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Farewell to Revolution! Gustav Landauer's Death and the Funerary Shaping of His Legacy

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Abstract

The violent death of Landauer in May 1919 at the end of the *Räterepublik* of Munich left several of his best friends with a terrible feeling: a sense of tension between the unique hopes incarnated by Landauer and the spiritual and political void his passing left behind. This article is an attempt to capture the tragic shift from a living revolutionary who projected his unique anarchist views onto the failed Munich Revolution to the efforts of a group of close friends who searched to save their dear Landauer from the infamy of failure, making of his months in Munich and his death an important amendment to his spiritual and political legacy.

Keywords

Gustav Landauer – Munich Revolution – theory of revolution – anarchism – modern Jewish philosophy – Martin Buber – Margarete Susman – Fritz Mauthner – Julius Bab

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> On the morning of the 2nd of May, Landauer was transported to Stadelheim together with three other arrested members of the worker soviets of Starnberg. After the reports on his assassination in the press of the day as well as in an official publication … Landauer was delivered to

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> the soldiers without the slightest protection. Their officers did not prevent them from their murderous intentions; on the contrary, the soldiers were cheered to do it. It was an officer who appealed to the troop of soldiers, with whom Landauer was walking, and said: "Stop, this Landauer must be shot immediately!" Another officer … beat him on the head with the stick of his horsewhip. This was the signal for the soldiers, who leapt on him as a pack of animals. They shot and beat Landauer to death. His last words, according to an eyewitness, were: "Kill me! Show me that you are men!"[1]

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The violent death of Landauer in May 1919 at the end of the *Räterepublik* of Munich left several of his best friends with a terrible feeling: a sense of tension between the unique hopes incarnated by this friend and revolutionary, and the spiritual and political void his passing left behind. The execution of Landauer by the *Freikorps* rendered vivid the disparity between the expectations of Landauer as he threw himself into the Munich Revolution in late 1918, and the conflicted reactions of his close companions, who expressed hesitations vis-à-vis Landauer's revolutionary commitments but wished to remain faithful to his spiritual legacy.

This article is an attempt to capture the tragic shift from a living leader who projected his unique anarchist views onto the failed Munich Revolution to the efforts of a group of close friends who searched to save their dear Landauer from the infamy of failure, forging out of his months in Munich and his death an important amendment to his spiritual and political legacy. Thus, the death and failure of Landauer became a task for a group of friends who shared the responsibility to rescue Landauer's death from dishonor.

Yet the achievement of this task presupposed a confrontation with the baffling aspects of Landauer's death in order to transfigure them into a spiritual exemplum and a political lesson for the future. The present essay describes the transformation of this brutal death, which put an end to the expectations

1 Unless otherwise noted, all translations are ours. Martin Buber, ed., *Gustav Landauer: Sein Lebensgang in Briefen*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt a. M.: Rütten & Loening, 1929), 2:423. See also Samuel Hayim Brody, *Martin Buber's Theopolitics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 19–60. For a more accurate description of Landauer's death, see Rita Steininger, *Gustav Landauer: ein Kämpfer für Freiheit und Menschlichkeit*, (Munich: Volk Verlag, 2020), 158–167.

of a leader, into an image of martyrdom in the eulogies of Landauer's friends: Martin Buber, Margarete Susman, Fritz Mauthner, and Julius Bab.

This inquiry into the funerary shaping of Landauer's legacy undertakes a multifaceted study of a wide range of sources written by Landauer and his friends, aiming progressively at disclosing the spiritual redemption of his cruel death. These funerary and literary elaborations on Landauer's death shed light on the contradiction between his thought and his fatal involvement in the Munich Revolution. They reveal his failure while balancing it with the "true meaning" of his work and life. The following study of these eulogies will reveal the tension between Landauer's death and his surviving legacy, a tension which finds its resolution in the harmonization of these two conflicting elements into a political lesson for the future.

1 Part I: Gustav Landauer's Antipolitical Views and Expectations

1.1 *Joy and Revolution*

> The joy of revolution is not only a reaction against former oppression. It lies in the euphoria that comes with a rich, intense, eventful life. What is essential for this joy is that humans no longer feel lonely, that they experience unity, connectedness, and collective strength (*Massenhaftigkeit*). This is why no sensual or spiritual expression of revolution and its conditions is more powerful than Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: after the individual soul goes through deep melancholy, doubt, and fruitless attempts to find happiness and joy in solitude, it reaches for the heavens, rises above itself, and joins all other individual souls in a common ode to joy. Let us not forget its words, borrowed from Schiller's revolutionary poem: "All men become brothers where your gentle wings rest."[2]

Landauer's book *Die Revolution* (1907) reaches a crescendo of emotion and exaltation toward its end, bursting with the sensual and spiritual appeal of the revolutionary experience. This evocation of Beethoven's last symphony sounds almost like a confession, disclosing to the reader the secret heart of revolution. For Landauer, the joy, *Freude*, transmitted by the Ninth Symphony is an aesthetical anticipation of the revolutionary instant in which individual failed attempts at happiness "flow into," *sich mündet*, an intense common sensorial and

2 Gustav Landauer, *The Revolution*, in idem, *Revolution and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Gabriel Kuhn (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010), 171–172.

spiritual experience. In this harmonization of singular attempts, a qualitative shift is reached. The individual efforts are redeemed in a unique experience of a common belonging between men, women, and nature.

This moment of joy is also at the heart of Landauer's anarchism. It delineates a direct and symphonic passage from individual finitude to a spiritual and sensorial community and completeness, without any need for political mediation. It is a common feeling and spirit "falling upon men." This joy is a Spinozist ontological moment of elevation toward completion.[3] Landauer understands the positive dynamic of joy in a romantic way, in which the common sensual feeling of justice replaces Spinoza's intellectual understanding of the causes of alienation. Moments of despair, alienation, and suffering turn suddenly into a revolution of human and social existence, manifesting itself with a spontaneous destruction and reorganization in an atmosphere of revolutionary feasting. Joy is the feeling which accompanies the temporary overlapping of human, natural, and cosmic rhythms. For this reason, revolution is best expressed in the Ninth Symphony since it relies on a common aesthetic feeling.

1.2 *Two Concepts of Pantheism*

In Landauer's 1903 edition of Meister Eckhart's *Von stetiger Freude*, he translated:

> If I am fully transported into the divine essence, then God, and all that He has, is mine. [...] That is when I have true joy, when neither pain nor sorrow can take it from me, for then I am installed in the divine essence, where sorrow has no place.[4]

3 According to Spinoza, joy is the transition to greater perfection and completeness, and in the fifth part of *Ethics*, joy reaches its full dimension in the intellectual love of God. Landauer is more interested in the social multiplication of joy: "Eo magis foveri debet, quo plures homines eodem gaudere imaginamur" (the more men we imagine to enjoy it, the more it must be encouraged) (v, xx D; translation: Edwin Curley, *A Spinoza Reader: The "Ethics" and Other Works* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994], 254). Regarding Landauer's interpretation of Spinoza, see Hanna Delf von Wolzogen, "Gustav Landauer's Reading of Spinoza," in *Gustav Landauer: Anarchist and Jew*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Anya Mali in collaboration with Hanna Delf von Wolzogen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 155–171; Daniel Reiter, *Individualität und Gemeinschaft im Denken Gustav Landauers und Spinozas: Eine vergleichende Studie* (Hamburg: Diplomica, 2013).

4 Cf. Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, with foreword by Bernard McGinn, trans. Maurice O'C. Walshe (New York: Crossroad, 2009), 75–76. For the German version, see Landauer's translation of Meister Eckhart, *Von stetiger Freude*, in idem, *Mystische Schriften* (Berlin: Karl Schabel, 1903), 43–47, at 47: "Und bin ich ganz in das Göttliche Wesen verwandelt, so wird Gott mein und alles was er hat. Dann habe ich rechte Freude, die nicht

This transfiguration and transposition of man into the divine realm is at the heart not only of Eckhart's mysticism, but of Landauer's concept of revolution.[5] Joy is the divine feeling which accompanies human participation in the revolution. In his introduction to the *Mystische Schriften*, Landauer uses the concept of pantheism to present to his readers the modernity of Eckhart:

> He [Eckhart] is pantheistic, yet in an almost opposite way to what is understood under this term since Spinoza's revival of it. The pantheism of the latter dissolves the concept of God—not in the sense of Spinoza of course—in the material world. In contrast, Eckhart dissolves the world and God into what he sometimes called the Godhead, into what is unspeakable and unrepresentable, into what is obviously beyond time, space, and individuation, into something psychic. Instead of things, he posits a psychic force. Instead of cause and effect, a flow. His pantheism is a panpsychism, even if he pretends not to know what the soul is.[6]

Landauer opposes here two concepts of pantheism, one materialistic and atheistic in its orientation, and the other panpsychic, which could be the source of a renewed spiritualization of humanity and nature. Revolution should be grounded in a premodern understanding of totality in order to redeem modernity from the growing duality of spirit and matter and to rediscover their psychic source.[7]

Leid noch Pein von mir nehmen kann, dann bin ich in das Göttliche Wesen versetzt, wo kein Leiden Platzt hat."

5 On Meister Eckhart and Landauer, see Thorsten Hinz, *Mystik und Anarchie: Meister Eckhart und seine Bedeutung im Denken Gustav Landauers* (Berlin: Karin Kramen, 2000); Yossef Schwartz, "Gustav Landauer and Gershom Scholem: Anarchy and Utopia," in Mendes-Flohr and Mali, *Gustav Landauer: Anarchist and Jew*, 172–190.

6 Gustav Landauer, "Vorwort," in Meister Eckhart, *Mystische Schriften*, 5–10, at 6.

7 On Landauer's notion of mysticism and revolution, see Adam M. Weisberger, *The Jewish Ethic and the Spirit of Socialism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 158–172; Norbert Altenhofer, "Tradition als Revolution: Gustav Landauer's 'geworden-werdendes' Judentum," in *Jews and Germans from 1860 to 1933: The Problematic Symbiosis*, ed. David Bronsen (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1979), 173–208; Rolf Kauffeldt, "Anarchie und Romantik," in *Gustav Landauer im Gespräch: Symposium zum 125. Geburtstag*, ed. Hanna Delf and Gert Mattenklott (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1997), 43–54, at 45; Anna Wolkowicz, *Mystiker der Revolution: Der utopische Diskurs um die Jahrhundertwende* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2007). For the new conception of mysticism during the fin-de-siècle, influenced also by Landauer's translation of Meister Eckhart, see Walther Hoffmann, "Neue Mystik," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 4, ed. Friedrich M. Schiele and Leopold Scharnack (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913), 608–611; Uwe Spörl, *Gottlose Mystik in der deutschen Literatur um die Jahrhundertwende* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997); Martina Wagner-Egelhaft, *Mystik der Moderne: Die visionäre Ästhetik der deutschen Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1989); Wolkowicz, *Mystiker der Revolution*.

