity and Western Enlightenment, as he carried out a critical reading and questioning of the legacy of Enlightenment. In this regard, many acknowledge the role of his wife, Janina Lewinson, in shaping his critical vision of Western modernity. This is evident in his work *Modernity and the Holocaust*, in which he affirms that instrumental rationality targeted the broad space of life and committed massacres against humanity. By this, Bauman means the Jewish Holocaust, which resulted from functional reason and modern bureaucratic systems<sup>19</sup>. Genocide is a phenomenon that suggests a deep rupture between values and action, and defines moral action in the sense of stripping the self of all its moral responsibilities.

## 3- Critique of Individualism:

Bauman argues that human freedom became connected to the capitalist system, within which man was able to exercise his activity with full freedom under Adam Smith’s slogan: let him work and let him pass. According to Bauman, this produced in the individual an individualistic tendency, “Individualisme,” since modernity transformed the perception of the active self. The self was no longer truly a self; instead, society became a collection of individuals whose primary concern was the pursuit of personal interest in the absence of the community. From this point, the individual becomes irresponsible and indifferent. As Alexis de Tocqueville explains, the individual is the citizen's worst enemy. The citizen is someone who seeks his well-being through the well-being of the city and links personal well-being to the common good, whereas the individual tends toward indifference, doubt, and suspicion regarding the common cause, public interest, or the just society<sup>20</sup>.

The emergence of individualism suggests the weakness of the social fabric, the erosion of all social frameworks, and the fragility of traditional systems, because individualism is a revolt against collectivity. Bauman says: “The community has retreated, and its immune system, which protects it from problems, has itself become a problem”<sup>21</sup>. Thus, the concept of community dissolved and was replaced by the concept of the network, which refers to the constant interaction of connection and disconnection<sup>22</sup>. The individualistic process manifested itself in various human dealings, and the individual began to enter into social relationships that do not last long. Liquid or hyper-modernity surpassed solid modernity, unsettled and displaced the manifestations of life, abolished the sacred and the transcendent from the life of the individual and society, and left a wide space for the authority of science and reason.

Bauman says: “Many thinkers began to speak of the end of history, postmodernity, another modernity, hypermodernity, and other such categories as an expression of their intuition that a radical change had occurred in the system of shared living and in the social conditions in which the politics of life is managed these days”<sup>23</sup>.

The age of liquid modernity is the age of transformation, melting, and liquidity instead of solidity. He says: “If the essence of modernity in the solid phase was to control and fix the future, then its main concern in the liquid phase is to ensure the independence and freedom of the future and to ward



off the threat represented by any premature exploitation of the hidden and unknown opportunities that the future may bring, or that it must bring”<sup>24</sup>.

It is a revolt against stereotypes and a deconstruction of what is solid and fixed, in order to move toward a more liquid and flexible time. He states: “What moves modernity from its solid state to its liquid state, and what justifies our use of this description, is the intense obsessive-compulsive fear that has deepened the inability of any successive forms of social life to preserve their shape for a long period or to maintain stable forms over time, just like liquid substances. Melting all that is solid has been the essential and distinctive characteristic of the modern form of life from the very beginning. Yet today, unlike the past, the forms that melt are not replaced by other solid forms, those forms that were regarded as amended, meaning more solid, more durable than their predecessors, and more resistant to melting. Instead, lasting forms are replaced by other forms that are less resistant to melting, if not more inclined to melt, and are therefore equally impermanent”<sup>25</sup>.

Liquid modernity is the Western man’s exit from the culture of grand narratives into a world governed by freedom, change, and liquidity. He expresses this by saying: “Liquid modernity is a permanent battle to the death against all models”<sup>26</sup>, in order to impose a certain kind of freedom.

#### **4- Critique of Freedom:**

Freedom is the determination by the existent being of its own destiny, knowing that freedom of will is the possibility of acting according to motives that arise from within and are not determined by external circumstances. The term freedom has taken on several concepts and meanings, and most philosophers have addressed it in their writings, but each of them presented a different concept according to his philosophical doctrine. For this reason, we find freedom in the political sense, represented in the ability to express thought and opinion, provided that the individual is responsible within the limits drawn by the law. The aim of respecting and not violating the law is to guarantee the freedom and rights of others. As for freedom in the psychological sense, it is represented in limiting unconscious impulsiveness. Bergson sees it as that force which reveals the qualities within the human self<sup>27</sup>. As for Kant, he considered it a reasonable, transcendental form. Therefore, we say that freedom does not mean the absence of social controls and moral rules; rather, we must live under these controls and bear responsibility for our actions. It is not possible to imagine a free human being except within a free society, as Bauman confirms in his statement: “People are essentially free insofar as they bear responsibility for their actions, and the understanding of freedom may be derived from some ethical doctrines and beliefs founded in their world, legally constructed, or philosophically shaped. People are often essentially free insofar as their lives can be nothing other than their own project, and they do not conceive of them as a series of concessions or submission to necessities”<sup>28</sup>. For this reason, Bauman acknowledges that liquid modernity has produced a new concept of freedom, completely different from previous conceptions, in line with everything imposed by globalization, market requirements, and the fragile network of social relations. He says: “The history of freedom is based on a series of reformulations and redefinitions. The history of freedom builds a bridge extending over the broad range of social formations with their precise contradictions and power struggles”<sup>29</sup>.

