



## In Search of Politics

*Zygmunt Bauman*

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## **In Search of Politics** Zygmunt Bauman

In this book, the noted sociologist confronts the decline of the public realm and the profound contradictions of freedom in present-day society. How can most of us consider ourselves free and yet believe equally firmly that there is little we can change—singly, severally, or all together—in the ways the affairs of the world are being run? Why has the growth of individual freedom coincided with the growth of collective impotence, insofar as there is no easy and obvious way to translate private worries into public issues and, conversely, to pinpoint public issues in private troubles? What, under these circumstances, can bring us together?

Occasionally, our impulses toward sociality are released in short-lived explosions, sometimes in carnivals of compassion and charity, sometimes by outbursts of beefed-up aggression against a freshly discovered enemy. The trouble with these occasions is that they run out of steam quickly, and when we return to our daily business the shared world, brightly illuminated for a moment, seems if anything darker than before.

The chance of changing this condition hangs on the *agora*—the space neither private nor public, but more exactly private and public at the same time. In this space, private problems meet in a meaningful way—not just to draw narcissistic pleasures or in search of some therapy through public display, but to seek collective levers powerful enough to lift individuals from their private miseries and create "public good," a "just society," or "shared values." The trouble is that little is left today of the old-style private/public spaces.

In this book, the author both explores these problems and sketches the outlines of a solution for them. We cannot, he argues, overcome our collective impotence without resorting to politics and using the vehicle of political agency. In the latter part of the book, the author focuses on three orientation points for a reconstruction of politics: the republican model of the state and of citizenship, basic income as a universal entitlement, and an attempt to re-enable the institutions of autonomous society by catching up with the extraterritorial powers wielding control in an age of globalization.

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