1.3 *From Isolation to Community*

In his essay *Durch Absonderung zur Gemeinschaft*,[8] Landauer develops the idea of spiritualization of social relations and presents it as a synthesis of mysticism and socialism. The passage from modern isolation to the premodern form of human cooperation passes through an individual mystic experience and the dismissal of illusions and abstract bonds. The regeneration of humankind presupposes an inward movement and a historical regression:

> So as not to be an isolate, lonely and God-forsaken, I recognize the world and sacrifice my ego to it, but only so that I might feel myself to be the world to which I have opened myself. Just as a suicide (*Selbstmörder*) hurls himself into the water, so I crash precipitously into the world, but I find not death, rather life there. The ego kills itself so that the world ego (*Weltich*) might live.[9]

Transforming the original thought of Eckhart, Landauer operates a pantheistic secularization of the former's mysticism, replacing "God" with "humanity" and "cosmos" with "Volk," and thus making the thought of the medieval Meister appealing for modern souls. The revolutionary transfiguration of all relationships between man and man, man and world, as well as man and God, is seen as the path toward "the community we yearn for" (*Gemeinschaft nach der wir uns sehnen*).[10] This new socialization is a liberation from all enslavements and the path which leads from isolation to community.[11]

Through a deep immersion, *Versenkung*, in oneself, a man can discover the hidden essence of the community. "Whoever discovers this community in

8 This was a speech given by Landauer on June 18, 1900, entitled "Die neue Gemeinschaft" (The New Community), at the Hart brothers' circle in Berlin, where he met Martin Buber and Erich Mühsam. See Gustav Landauer, "Durch Absonderung zur Gemeinschaft," in idem, Skepsis und Mystik, vol. 7 of *Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. Siegbert Wolf (Lich, Hessen: Edition AV, 2011), 7:131–147.

9 Translation from Weisberger, *Jewish Ethic and the Spirit of Socialism*, 168. Cf. Gustav Landauer, *Skepsis und Mystik*, in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 7:48.

10 Landauer, *Durch Absonderung zur Gemeinschaft*, 133. See Elliot R. Wolfson, "Theolatry and the Making-Present of the Nonrepresentable: Undoing (A)Theism in Eckhart and Buber," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 25 (2017): 5-35, esp. 8-12.

11 There seems to be a proximity between Landauer's political-mystical thought and Georg Simmel's conception of mysticism and religiosity as a constant dialogue between individual and community. See Georg Simmel, "Die beiden Formen des Individualismus," in *Das freie Wort: Frankfurter Halbmonatszeitschrift für Fortschritt auf allen Gebieten des geistigen Lebens* 1, no. 13, October 5, 1901, 397–403. For a comparison between these two notions of mysticism, see Yossef Schwartz, "Martin Buber and Gustav Landauer: The Politicization of the Mystical," in *Martin Buber: Neue Perspektiven / New Perspectives*, ed. Michael Zank (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 205–219.

himself will be eternally blessed and joyful, and a return to the common and arbitrary communities of today will be impossible."[12] Referring once again to Meister Eckhart, Landauer stated that the singularity is nothing but an electric spark of the whole and, through the mystic detachment, *Abgeschiedenheit*, the individual becomes one with the world: "Since the world has disintegrated into pieces and has become alienated from itself, we have to flee into mystic seclusion in order to become one with it again."[13] In this moment of symphonic regression of individuals toward the primary common background, the community then also regresses from a normative and political state to a primordial and spontaneous bond, a bond which is not even human, but natural and divine.

1.4 *The Role of the Workers' Councils in the Aftermath of the November Revolution*

One month after the November Revolution (1918), Landauer gave an important speech to the Bayerische Arbeiterräte, the Bavarian Workers' Council. The discourse ends with the democracy envisioned by Landauer:

> I do not fear any parliament of the old system. I do not fear any resolution saying: the revolution happened; it must not be continued. Something of the old system should be reinstalled. As long as we are here, the true and new democracy, in which the people exercises its self-determination in its corporations, in which the people does not renounce one's right for three or five or any number of years, but remains always in charge of its destiny—if we have this democracy, this democracy of worker, soldier, and farmer councils, we shall be invincible.[14]

The entire speech helps us to concretely understand the meaning of the revolutionary and anarchical reorganization of human society envisioned by Landauer. In the beginning, he insists on the criticism that the councils must exercise on former institutions and functionaries. The councils have neither direct executive nor legislative power, but the new revolutionary government is bound to listen to the grievances and critiques of the councils in order to dismiss ancient functionaries and to progressively reform justice, institutions,

12 Landauer, *Revolution and Other Writings*, 96.

13 Ibid., 105.

14 Gustav Landauer, "Rechenschaftsbericht des 'Zentralarbeiterrates' an die bayerischen Arbeiterräte," in idem, *Nation, Krieg und Revolution*, vol. 4 of *Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. Siegbert Wolf (Lich, Hessen: Edition AV 2011), 4:260–271, at 271.

police, and army. This new revolutionary alliance between the government and the councils is interpreted by Landauer toward the end of his speech as a completely new regime, in which a new science with new *Wissenschaftlers* will eliminate the shameful compromise with the ancient regime. Landauer speaks also of a new type of democracy, which could get rid of any parliamentarism and, in general, of any authorization and delegation of power. Councils, understood now as meaning *Volk*, will constantly provide substance to government and realize the destiny of the people, the expression of its profound essence, without any mediation.

The tension stressed by Landauer between parliamentarism and councils was at the heart of the contradictions of the Munich Revolution, which, in its first phase under the leadership of Kurt Eisner, sought a balance between the new revolutionary councils and democratic parliamentarism. Yet, when Eisner's party lost the elections in Bavaria in January 1919, this irenic mixed regime of councils and parliament proved to be an illusion, radicalizing the revolution toward a regime of councils without a parliament.[15]

1.5 *The Successful Unsuccessfulness of Modernity*

In his essay *Die Revolution*, Landauer develops another aspect of modern revolution. He depicts the period ranging from 1500 to 1900 as a long period of revolution:

> the era from the year 1500 until now (beyond) is an area for which the following formula fits: it is without a common spirit. An area of lack of spirit, hence an area of violence; an area of lack of spirit, hence an area where spirit is only active in isolated individuals; an area of individualism, hence of atomization as well as uprooted masses reduced to nothing; an area of personalism and hence of individual, melancholic and ingenious spirit.[16]

Landauer perceives modernity as a long process of loss, of despiritualization, producing a new agent: the individual. The loss of the relatively immanent and stable Christian spirit in medieval corporative society resulted in a new type of anxiety which increased the separation between the spirit, society, and world across various realms. The more the spirit receded into the past, in the

15 For a description of the different phases of the Munich Revolution and Landauer's role in it, see Ulrich Linse, *Gustav Landauer und die Revolutionszeit, 1918–1919* (Berlin: Kramer, 1974).

16 Landauer, *Revolution and Other Writings*, 135.

individual sphere, the more social organization lost its spontaneous or traditional forms in favor of artificial, rational, and violent bonds.

> This is the complexity in which we find ourselves, this is our transition, our disorientation, our search—our revolution. Life in these centuries is an amalgamation of substitutes for spirit. After all, we need something that makes human community possible and that guides it. Where there is no spirit, violence takes over, and the state and the related forms of authority and centralism become consolidated. However, unrecognized expressions of spirit do remain. Spirit never disappears entirely. If it no longer manifests itself among the people, it appears as an abundant and exhausting force in some lonely individuals. The works of beauty and wisdom it produces through them are very different from the works produced during the areas of community. Our centuries are marked by a desire for freedom and by attempts to attain it. This is what we usually mean when we speak of revolution. The violent surrogates of spirit are enormous.[17]

The modern revolutionary transition period constantly creates substitutes for the former medieval spirit. This production of substitutes proceeds from a continuous search for a new social organization. In this Landauerian perspective, modernity is revolutionary in its destruction of the former *Topia*[18] and in its quest for a new *Geist*. This long revolutionary process accomplishes itself through a growing instrumentalization of social relations, replacing the inner organization of traditional communities with a transcendent state.[19] For

17 Ibid., 135–136.

18 According to Landauer, all of history is a sequence of two alternating phases: topias and utopias. A topia is a period of stability in all spheres of social life; utopia is a reaction against this stable state of affairs. Revolution is a kind of hidden force in history, the threshold between topia and utopia: "Revolution is always alive, even during the time of relatively stable topias. It stays alive underground. It is always old and new. While it is underground, it creates a complex unity of memories, emotions and desires." Ibid., 116.

19 In this regard, Buber underlined the originality of Landauer's understanding of the state. See Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), 46: "Landauer's step beyond Kropotkin consists primarily in his direct insight into the nature of the State. The State is not, as Kropotkin thinks, an institution which can be destroyed by a revolution. The State is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behavior." However, the influence exerted by Kropotkin on Landauer's thought is unquestionable. In fact, Landauer translated Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, in which the ideas of mutual help in medieval communities, as well as the power of cooperation in order to counter centralized authorities—both extremely important to Landauer—are prominent. According to Max Nettlau, Landauer and Kropotkin did not spend much time

Landauer, this enormous creativity of individuals ends in the production of a new technical domination over men. This is the historical background of the seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century revolutions: men search for freedom while inventing new artificial forms of domination.

1.6 *The Failure of Campanella's Utopian Thought*

Landauer's concept of *Anti-Politik* comes to the fore in his criticism of modern political thought. It is one of the most remarkable features of *Die Revolution* that Landauer devotes much of his work to extensive interpretation of early modern thinkers such as Campanella, Thomas More, and Étienne de La Boétie.