Modernity gave Western man a form of freedom through which he experienced a degree of luxury and happiness, yet Bauman considers this happiness false and unreal under economic, liberal, and capitalist systems that deprived some individuals of freedom for the benefit of others. He states:

“There is an incidental ambiguity in freedom in its modern form associated with capitalism. The effectiveness of freedom requires that some other people remain unfree and that one be capable of that. Freedom, in its economically limited modernity, does not differ from what has been said about its modern applications regarding the content of its social relationship: to be, as it was before, selective. Perhaps it is properly achieved only in one part of society. It constitutes one of the poles in the relationship whose normative system is its basis, while compulsion and restriction constitute its other pole”<sup>30</sup>. Based on this, it can be said that it is impossible to speak of a free human being outside a free society, for freedom is what makes man capable of choosing and responsible for his choices. Bauman does not reject freedom as such; rather, he criticizes the form it has taken in contemporary societies that believed in freedom and raised it as a slogan. Today, man is free, but he must bear the consequences of his choices. Accordingly, Bauman criticizes freedom in both socialist and liberal societies because it has become subject to the fear and anxiety imposed by globalization. Thus, he maintains that the more the pursuit of liquid life increases, the more risks grow, along with fear of an obscure future that causes happiness to disappear and violence to emerge.

## 5- Liquid Violence:

The phenomenon of violence has been linked to human beings and their daily life. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the concept of violence, “La violence,” which, in all its forms, has constituted a major challenge facing humanity and society. If material violence poses a direct danger to human beings within societies, it often takes another, non-material form that is even more dangerous. This occurs when its existence relies on cultural narratives that justify it and transform it into legitimized violence that can be practiced against the other. This cultural justification of violence makes culture a tool upon which violence depends for its existence. Thus, together with direct material violence, it forms another kind of indirect structural violence, or what is known as cultural violence. This is a contemporary concept, but its origins go back to ancient myths. Ancient poetry conveys to us the conflict of the gods in mythology, in addition to what is known as material violence, which was linked to political violence, “La violence politique.” This intersects with a new concept, namely that of conflict, “Le conflit.” This conflict results from differences, struggles, and contradictions between the goals of states or groups and their capacities, and conflict does not necessarily take the form of simple confrontation.<sup>31</sup>.

Violence, in general, refers to the actual use of physical force. Its meaning includes every form of behavior that involves the use of physical force to influence oneself or others. It is one of the mechanisms of conflict, and such conflict may be either violent or non-violent. Marxism, for its part, dealt with the concept of political violence and connected it to the political conditions that arise within the material conditions of social life<sup>32</sup>. As for the German thinker Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), when she examined violence in its political form—politics being one of her central intellectual concerns—she viewed violence as a contemporary phenomenon associated with instrumental reason, separated from authority and power, and marked by its instrumental character. For this reason, she insisted on studying violence in depth. Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), on the other hand, regarded symbolic violence as one of the mechanisms of cultural domination, rather than the material violence discussed by Marxism and some classical theories. It thereby became a recognized legitimate culture, taking on a symbolic form that enables it to conceal itself and exercise symbolic violence. This domination operates through a set of tools, including the educational, linguistic, media, and even family fields.

This is what Bauman calls solid violence, which represents a danger to the individual, society, and the state alike.

In his analysis of liquid violence, Bauman drew on the views of earlier thinkers who examined legitimate and illegitimate violence, as well as material and symbolic violence. In this context, he cites René Girard (1923–2015), saying: “When Girard proposed a comprehensive theory of the role of violence in the birth and survival of the human community, he argued that there is always a violent and raging desire beneath the calm surface dominated by friendly peaceful cooperation. This desire needs to be released outside the boundaries of the community in order to preserve the island of collective safety, that island where violence is absent. Thus, the violence that demands proof of the sincerity of collective unity is recycled as a weapon of collective defense. In this recycled form, violence becomes an indispensable condition. It is internal violence, that is, the disputes within the same group”<sup>33</sup>. It is therefore a form of violence that destroys individuals, groups, and even states.