> In his politics, though, he [Campanella] did not consider the intimate (*liebenvolle*[*n*]) connections (*Selbstverständlichkeiten*) between the Christian tradition and the magical forces of the Renaissance. He only saw reason, natural law and the principle of the State. This caused him to envision some kind of state communism. The relativities, connections, and various associations of former times (*Zeit der Schichtung*) seemed dead and gone. He took from individualism only its worst damaging consequences. In Campanella's utopian system, the State has taken control of everything: love, family, property, education and religion. Campanella foresees the absolute democratic state, the state that knows neither society nor societies; the state that we call social-democratic. Campanella, a terribly lonely man, embraced the world with the love that accommodates and nurtures a thinker's spirit. He found no love, however, in the life around him. He saw only violence resulting from a lack of reason in his time and violence in the name of reason in the time to come.[20]

Campanella is presented here as an emblematic transitional figure, moving from medieval Christian "self-evidence" and the social stratification in relatively autonomous societies or corporations to a new rational total organization of human common life. This rationalization is the essential background of modern political revolutionary thought, be it oriented toward state communism or a social-democratic state. For Landauer, modern utopian and later revolutionary thought are the outcome of the usurpation of spontaneous human

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together, although they were neighbors in England, because the German anarchist did not share the economical rationalism of the anarchist socialism of Kropotkin, who in turn rejected any form of individualism. See Max Nettlau, "La vida de Gustav Landauer segun su correspondencia," trans. Diego A. de Santillan, in *Incitation al Socialismo* (Buenos Aires: Publicaciones Mundial, 1947), 236.

20 Landauer, *Revolution and Other Writings*, 162.

capacity by an abstract rational principle, which is implemented by and associated with state power and domination.[21] At the heart of modern political transformation is the techno-rational capture of all human spontaneity for the sake of state, reason, and violence.

1.7 *From Anti-Marxism to Anti-Politics*

Landauer's rejection of Marxism could be associated with his critique of Campanella and modern utopian thought. In Landauer's eyes, Marxism is an extreme attempt to fix the revolutionary scenario with scientific parameters, while for Landauer, revolution belongs irremediably to the realm of the possible. Landauer accuses Marxism of utopianism, since it develops an abstract plan and a naïve trust in the future which impedes real participation in political actions: "[Marxism] is not a description and a science, which it pretends to be, but a negating, destructive and crippling appeal to impotence, lack of will, surrender and indifference."[22] In his *For Socialism*, Landauer harshly criticizes the Marxist conception of an automatic transformation of capitalism into socialism by a "miraculous sudden collapse,"[23] based on "the inexorable historical tendencies discovered and secured by Karl Marx."[24] This optimistic trust in the future is due to a "ludicrous scientific superstition" and a "Darwinistic garb" which turn Marxism into "the plague of our times and the curse of the socialist movement."[25] According to Landauer, the adjective "materialist" used to describe the Marxist conception of history is a euphemism for a "spiritless conception of history."[26]

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21 The presence of utopian elements in Landauer's thought has been extensively discussed by many scholars, starting with Buber, who celebrated his friend in *Paths in Utopia*. We think that this issue needs a semantic clarification. If one understands "utopia" as an ideal political project or a dream of a perfect society, it is difficult to find even one hint of it in Landauer's writings. However, if we consider "utopia" in a romantic way, as a social and human order yet to come, it would be possible to define Landauer as a utopian thinker. In this regard, see the important works of Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe*, trans. Hope Heaney (London: Verso, 1992); idem, "Romantic Prophets of Utopia: Gustav Landauer and Martin Buber," in *Gustav Landauer: Anarchist and Jew*, 64–81; idem, "Utopia and Revolution: The Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer and Martin Buber," in *Jewish Thought, Utopia, and Revolution*, ed. Elena Namli, Jayne Svenungsson, and Alana M. Vincent (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 49–64.

22 Gustav Landauer, *For Socialism*, trans. D. J. Parent (New York: Telos, 1978), 109.

23 Ibid., 20.

24 Ibid., 48.

25 Ibid., 32.

26 Ibid., 56.

Landauer identifies the origin of Marxism with technology, stating that "the father of Marxism is steam."[27] He sees Marxism as "a product of technical centralization of enterprises." "Never will socialism 'blossom' from capitalism, as the unpoetic Marx so lyrically sang, but his doctrine and his party, Marxism and Social Democracy, did develop from steam energy."[28] This connection of Marxism and technology brings Landauer to *Anti-Politik* and to the difference he draws between socialism and politics. The socialist "is interested in the whole, and he grasps our conditions in their totality, in their historical context; he thinks holistically. It then follows that he rejects the entirety of our forms of life, that he has no other intent and goal but the whole, the universal, the principle."[29] Whereas socialism concerns the whole of human existence, since it is "a joy, and a jubilation, a building and making,"[30] politics is a technological surrogate interested only in partial aspects of life. For Landauer, socialism is rooted in inner life, not in science. In contrast, politics by necessity involves a "depersonalization and dehumanization of the relationship."[31]

1.8 *The Ambiguity of Revolution*

While Landauer was writing *Die Revolution*, he began to translate an "almost entirely unknown book in Germany,"[32] the *Discours de la servitude volontaire* of La Boétie, which was published in the journal *Der Sozialist* in 1910–1911. Landauer abundantly uses La Boétie's writing to develop a different concept of revolution.

> But let us dwell a while with Etienne de La Boétie: we need nothing, he says, but the desire and the will to be free. We suffer a servitude that is voluntary … "Be determined, to no longer be servant, and you will be free. I do not encourage you to chase away the tyrant and to throw him off his throne. All you need to do is stop supporting him …" Fire can be extinguished by water. But conspiracies to chase away or kill a tyrant can be enormously dangerous when conceived by men who are after fame and glory and hence prone to reproduce tyranny … The point is: tyranny is not a fire that has to be or can be extinguished. It is not an external evil.

27 Ibid., 65.
28 Ibid., 67.
29 Ibid., 45.
30 Ibid., 53.
31 Ibid., 96.
32 Landauer, *Revolution and Other Writings*, 159.

> It is an internal flaw. The fire of tyranny cannot be fought from the outside with water.[33]

The fire of tyranny can be extinguished either by external means—which have the advantages of immediacy and efficacy—or by internal means, which takes longer and presupposes a deeper spiritual transformation. Landauer presents here two contradictory impulses in the revolution. The first one is concerned only with political violence and stabilization of power. The second is an anti-political process of retreat from submission to a political order. The two faces of revolution are first, a virile exhortation to establish a new political reality (*Verwirklichung und Beginnen*), and second, a more "feminine" or introspective radical change. If the former could be seen as an active desire of revolution, the latter is more similar to the painful birth of the community.

1.9 *Facing World War I*

In his 1915 article "Aus unstillbarem Verlangen," Landauer expresses his *Anti-politik* vis-à-vis the world war and the expectation that every German intellectual justify the war mobilization and fight a war of spirit. Landauer clearly opposes such justification and any form of call for mobilization.[34] He justifies his attitude in the following way:

> The most spiritless of all wars that ever happened is being conducted with the greatest enthusiasm that ever was, since spirit can no longer stand to be separated from life. Now, a time will soon come, after the end of this war, in which spirit will appear.[35]

The world war is presented by Landauer as the culmination of modern politics, with its unprecedented material and moral mobilization, and unlimited accumulation of technical and political means, human forces, and spiritual aspirations, with no idea, no finality, and no *Geist*, but rather imperial expansion.

> Since men yearn for the social bonding spirit, which has been lost, yet instead seek out the surrogate of the ancient religion, now dead in its historical forms, they are ready to sacrifice themselves in myriad hecatombs

33 Ibid., 158–159.

34 On Landauer's harsh condemnation of the war, see Ulrich Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Akademie, 2008), 145–150.

35 Gustav Landauer, "Aus unstillbarem Verlangen," in idem, *Dichter, Ketzer, Aussenseiter: Essays und Reden zu Literatur, Philosophie, Judentum*, ed. Hanna Delf (Berlin: Akademie, 1997), 12–15, at 12.

> to the state—which continues to live its evil illusory life, for the communities once raised by the spirit degenerated in the state.[36]

World war is the supreme point of the transmutation of spirit into a techno-political surrogate. The mobilization and the sacrifice for war is the highest form of nostalgia for the lost "social bonding spirit." Landauer's harsh condemnation of war mobilization is in tune with the inner retreat defended in *Die Revolution*. He conceived it also as a preparation for the postwar period and its great necessities. After the collapse of the imperialist state, a real need for spirit and a new social organization will appear.

Far from being a mere antithesis to the war, Landauer's ideal of peace claimed the advent of socialism and a new human order.

> Peace is not the absence of war. Peace is not a mere negation. Peace is the positive organization of freedom and justice. Peace is the construction of socialism, and it cannot be reached for less. And by socialism we mean something completely different from statements and rulers. Socialism will be a new human order. It will be the order which is missing today, and instead of which we have the barbarian disorder of authoritarian violence, with periodical outbursts of war.[37]

2 Part II: The Death of Landauer and the Funerary Shaping of His Legacy by His Close Friends

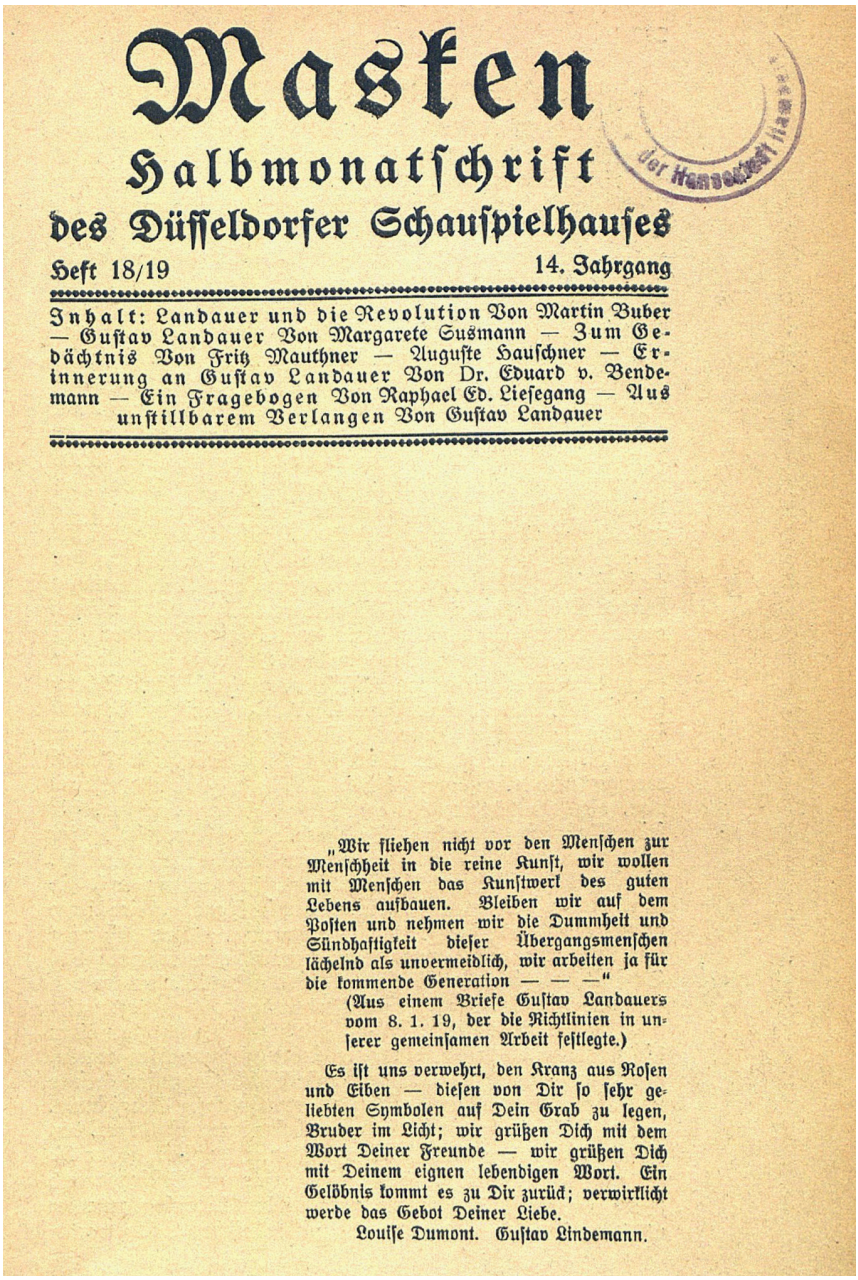
2.1 Masken*: A Monument of Words*

In 1919, a few months after Landauer's assassination on May 2, the Dusseldorf journal *Masken* devoted a double issue to eulogies of Landauer's life and work. The second page of the issue displays a color lithograph (Fig. 1). In the upper part, it shows crucified martyrs, and in the lower part, raised fists calling for justice and revolution. The martyr at the center of the image is seen from below and from afar. The viewer shares the point of view of the protesters, whose faces are not in the frame. The third page of the issue lists the contributors, some of Landauer's closest friends: Martin Buber, Margarete Sussman, Fritz Mauthner, Auguste Hauschner, Eduard Bendemann, and Raphael Liesegang (Fig. 2).

36 Ibid., 15.

37 Gustav Landauer, "Deutschland, Frankreich und der Krieg," in idem, *Nation, Krieg und Revolution*, 153–164, at 164.

FIGURE 1 Frontispiece of the double issue of *Masken* honoring Gustav Landauer. We thank Samuel H. Brody and the ILL office of the Washington University in St. Louis for providing us with this image.



Masken

Halbmonatschrift

des Düsseldorfer Schauspielhauses

Heft 18/19 14. Jahrgang

Inhalt: Landauer und die Revolution Von Martin Buber — Gustav Landauer Von Margarete Susmann — Zum Gedächtnis Von Fritz Mauthner — Auguste Hauschner — Erinnerung an Gustav Landauer Von Dr. Eduard v. Bendemann — Ein Fragebogen Von Raphael Ed. Liesegang — Aus unstillbarem Verlangen Von Gustav Landauer

„Wir fliehen nicht vor den Menschen zur Menschheit in die reine Kunst, wir wollen mit Menschen das Kunstwerk des guten Lebens aufbauen. Bleiben wir auf dem Posten und nehmen wir die Dummheit und Sündhaftigkeit dieser Übergangsmenschen lächelnd als unvermeidlich, wir arbeiten ja für die kommende Generation — — —"

(Aus einem Briefe Gustav Landauers vom 8. 1. 19, der die Richtlinien in unserer gemeinsamen Arbeit festlegte.)

Es ist uns verwehrt, den Kranz aus Rosen und Eiben — diesen von Dir so sehr geliebten Symbolen auf Dein Grab zu legen, Bruder im Licht; wir grüßen Dich mit dem Wort Deiner Freunde — wir grüßen Dich mit Deinem eignen lebendigen Wort. Ein Gelöbnis kommt es zu Dir zurück; verwirklicht werde das Gebot Deiner Liebe.

Louise Dumont. Gustav Lindemann.

FIGURE 2 Title page of the double issue of *Masken* honoring Gustav Landauer

An epigraph is printed at the bottom of the page, taken from one of Landauer's last letters, written during the Munich Revolution:

> Unlike pure art, we do not flee from real men to ideal humanity; we want to build with men the masterpiece of good life.[38]

This edition of *Masken* was intended to be a memorial, *ein Denkmal*, for Landauer, in place of the missing gravestone and the missing socialist transformation of humanity. The second epigraph is written by Louise Dumont and Gustav Lindemann:

> We were forbidden to put on your grave a crown of roses and yew, symbols which you love, brother of light. We say goodbye to you with the words of your friends. We say goodbye with your own living word. Yet we owe you a vow back: may your command of love be accomplished.[39]

The issue was not only a commemoration of the deceased and his vibrant revolutionary thought. It was also a testament to the intense love and friendship which Landauer and his close friends shared.

2.2 *Martin Buber: A Defense of Landauer's Spiritual Legacy*[40]

2.2.1 Revolution: Tragedy or Comedy

Masken opens with Buber's eulogy:

> Landauer was filled with the tragic of all former revolutions—a tragic born of the fact that socialism does not exist anywhere as a concrete reality—when a series of revolts burst forth, a succession which was called the German Revolution. This was Landauer's feeling when he stepped into the revolution, a feeling so distinct from the common hope. It was not hope, but a grim decisiveness to do his duty amid this crisis. He wanted to act not as a spiritual leader nor as a pathfinder, but rather as one of the many righteous German revolutionaries working for the blessing of revolution as much as he could. He wanted also to prevent the curse of revolution as much as he could. It was not his fault that this time too, and this time even more so, the curse crushed the blessing to death, as he had prophesied.[41]

38 *Masken: Halbmonatsschrift des Düsseldorfer Schauspielhauses* 14, nos. 18–19 (1919): 281.

39 Ibid.

40 On the relationship between Buber and Landauer, see Brody, *Martin Buber's Theopolitics*, 19–60.

41 Ibid., 286–287.

In Aristotle's *Poetics*, tragedy is defined as the collapse of a prominent hero through some fatal errors or personal decisions, while comedy ends happily for the main character after surmounting many obstacles.[42] In Landauer's writings, revolution appears more as a new divine comedy. Yet Buber ascribes here to Landauer a prophetic awareness of revolution as a human tragedy.

As mentioned above, revolution is for Landauer a joyful and sparkling outcome, and an "incredible miracle [that] is brought into the realm of possibility."[43]

> May the nations be imbued with the new creative spirit out of their task, out of the new conditions, out of the primeval, eternal and unconditional depths, the new spirit that really does create new conditions. May the revolution produce religion, a religion of action, life, love, that makes men happy, redeems them and overcomes impossible situations.[44]

Buber invented Landauer's tragic consciousness. This addition is a clear sign of care for his deceased friend and marks the beginning of Landauer's reception. The motif of tragedy is due to the brutal murder of his friend, and to the tragic epilogue of the Bavarian Council Republic, which Buber had already defined as "an unspeakable Jewish tragedy" in February 1919, before Eisner's death.[45] By projecting the motif of the "tragic of revolution" on Landauer's death, Buber was building a Jewish exemplum meant to distance his readership from the belief in the positive outcome of revolution.

2.2.2 Re-Educator of the Souls

In a letter dated November 22, 1918, written in Krombach, Landauer explains for the second time to his friend Buber why he must return to Munich and to his revolutionary responsibilities:

42 Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449a31–1451a15.

43 Landauer, *For Socialism*, 21.

44 Ibid., 26.

45 Buber to Ludwig Strauss, February 22, 1919, in Martin Buber, *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten*, ed. Grete Schaeder (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider 1973), 2:29. On Buber's impression of the Bavarian Council Republic, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Messianic Radicals: Gustav Landauer and Other German-Jewish Revolutionaries," in *Gustav Landauer: Anarchist and Jew*, 14–44.

> I am hoping to be able to return to Munich within a few days. There, I am active and collaborate intimately with Kurt Eisner. The situation is very serious. If the revolution succeeds in overcoming this dangerous liquidation of the war, it will be almost a miracle.[46]

Landauer did not mention in this passage that joining the revolution in Munich also meant leaving behind his three daughters—Lotte, Gudula, and Brigitte—who had just been bereaved of their mother a year earlier. Instead, Landauer justified his travel to Munich by mentioning his intimate collaboration with the leader of the Munich Revolution, Kurt Eisner. This call from the leader gave Landauer the opportunity to redeem a rather unsuccessful political path for which he had fought bitterly in his twenties.[47] This was an attempt to fulfill the dreams and promises of his youth. Landauer further justifies his participation in his letter, writing of his hope to realize a "miracle," the transformation of a lost world war into a successful revolution.

> Despite all the circumstances, Bavaria will never surrender, I can promise you. You should outline your thoughts on public education, on publishing houses, etc., and send them to me. Or better, you should come with them to Munich. I am working there, beyond any personal reasons, to re-educate the soul through speech activities (*durch rednerische Betätigung an der Umbildung der Seele*), as Eisner puts it.[48]

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46 Buber, *Gustav Landauer: Briefen*, 2:299.

47 His first political commitments saw him rise to the top of German anarchist circles during the 1880s. In 1893 he participated in the Zurich congress of the Second International as an anarchist delegate. He was expelled from the congress by August Bebel, who accused him of being a police informer. When Landauer returned to Berlin, he spent one year in prison for the writings published in *Der Sozialist*. Then he traveled again as an anarchist delegate to a Second International congress in London where the anarchists were excluded and, consequently, organized another conference. On this occasion Landauer prepared a report with the title "From Zurich to London," which became his most translated piece at that time. During these years, Landauer spent a total of eighteen months in prison for his writings published in *Der Sozialist*. Following this period of political enthusiasm, the first decade of the last century was characterized by a withdrawal from all public activities; in fact, Landauer devoted these years of his life to a more philosophical and mystical idea of anarchism, due partly to his translation of Meister Eckhart and his friendship with Fritz Mauthner. See Charles B. Maurer, *Call to Revolution: The Mystical Anarchism of Gustav Landauer* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1971); Eugene Lunn, *Prophet of Community: The Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Ruth Link-Salinger, *Gustav Landauer: Philosopher of Utopia* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1977), 74–76.