The proposition presented by Bauman regarding violence went far beyond the propositions of classical theories. His conception of violence was linked to what modernity has produced and to the prevailing human condition. He says: “There is no way to achieve justice and its guarantees as the basic condition for lasting peace. The corrupt openness of societies caused by negative globalization is itself the main cause of injustice and, consequently, is indirectly a cause of conflict and violence”<sup>34</sup>. The growth of the concept of violence in liquid life has generated a feeling of fear, insecurity, and instability.

## 6- Liquid Fear:

Many philosophers have examined the question of fear from different perspectives: psychologically, as in Sigmund Freud (1856–1939); philosophically, as in Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980); and socially, as in Émile Durkheim (1858–1917). However, the Polish philosopher Zygmunt Bauman moved beyond the traditional analysis of the phenomenon by shifting it from solidity to liquidity. What may be called the solid analysis of fear and insecurity concentrates on fear in its natural, instinctive, and even social form. By contrast, the fear produced by the manifestations of modernity and postmodernity is a liquid fear imposed by capitalist and liberal systems, globalization policies, and the breakdown of the network of social relations. It is an age of instability generated by Western modernity, which, despite its scientific and technological progress, has emptied the human being of his value-based, moral, and spiritual dimension and subjected him to social, economic, and psychological problems. This revealed the hidden and dark side of economic systems and globalization, and raised numerous questions about man's relationship with himself, his society, his Creator, and his morals. Accordingly, Bauman argues that the growing phenomenon of fear and insecurity has compelled individuals in Western societies to reconsider and reread themselves. He states: “Security is the name of the game in an insecure world. Security is the main goal of the game and its highest reward. It is a value that practically, if not theoretically, dwarfs and pushes aside all other values, including those values most beloved and most hated by them”<sup>35</sup>. For this reason, it became one of the major causes of international and global violence and terrorism. Human beings were no longer able to control what happens, whether in the present or in the future, and this blurred vision intensified, causing man to lose the values of brotherhood and tolerance. This forced him to reconsider his moral and spiritual dimensions, perhaps as a possible way out of the troubled and liquid condition imposed by modernity.

The hope proposed by Bauman is liquid culture, since it has a universal and human dimension provided that we move beyond its solid concept produced by Western modernity and Enlightenment. He says: “The culture of liquid modernity has no people to enlighten and elevate, but it has customers to seduce. Seduction is the opposite of enlightenment... The function of culture is not to satisfy existing needs, but rather to create new needs in order to preserve needs that are already entrenched or always unfulfilled”<sup>36</sup>. Culture is the new mechanism of change in a time in which all the values and principles brought by Western modernity dissolve.

## Conclusion:

Bauman maintains that the era of Western modernity contained numerous promises, ideas, and projects aimed at freeing Western man from submission to the Church and theology and leading him toward mastery and control over nature through reason, or logos. This required him to establish an epistemological rupture with his mythical past. Secularism therefore emerged as an inevitable outcome, stressing the need to separate the religious from the worldly, alongside globalization and various economic systems such as liberalism, capitalism, and socialism. As a result, the human being lost his humanity as well as his moral, religious, and spiritual values, becoming a one-dimensional being trapped in alienation and estrangement, which are among the consequences of modern reason after it had turned into an instrumental and technical reason. Voices then began to call for a return to the missing link, namely the spiritual dimension marginalized within modern Western consciousness, especially after it found itself in two world wars. The phenomena of fear, anxiety, violence, and death expanded, and being lost its direction. This contributed to reshaping the map of thought and the world, prompting Bauman to affirm that the best solution to this crisis-ridden condition lies in reconsidering the hierarchy of values and morals and in establishing a new liquid culture that liberates the human being from violence, fear, anxiety, and insecurity.

## Results:

- Western modernity failed to fulfill its promises, leading to the loss of moral, religious, and spiritual values, and reducing the human being to a one-dimensional, alienated entity.
- The transformation of reason into instrumental and technical reason generated widespread phenomena of fear, anxiety, violence, and existential disorientation.
- Bauman’s solution lies in re-evaluating the hierarchy of values and establishing a new liquid culture that liberates humanity from violence, fear, and insecurity.

## Recommendations:

- Reconsider the hierarchy of values and morals within modern Western societies.
- Reintegrate the spiritual dimension that has been marginalized in modern Western consciousness.
- Adopt a new liquid culture capable of freeing individuals from violence, fear, anxiety, and instability.

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