48 Buber, *Gustav Landauer: Briefen*, 2:299. See also 2:296 n. 1.

Considering the necessity of Bavaria's secession from the old Reich or the new Germany, Landauer invites Buber to transplant his cultural activities into the new political context of the Munich Revolution. In line with his new role as a "re-educator of the souls," Landauer conceived his speeches and meetings as a means to produce "a participation of everybody in the actual social structures."[49] By transplanting cultural activism into a new revolutionary context, Landauer hoped to make it more rapidly effective.

2.2.3 Correcting the Falsified Public Image of Landauer

> It was claimed that Munich was for Landauer an occasion "to justify his whole life by action, to bring the proof for the fact that he was right in all that had filled [his action and thought] across decades. In short: to make of a proof an example." Among all the outrageous false claims about Landauer that were spread after his death, this claim is the most false. The life of a pure and creative man needs no "justification," especially the life of Landauer, which one can contemplate as an impressive succession of silent, faithful, and constructive deeds. […] Yet, no revolution could prove that Landauer was treading on the right path, as I have shown you with his words. This revolution was not his affair, and could not meet his expectation. Just before the death of Eisner, Landauer told me that the expected day is still far away. Landauer did not intend to prove this by his own example. He sought to find his place in the event, to be part and parcel, to fulfill the duty of the moment, and the duty of solidarity, to make the sacrifice of himself. Landauer entered the German Revolution [already] decided on the sacrifice. He knew what he would have to sacrifice at the ultimate hour: more than his life, his cause, insofar as it depended on his person.[50]

These empathic and lyrical lines of Buber are a celebration of the exemplarity of his friend, who embodied the true revolution, and yet was ready to sacrifice himself and his cause to an impossible revolution. This ultimate sacrifice, imagined by Buber, was a well-thought-out attempt to save and correct the negative and, in Buber's eyes, falsified public image of his friend.

In a letter to Hedwig Petermann, dated February 27, 1919, Landauer addressed this tension between his public image in the German newspapers and his self-image:

49 Ibid., 300.

50 Buber, "Landauer und die Revolution," in *Masken*, 282–291, at 287.

> I read between the lines, that you are addressing an unpleasant composed figure. On the one hand, the real Landauer—who I am and whom you know—and on the other hand, the Landauer of the newspapers, who is an abhorrent man and whom I would not touch even with a ten-foot pole. I beg you only to rid [yourself] of this distortion, with this excellent means of mine: do not read the newspaper.[51]

2.2.4 An Affectionate Misinterpretation of Landauer's Choice

Buber concentrates on the cultural and spiritual meaning of revolution in an attempt to redeem Landauer from his own choices. In this sense, Buber's shaping of the memory of his deceased friend is an affectionate misinterpretation. Even if the notion of "spirit" is ambiguous in Landauer's writings, as it is used both in the sense of an authentic bond as well as in the phrase *Krieg des Geistes* (war of spirit), it is worth noting that the German Jewish anarchist was extremely active and enthusiastic for the outbreak of the Munich Soviet Republic. It is not by chance that Landauer rejected moving to Dusseldorf, where already in the summer of 1918 he had accepted a job as dramaturge of the *Volkstheater*. There, he could have led the long life of a cultural agent engaged in a progressive revolution of the soul. Yet for Landauer, only the concrete and violent changes accomplished by the Munich Republic could create the conditions for the realization of a spiritual revolution. "My dear Bavarian did well," Landauer wrote to Gustav Lindemann and Louise Dumont-Lindemann on November 11, 1918. "As soon as I can, I will travel to Munich. I have serious doubts concerning [the government in] Berlin. Now, at last, it is time and [our] duty to help and work together."[52] Landauer's decision here illuminates a clear preference for direct action and a general rejection of linear time and bourgeois progress.[53]

In the letters of November 1918, Landauer explains the Munich Revolution to his friends as a consolation and an enormous hope: "The great hope, I tell you, is our Bavaria, where the revolution has been led from the beginning with reason and humanity."[54] Despite his awareness of the difficulties and dangers, Landauer took his new task as the spiritual guide of the "real revolutionaries"

51 Buber, *Gustav Landauer: Briefen*, 2:385–386.

52 Ibid., 2:293.

53 In this regard, see the affinity between Landauer's political idea of time and Walter Benjamin's conception of *Jetztzeit*. See Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, in idem, *1938–1940*, vol. 4 of *Selected Writings*, ed. H. Eiland and M. W. Jennings, trans. E. Jephcott et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), Thesis XIV, 395: "History is the subject of a construction whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled full by now-time (*Jetztzeit*)."

54 Letter to Auguste Hauschner, November 24, 1918, in Buber, *Gustav Landauer: Briefen*, 2:314.

seriously: "the real revolutionaries, of the spiritual kind, have to follow my example and operate in the workers' and soldiers' councils."[55] Buber invents a new Landauer "out of his own words" after the latter's death. Yet, Landauer's participation in the Munich Revolution did not match this literary construction. For Landauer, this revolution was an "ethical" imperative and an impelling urgency of the time for the creation of a new spirit (*Schaffung eines neuen Geistes*).[56] Landauer's letters, edited by Buber, vehemently contradict Buber's memory of his friend:

> Now meaning is at stake. We deal with the highest affairs of humanity: equality and a reasonable and good life. It is a struggle against the parties. It is about the new, the hidden, which will soon appear. [...] The great decisions are still ahead. We are in the revolution, and purification and elevation will bring about the highest time. What a grace that we can live it![57]

In attempting to redeem his friend from his failed choices *post mortem*, Buber was also trying to produce an impression of friendship and proximity—a friendship which had been tested during the first months of the war when Landauer called his friend *Kriegsbuber*.[58] In a letter dated May 12, 1916, Landauer makes clear his repulsion to Buber's understanding of the world war, as expressed in the introductory words to the review *Der Jude* (vol. 1, 1916):[59]

> Notwithstanding all your protest, I call this kind of speech [i.e., the introduction he is writing] aestheticism and formalism. And I must say, that you—even vis-à-vis yourself—do not have the slightest right to add a speech of your own on the political events of our days, to which one gives the name World War, and to arrange this chaos within your pleasant and wise general views. It results in something completely insufficient and outrageous.[60]

55 Letter to Margarete Susman, November 23, 1918, in ibid., 2:308.
56 Letter to Margarete Susman, November 14, 1918, in ibid., 2:296.
57 Letter to Georg Springer, November 27, 1918, in ibid., 2:318.
58 See Dominique Bourel, *Martin Buber: Sentinelle de l'humanité* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2015), 200–205, 224–225.
59 Martin Buber, "Losung," in *Der Jude: Eine Monatsschrift, Erster Jahrgang, 1916–1917*, 1–3.
60 Letter to Martin Buber, May 12, 1916, in Martin Buber, *Briefwechsel aus Sieben Jahrzehnten*, vol. 1, ed. Grete Schaeder (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1972), 1:434.

Further on in the letter, Landauer notifies Buber that in light of their discord, he is not interested in participating in the review *Der Jude* "as long as the war lasts."[61] In the two volumes of Landauer's letters edited by Buber, this long and fascinating letter was omitted.[62]

2.2.5 A Missing Leader—A Missing Image

After trying to redeem the memory of Landauer by defending the cultural concept of revolution against the active and political one, Buber feels that he can now deliver his confession, his critical confession. Could it be the first time that Buber finally dared to disclose his criticism of his now deceased friend?

> I must confess, that I believe he did wrong [by participating in the Munich Revolution]. On November 7, there was for Gustav Landauer a higher duty, a larger responsibility, namely a responsibility for his own cause and for the true transformation [of the spirit]. Indeed, what the revolutionary crowd was missing, what destroyed them and made them disoriented, was the absence of an image, an image complete, authentic, and accessible, which could and should be realized. An image of institutions, relations, and conditions, an image of a new society. Not an arbitrary image, nor a construction of the intellect, but rather an adequate image drawn from the right perception of the historical context, and from the seeds of community preserved in the natural depth of the nation.[63]

Buber confesses thoughts and ideas he kept guiltily to himself. In his correspondence, he never shared his doubts about the moral, political, and historical commitments of his friend.[64] Landauer went too fast, too directly; he surrendered too easily to the call of the revolutionary moment. He preferred the illusion of a rapid and direct transformation of the masses and the souls to the true elaboration of his thought into "a complete, authentic and accessible image." By ceasing his literary and intellectual work, Landauer failed to meet his responsibility to the future and to the nation. He left his surroundings without any concrete possibility to reorganize and change—without an image.

In his 1903 essay on Lesser Ury, Buber develops his new concept of image, which he reads, or discovers, in the new artistic work of the painter.

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61 Ibid., 436.

62 See Buber, *Gustav Landauer: Briefen*, 2:135–140.

63 Buber, "Landauer und die Revolution," 287.

64 Buber communicated his criticism to his friends, but never to Landauer himself. See the letter to Ludwig Strauss in Buber, *Briefwechsel*, 2:29.

> Energy surges, a living energy rebels against the dark powers of fate and seeks redemption. The individual fights against the world. That is the "content." All things are connected; all things awaken each other, develop each other. Each reveals to the other its self, draws it out. Each lives off the other, in the other. That is the "form." In reality, both are united in each of Ury's works indissolubly, world struggle and world harmony, revolution and pantheism.[65]

The image is an equilibrium between the *conatus* of individuals against the forces of nature and the common manifestation of the self. "Not just nature, but *natura naturans*, is everywhere, in me, in you, from me to you, from you to me."[66] The image, which Landauer failed to impose on the revolutionary movement, was this symbiosis between the individual struggle and the expression of the whole, which Buber considered to be the task of the leader to incarnate and to project.

2.2.6 The Seduction of the Moment or the Responsibility for the Future

Buber did not believe in the spontaneous anarchic organization of the revolutionaries. Yet for Landauer, the new social bonding spirit could only come to its realization through negation, and through the negation of authority: "The desire for destruction is a creative desire." Landauer did not abandon his responsibility when he ceased his cultural activities in Dusseldorf. On the contrary, he believed that only a revolutionary movement could reach a complete and new organization, comparable to a new countenance of humanity. For Buber, spontaneity was just mobilization without finality, masses without orientation. Instead of hoping for a harmonious organization to come out of a poor design, it would have been more appropriate to lead the people by developing a narrative image that would integrate the ancient and genetic *Volkscharakter*, the distorted historical situation, and the messianic transformation. Without such an integrative and authentic representation of the situation of the people—which could only be reached by the cultural leader—the people would fail in its revolutionary mission. According to Buber, the self-formation of the people needed the representational moment, the "imaginative" anticipation of the leader. Landauer wanted instead to disappear in the self-formation of the *Volk*, giving all his energy and thought to this spontaneous movement unto death. For Buber, Landauer should have retreated from political life and devoted all his energy and spirit to creating a series of mythical narrations of the

65 Martin Buber, *Juedische Kuenstler* (Berlin: Jüdisches Verlag, 1903), 82–83.
66 Ibid., 84.

entire history of the people. By retreating from politics, Landauer could have reached a mystical union with the spirit of the people, from its very origin to its end. This should have been Landauer's path after the great defeat of 1918. Yet Landauer did not resist the seduction of the istant, and failed to fulfill his responsibility for the future: "he decided to jump into the breach, which had to be filled by a human body. The terrible urgency and issue of the instant tormented him more than his responsibility for the future."[67]

2.3 *Margarete Susman: The Tragic Fate of a Poet in Politics*

2.3.1 The Call of Eisner, the Prudence of Susman

The second funerary essay in *Masken* was written by the poet and philosopher Margarete Susman (1872–1966). Like Buber, she insisted on the tragic outcome "which marks the destiny of every pure revolutionary without exception."[68] For Susman, Landauer was a passionate politician who represented "the marriage of the absolute and subjective truthfulness and the objective truth of facts perceived in their exact contours."[69] Yet, being a passionate revolutionary, Landauer privileged his own subjective desire for the general liberation of men over the pragmatic evaluation of the right conditions for the revolution.

> In his overwhelming love, he attempted to begin alone the mission for which he wanted men to arise, although he saw and knew that the hour had not yet come. But human life is too short, too unique. What must be done must be done soon. Which true revolutionary would wait for his hour? Had he waited, had he not tried to grasp even a miserable corner of reality, would the world have made any step forward in any cause?[70]

Landauer anticipated history by deciding to go to Munich and participate in the revolution. For Susman, this anticipation came out of Landauer's overflowing heart. By this metaphor, Susman meant Landauer's individual prophetic knowledge of truth before and during the war, and his irresistible desire after the catastrophe to share and accomplish it. Yet, if we read Landauer's letter to Susman, dated November 14, 1918, it seems that Landauer thought that the revolutionary moment had arrived.

67 Buber, "Landauer und die Revolution," in *Masken*, 288.
68 M. Susman, "Gustav Landauer," in *Masken*, 291–299, at 292.
69 Ibid., 291.
70 Ibid., 294.

> No, I will be much more in the right place in Munich, to which I am traveling today. The difficult and even dark situation requires that I do not postpone any longer, but lead the way. For me what is intimidating is the fact that this dead body, the parties, and the press, raise again its head with great insolence. This is what is concealed behind the great term "National Assembly." If it were to succeed now, if one were to expect from it the solution, then everything would be lost. We would just figure as a ridiculous and pathetic imitation of the so-called French "Republic."[71]

Landauer did not go to Munich only out of love, but also out of a clear political understanding of a decisive choice. Should he wait for the National Assembly, the parties, and the free press to accomplish the content of his expected revolution and new society? Or should he privilege revolutionary action in order to prevent the constitution of a new parliamentary and bourgeois republic? According to the *Nein* which opens the letter, Landauer rejected Susman's suggestion to wait and see whether the new parliamentary regime could at least supply better conditions for his enterprise. That same day, November 14, 1918, Eisner had written to Landauer and asked him to "come to Munich as soon as your health allows it."[72] For Landauer, there was no real hesitation between the call of Eisner and the prudence of Susman. Landauer could not support the vague illusions of parliamentarism; during the war, he had translated an anthology of letters from the period of the French Revolution from French into German. This work of translation, completed in the middle of the great war between the Reich and the French Republic, had helped him deepen his criticism of party politics and parliamentarism. For him, parties could never be endowed with the total spirit of revolution, but only with a partial vision, which, defined the flaw of modernity. In contrast, Landauer developed his idea of the "representatives of the revolution" in the introduction to *Die Französische Revolution in Briefen*:

> I designate as the representatives of the revolution the best, the mid-level, and the ordinary persons in whom the spirit and the mood of revolution is active in some measure. Where the revolution happens and enters the mind, no one, man or woman, is insignificant, so long as the revolution is alive, is warming the hearts and exciting the spirits.[73]

71 Buber, *Gustav Landauer: Briefen*, 2:296.

72 Ibid., 2:296 n. 1.

73 *Revolutionsbriefe*, ed. Gustav Landauer (Frankfurt am Main: Rütten & Loening, 1919), xviii.

No political parties are needed, when the spirit of the revolution coordinates a common and general action in the different *Reprasentatives*.

2.3.2 The "Feminine" Feature of Landauer

In her eulogy, Susman underlines a feature of Landauer's vision of revolution in which love, sympathy, fullness, and other "feminine" traits come to the fore. Susman builds a tragic narrative of deceived love and hate received in return. In the eyes of the female friend, Landauer reached a level of intense sympathy with modern misery, understood as a complete and new exclusion from every material, moral, aesthetical, and spiritual value. Landauer faced the extreme isolation of mankind with his immense love of humanity and his capacity to restore harmony. Susman presents Landauer as the only revolutionary figure capable of opening men's hearts to their concealed fertility and to their inner wealth.

> This misery, this absolute hopelessness, this extreme closure of life by thousands of unnecessary fences and false bonds, this made Landauer suffer most intimately. He wanted to liberate humanity from this man-made misery. He desired to open up their lives for all kinds of goodness and values with the radiant key of his love and spirit. He wanted to bring them to the secret room of their heart, where gold and gems are plenty and so abysmally enclosed. He possessed the magic lantern, the magic word, the key, and all the symbols which characterize the dreamer's rich soul of the fairy tales. Indeed, he was a dreamer, yet a dreamer in the highest sense which only few understand: a man capable of dreaming a world, not the trivial world perceived by him and by all men, but a world toward which he was working.[74]

2.3.3 Revolution Must Delight

The happiness of the first shared experience of human love characterized for Susman the singularity of Landauer's concept of revolution. This unique moment of happiness opened a passage between a harsh world of hopelessness and a dream of fullness. The revolutionary moment is both a liberation from the past and a taste of the future merging in happiness.

> For him, revolution was not only penitence and sacrifice. For him, it was first of all—and here we touch at the deepest roots of Landauer's thought—happiness: the happiness of making oneself free to humanity,

74 Susman, "Gustav Landauer," 295–296.

> a liberation from the pressure of centuries of rape, and of an unjust, brutal, and colorless life. But obviously, only someone who felt this pressure, who suffered from it, could enjoy this liberation.[75]

While unfolding this idea of happiness, Margarete Susman probably had in mind a letter dated January 13, 1919, in which Landauer wrote to her:

> Revolution must delight in every respect; it must be for human beings a reality, a presence and a redemption. The revolution in our land was great and real for a few hours or days, because it brought liberation, incarnated happiness (*Glück*) and redemption for the soldiers. In the moment in which it no longer knew its way further, and stopped to give to others, i.e., to everyone, something real, a work to accomplish and a way for salvation—then began the break, the suspension in which we are.[76]

The word *Glück*, echoing the aforementioned theme of *Freude*, points at an experience of an inner transformation of body and soul, feeling for the first time their free agency in a moment—and only a moment—of ontological and aesthetical conversion. Landauer describes this moment, probably in November–December 1918, with a kind of nostalgia, needing now to face the dilemma of how to maintain and develop this newly discovered freedom: "Spartakus und Kompromis?"[77] Landauer rejected both Eisner's turn toward representative democracy and the Spartacist terror. For him, the soldiers' newly discovered freedom must not be turned toward state politics, but rather toward a "new economy" relying on the autonomous-interrelated development of communities.

2.3.4 How Many People in the Whole World Can Dream the Same Dream of Happiness?

Now that the revolutionary moment had turned into a failed political attempt, Landauer, according to Susman, had to face masses who did not understand his efforts and rewarded him with hate. In order to show the tension between the pure revolutionary and the people, Susman emphasizes the loneliness of Landauer and his desperate attempt to redeem the world. In a letter to Hermann Croissant dated January 3, 1919, Landauer depicts himself as a

75 Ibid., 295.
76 Buber, *Gustav Landauer: Briefen*, 2:359.
77 Ibid.

"preacher in the desert."[78] The suggestive image of the desert and the prophet is the background of Susman's eulogy of her friend:

> What he calls socialism is something else. If one would dare to summarize his concept of socialism in one short sentence, it would be men's will for salvation, purification, and liberation, which rises from the deep sorrow of one's loving spirit for contemporary human beings and their self-made hell. Landauer wanted to purify and liberate people from all their material and ideological prejudices and bounds, which blocked their way to salvation, to the intensified life of the soul, the spirit, and the heart.
>
> [...] But let's face it: how many people in the whole world can dream the same dream of happiness? And yet the future of Germany depends on this dream, being dreamt collectively by German youth [...].[79]

Susman emphasizes a regressive understanding of socialism as a liberation from former social and intellectual forms of submission and a common psychological return to the feminine creativity of humans. The dream, or rather the common dream, defines this liminal zone in which the revolutionary transformation of men and women takes place: "How many people in the whole world can dream the same dream of happiness?"[80] The solitude of the poet and the dreamer reveals the frailty of Landauer's psychological understanding of revolution. The hatred of the people, the harshness of men and women, is grounded in the difficulty, and maybe impossibility, of extending the dream of the poet to the whole society, and thus abolishing the difference between reality and dream. Landauer's career is understood in poetic terms by Susman as the tragic fate of the modern dreamer. Yet, this literary rendering of the hate responsible for Landauer's end and death appears soft and even soothing vis-à-vis the "pogrom atmosphere" triggered by "the Jewish Revolution in Munich" and its role in the later rise of National Socialism and Hitler to power.[81]

2.4 *Fritz Mauthner: The Perplexing Last Months of Landauer in Munich*

2.4.1 An Eternal Adolescent

Mauthner's eulogy differs greatly in tone and content from the ones of Buber and Susman. In light ironical manner, Mauthner labeled his friend *ein Apostel*

78 Ibid., 2:347.

79 Susman, "Gustav Landauer," 297–298.

80 Ibid., 298.

81 We borrow the expression "pogrom atmosphere" (*Pogromstimmung*) from Brenner's book. See Michael Brenner, *Der lange Schatten der Revolution: Juden und Antisemiten in Hitlers München* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, 2019), 119–180.

of a new faith: "Human beings are noble creatures. They will learn to master themselves without the use of violence and will create a paradise on earth."[82] Mauthner reminds himself and his readers of an encounter at his home with Landauer, at the end of World War I, just before the revolution.

> He came back to me last autumn, just before the revolution, in fervent expectation of the world revolution, which he had helped to prepare. He had lived, suffered, and dreamt thirty years for the theory of this revolution, an eternal adolescent. Once again, we disagreed about the right moment for the political overthrow. My claim was: first peace, then social revolution. He saw salvation in immediate uprising. We clashed as steel on stone. He was a fighter; I am an apolitical observer.[83]

Sharing Buber's and Susman's views about Landauer's erroneous political and historical appreciation of the immediate postwar situation, Mauthner diverged from them concerning Landauer's political nature. For him, his friend was not an *Anti-Politiker*, but an eternal young man searching for political action. He did not want to end the war in a political arrangement, but to pursue it in an immediate revolution. This desire for revolution was blinding him. In sharp contrast, Mauthner praises himself as being liberated from this dangerous inclination and, therefore, as being endowed with a clear vision of reality.

2.4.2 The Betrayal of the "Religion of Non-Violence"

> [Even during the revolution] he was always the same kind and superb man. He was not even aware of the fact that he was becoming unfaithful to his religion of nonviolence (which he conceived throughout thirty years as "anarchy"). Nonetheless, in the time of the Soviet Republic, he was the only moral conscience of the last Munich government, trying openly to push the government in the direction of his anarchism, and opposing violence.[84]

Taken by the political dimension and the necessity to implement a new social order, Landauer ended his career in a contradiction between his earlier commitment to nonviolent anarchism and his revolutionary action. Mauthner, the cold and distant observer of historical realities, insists on the

82 Fritz Mauthner, "Zum Gedächtnis," in *Masken*, 300–304, at 300.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., 301.

logical contradiction of his friend, professing nonviolence and acting differently. But could Landauer have avoided this unfaithfulness? His participation in the Munich Revolution transformed him from an *Apostel* to the last and feeble voice of conscience in a violent process. "My wrath about the way of the world is even more penetrating than the sorrow about the loss of a friend."[85] For Mauthner, the death of Landauer becomes the ultimate proof of the tragic inaccessibility of the world and a terrible justification for his own retreat and silence.[86]

2.4.3 Becoming a Philistine of Radicalism?

If Landauer rejected the terroristic method of revolution in his public writings, in his letters written during the *Räterrepublik* it is hard to find any hint against the violence of those days: "As I supported this horrible war only in the hope of what is happening now, so now I'm not worried anymore, I feel free and say to myself again and again: revolution!"[87]

In contrast, in his preface to the second edition of the *Aufruf* written on January 3, 1919, Landauer wrote:

> But the terrible danger is when routine and imitation take hold of the revolutionaries and turn them into philistines of radicalism, of loud words, and violent actions. The terrible danger is that they don't know and don't want to know: the transformation of society can happen only in love, work, and silence.[88]

Landauer formulates a bold observation and prophecy. The political nature of revolution produces a group of people, "the philistines of radicalism," who develop a rhetoric of mobilization and violent action against people and things. This appropriation, professionalization, and technologization of the revolutionary process impedes the real transformation of social life and replaces it with a surrogate and a violation of a natural conversion process. Landauer writes these lines of criticism while he belongs to the government of the Munich Soviets. He dissociates himself from the main positions of the leaders of the *Räterepublik*: parliamentary regime or Bolshevism. His position

85 Ibid.

86 Mauthner decided to spend the last years of his life completely isolated in a glass house on Lake Constance. His work and his life culminated with a mystical apology of silence in accord with his godless mysticism (*gottlose Mystik*) that transcends the limits of language.

87 Gustav Landauer and Fritz Mauthner, *Briefwechsel 1890–1919*, ed. Hanna Delf and Julius H. Schoeps (Munich: Beck, 1994), 352.

88 Landauer, *For Socialism*, 21. We modified the translation.

is not political, but social; it resonates as the last echo of nineteenth-century socialism.

2.4.4 The Impossible *Geistespolitik*

A few months later, during the desperate situation of Munich's third *Räterepublik*, Landauer, as *Volksbeauftragter für Volksaufklärung* (delegate for the education of the people), wrote a passionate letter to his former collaborators in the Ministry of Education, explaining to them his new vision as a provisory minister.

> We understand under the Soviet Republic nothing more than the living spirit driving toward its realization and accomplishing itself by any possible means. If we are not disturbed in our mission, it does not imply violence. The only implied violence is the violence of the spirit, from brain and heart to our hands, and from our hands to external institutions.[89]

The expression "violence of the spirit" encapsulates Landauer's ambiguous relationship with the modern necessities of revolution. Landauer yearns for a natural process, leading from mind to hands and from hearts to institutions, that are embedded in social behavior. This should be the revolution, "if we are not disturbed in our mission." Yet, the role of Landauer himself in the three successive *Räterepublik* was to face the constantly changing situation and to win over his adversaries (from within and from without). Searching for a spontaneous regeneration of society through love and culture, Landauer became more and more involved in real revolutionary politics and was obliged to suspend and postpone his vision, always "disturbed" in his mission.

2.4.5 The Missing Father

Just after blaming his deceased friend for the betrayal of his own new religion of nonviolence, Mauthner points to the suffering and distress of Landauer's three daughters, Charlotte, Gudula, and Brigitte:

> Yet life and death are more serious than the vanities of writers. And the young children of Gustav Landauer, who found refuge next to my place, ask and demand with their frightened and incredulous eyes for something other than a "literary portrait," ready to be printed, of their father, who has departed from an evil world.[90]

89 Linse, *Gustav Landauer und die Revolutionszeit*, 232.

90 Mauthner, "Zum Gedächtnis," 301.

Mauthner feels and shows the void left by Landauer as a father to his daughters. Revolution and counterrevolution have taken the paternal figure from these young girls. Yet for Mauthner, Landauer was "one of the purest victims of the war,"[91] not of revolution. Revolution was but an illusion, a last convulsion of a decaying Reich. In these terrible days, after which his wife had died, Landauer left home and met his own death without leaving an explanation, an orientation for his daughters. Shaken by the death of his friend, Mauthner could not fill the void with the necessary words and speeches. Therefore, he makes a public promise: "to try and write a book later, which should build his image upon memories and impressions, an image drawn with extreme fidelity, as he would have demanded, with tough love, with no embellishment."[92] Mauthner never wrote this uncompromised portrait of his friend Landauer, with his many contradictory facets.

2.4.6 A Moment of Madness

In most of his last letters to his daughters, Landauer tries to comfort and reassure them about his safety, while often stressing that the situation is serious. He is constantly anxious about the very negative image of himself diffused in the German press. He often asks his children not to read newspapers. Yet the last two telegrams and letters point to a moment of distress in which Landauer suddenly felt the urgent need to have his children with him, in Munich!

> Pack all your stuff. I want you here with me. Also Helma.[93] Willy[94] will bring you. Notification of departure needed. Papa.[95]

Was it rational for Landauer to urgently bring his daughters to Munich during the collapse of the third *Räterepublik*? Was it an expression of his distress, of his growing detachment from the revolutionary government, of his loneliness? On the following day, in the house of Eisner, who had been assassinated a few months earlier, Landauer understood that his request was folly. He wrote an unfinished last letter to his beloved daughters.

91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., 302.
93 Eisner's daughter.
94 Eisner's military escort.
95 Buber, *Gustav Landauer: Briefen*, 2:419.

> I thought to bring you to Großhadern. But the question is now resolved by the fact that nobody can travel to Munich. If you receive this letter, my wish is that if you feel threatened, you leave immediately, all together, and make your way to Uncle Hugo. He will welcome you warmly. As far as I am concerned, I will remain here further, although I am beginning to feel completely superfluous.[96]

This letter of retraction was never finished or sent. The daughters tried to reach Munich, but had to retreat to Hugo Landauer's house, since the road to Munich was blocked by the army.[97] In this letter he never sent, Landauer stopped pretending that things were going well. He even dared to reveal to his daughters that he felt unnecessary, useless, and maybe alone in Munich. Yet this feeling of a lack of meaning and influence did not lead him to the decision to join his daughters.

2.4.7 Remaining in Munich by All Means

Landauer's decision to remain in Munich seems even more puzzling, considering the fact that he had no official position anymore, nor political allies in the new communist government. In his last letter to the *Aktionsausschuss*, he writes:

> Until today you have not considered my recommendations. In the meantime, I have seen you at work. I have become familiar with your political agitation and your way of leading the struggle. In contrast to what you call the *pseudo-Räterepublik*, I have seen what your real action looks like. I understand the struggle differently from you, as creating the conditions in which each man can partake in the goods of earth and culture […]
>
> This message will remain strictly private between us. It is far from my intention to disturb, even slightly, the difficult work of defense you are conducting. Yet I am complaining most painfully that all this, which is now conducted [by the communist government], is only to a minimal extent my work, a work which was guided by human warmth, by impetus, culture, and renaissance.[98]

96 Letter to the daughters, April 16, 1919, in ibid., 2:419–420.
97 See ibid., 2:421.
98 Ibid., 2:420.

Mauthner accused his friend of being "unaware of the fact that he was becoming unfaithful to his religion of nonviolence."[99] However, this poignant message proves the contrary. In the third and last phase of the *Räterepublik*, in April and the beginning of May 1919,[100] Landauer knew that the revolution that was underway only had to do with "the difficult work of defense," with violent means and expediency. In a short message sent a few days earlier to the communist Action Committee, Landauer lauded "the energetic intervention of the Munich proletariat which saved the *Räterepublik* from the naughty coup attempt of the counterrevolutionaries." Following these words of praise, he added: "I put my strength at the disposition of the Action Committee, wherever one would need it."[101] The last weeks of the *Räterepublik* were to reveal to Landauer that this revolution was not the accomplishment of his work, nor a step toward a general participation in earthly and spiritual goods, but a failed political strategy for securing power and establishing the Bolshevik Soviet Republic envisioned by Eugene Leviné, the last leader of the *Räterepublik*.[102] Finally, Landauer retracted his responsibility, but only in a private mode, leaving in the wake of his death an ambiguous message of support and disillusionment.

2.5 *Julius Bab: Gustav Landauer, a Modern Brutus*

2.5.1 Marriage and Family in Revolution

A few weeks after Landauer's assassination, Julius Bab (1880–1955) gave a long eulogy for Landauer at the Berlin Frei Volksbühne, a theater and a *Volks-Kunstbewegung* (popular and artistic movement) for which the German Jewish anarchist worked ten years.

Having exposed the central anarchical ideas of his friend—*the liberation of the I* and *the new bound of the I*—Bab insists that Landauer was not only a dreamer, *ein Schwärmer*, but that "he had clear and definite ideas about the ways in which the primal forces of the soul affect reality as well as the domain in which they should operate."[103] At the moment when Bab seems to turn his attention toward Landauer as a man of action and politician, he suddenly makes a painful association.

99 Mauthner, "Zum Gedächtnis," 301.

100 For a description of the major events of this month, see Linse, *Gustav Landauer*, 216–218.

101 Ibid., 233.

102 For a brief portrait of Leviné, see Michael Brenner, *Der lange Schatten der Revolution*, 105–112.

103 Julius Bab, *Gedächtnisrede, gehalten in der Volksbühne zu Berlin am 25. Mai 1919* (Berlin: Cassirer, 1919), 15.

> And at this point, please allow one word, in this very moment of solemner remembrance and sorrow, one word, a unique word of anger! Yet it must be mentioned once—the indignation, the furor and the disgust which filled all who knew Landauer, even those who had only a slight idea of his nature, when, from the obscure foam of our newspapers, emerged the most absurd and shameful lie: Gustav had recommended in Munich the "communalization of women." Never was print more desecrated than by these lines![104]

Julius Bab evokes here one of the greatest fears of Landauer, expressed in many of his letters: the defamation, the desecration of his social, intellectual, and political reputation in and by German newspapers. Landauer was constantly reminding his daughters not to read the newspapers. Bab wants to protect his friend at the very moment in which he begins to deal with the difficult and dark problem of the implementation of Landauer's ideas. Reminding his audience of an accusation grounded on the old "platonic" topos of the communalization of women, Bab approaches the question of violence for the first time in his speech. For the German press, this violence was epitomized by the destruction of the traditional patriarchal order based on the family. Bab's intent was to deal with this difficult question, but it was important for him to dissociate his criticism of violence from the insanities of the German press. Bab insists on Landauer's praise of marriage. Furthermore, he stresses that "only the firm bond between man and woman in marriage can achieve a complete individual."[105] In opposition to the communists and to certain anarchist trends, Landauer did not want to rationalize family life, but he was interested in bringing modern state societies back to smaller social units centered around the family.[106]

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104 Ibid.

105 Ibid., 16.

106 Throughout his life, Landauer harshly criticized the idea of bohemian free love practiced by his closest friends, including Erich Mühsam and Franziska zu Reventlow. In his letters he strenuously defended the traditional institutions of marriage and family, which were—according to him—the smaller-scale model for a future community. Despite his conservative stance, Landauer married twice and, in the summer of 1908, during his second marriage, fell in love with Margarete Faas-Hardegger, the leading figure of the Swiss women workers' movement. Their affair ended because Landauer severely criticized her for political "pornocracy" and her "gypsy" attitude to morality. See the letter from April 1, 1909, in Buber, *Gustav Landauer: Briefen*, 1:246–250, at 250. On Landauer's idea of family and protest against bohemian sexual attitudes, see the works of Ulrich Linse, "Sexual Revolution and Anarchism," in *Max Weber and the Culture of Anarchy*, ed. Sam Whimster (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1999), 129–143; idem, "Die Freivermählten: Zur

2.5.2 Pure Spirit Breaks into Violence

Having redeemed his friend from the infamy of the destruction of the family, Bab discloses his criticism vis-à-vis the last phase of Landauer's life.

> In these "great fundamental measures of expropriation at the time of transition [from capitalism to new independent communities]," here lies the unresolved problem of Landauer's doctrine, here begins the moment in which pure spirit breaks into violence. This was the commencement of Gustav Landauer's tragic end.[107]

Bab reveals here a dangerous tendency in Landauer's political conception of the revolutionary transition from modern and bureaucratic states to anarchical communities. Implementation passes here through the violent moment of expropriation, in which new communitarian entities are created from the loot of former great landlords and properties. Landauer had a new middle age of communities in mind and was distanced from the danger of a collective appropriation accomplished by the new communist state. Yet, in Munich, Landauer shared this view of expropriation as a central means for revolutionary politics with socialists and communists. For Bab, this seemingly limited collaboration with the communists became a rapid source of confusion and, eventually, the beginning of Landauer's tragic end.

2.5.3 The Death of Hedwig Lachmann and the Loss of a Sense of Measure

The last part of Bab's eulogy is an attempt to understand Landauer's compromise with violence during the Munich Revolution. Bab invokes the loss of Landauer's second wife as a possible explanation for his choices.

> He had already been living with his children for a long time in the hometown of his wife, in Bavarian Swabia. He went to Munich to act for the revolution together with Kurt Eisner, whom he admired and in whose creative power he believed. Eisner fell, victim of a political assassination. Landauer lost his best companion. On February 26, 1919, he delivered a funeral eulogy filled with ardent anger and love. He had already lost his

literarischen Diskussion über nichteheliche Lebensgemeinschaften um 1900," in *Liebe, Lust und Leid: Zur Gefühlskultur um 1900,* ed. Helmut Scheuer and Michael Grisko (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 1999), 57–95; Theodor Pinkus, ed., *Briefe nach der Schweiz: Gustav Landauer, Erich Mühsam, Max Hoelz, Peter Kropotkin* (Zurich: Limmat, 1972).

107 Ibid., 17.

> wife a year prior. She was perhaps the only human being capable of injecting measure into his hot blood.[108]

As Bab recounts, Landauer's association with Eisner during the first months of the Munich Revolution was preceded by the death of his beloved wife, Hedwig Lachmann. Landauer's family had lost its feminine cornerstone before he decided to leave his home and partially his daughters in order to participate in the revolution. Bab thought that Hedwig could have restored a sense of measure and equilibrium in her husband. Lacking this necessary feminine influence, "the seduction of action was irresistible. Such was the desire to accomplish the dream, the utopia in this immature world, when the dawn of revolution broke."[109] Bab delves even further into the psychological explanation of Landauer's passionate departure for Munich. He sees it as a moment in which Landauer lost control of his passions, of "his rancor and anger," and betrayed his very ideas. Guided by the irrepressible delusion of realization, he lost the sense of his ideas and of reality. For Bab, this would not have been possible had Hedwig still been alive.

2.5.4 The Abandonment of Revolution

Bab's eulogy ends with an abandonment of violent revolution in favor of a pure spiritual renewal of men. This retreat from virile impetus to a feminine measuredness was, according to Bab, a historical need in Germany at that time. It was also meant to be a moderate solution combining cultural critique of the status quo with political realism.

> We must return to this path of pure spiritual renewal, from which Landauer departed only partially at the end, and which was the path of his entire life. We can yearn for a pure society only after the inner transformation of men. We cannot produce it with any violent means. We can only build a temporary construction with the imperfect men of today, still deeply imprisoned in their selfishness. This temporary construction can only be a precarious practical balance of human egoism, in search of minimal resistance, and minimal use of violence and bloodshed. Beyond this necessity, however, human aspirations for renewal progressively transform the present toward Gustav Landauer's goal.[110]

108 Ibid., 26.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid., 27.

Was Bab adopting here the moderating action he expected from Hedwig? In any case, Bab's finale contains at least two betrayals. The first was by Landauer, who betrayed his spiritual idea of revolution, driven by the "seduction of the action." The second is Bab's own betrayal of his friend, since he uses Landauer's idea of community in order to justify the political situation, namely the newly born Weimar Republic. Bab concludes with the hope for a progressive transformation of Germany which will happen by itself. The subsequent history of the Weimar Republic did not confirm Bab's hopes.

2.5.5 A Modern Brutus

In the last pages of his speech, Bab draws a poetic parallel between the death of his friend and Shakespeare's Brutus.[111]

> Brutus did not fall as a victor. He fell for a cause which could not triumph, since it was not even good or wise to try and bring freedom to a people that was not prepared for it. And yet these verses strongly resonate from his fallen body:
>
> This was the noblest Roman of them all.
> All the conspirators save only he
> Did that they did in envy of great Caesar.
> He only in a general honest thought
> And common good to all, made one of them.
> His life was gentle, and the elements
> So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, "This was a man."[112]

At the end of this passage Bab quotes the verses in which Mark Antony eulogized Brutus after his death, not as a winner, but as a man. Landauer as a modern Brutus devoted his life to the highest liberation, even if its translation to reality was necessarily doomed to defeat and brought him to form the wrong alliances. Brutus and Landauer embody the impossible realization of the dream of freedom that is the tragedy of politics itself. However, it is exactly

111 It is not by chance that Bab cited *Julius Caesar*. Bab had at least two reasons: first, Landauer's translation of Shakespeare was his last work, which was first published in 1920 under Buber's editorship; second, Landauer's reputed last words to his murderers were, "Erschlagt mich doch! Dass ihr Menschen seid!" (Beat me, then, to prove that you are humans!). See the letter of Ernst Toller to Maximilian Harden in Linse, *Gustav Landauer*, 254.

112 Bab, *Gedächtnisrede*, 29.

their tragic commitment to realization and, thence, their failure that make them extraordinary sons of human nature.

In his essay on Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*, published by Buber in 1920, Landauer comments on Schlegel's translation of the verse "His life was gentle,"[113] with which Bab concludes his eulogy. Landauer remarks that "gentle" means both *sanft* (mild) and *adlig* (noble). "Gentle" indicates for Landauer a unity of moral and natural qualities: "Noble and mild was Brutus, and yet he was a power of nature, a man and a hero."[114] If the end of Landauer's life seemed brutal and cruel, the words of Bab and Shakespeare tried to give back a sense of completeness: nature and civility, virile impetuousness and feminine gentleness.

3 Part III: The Redemption of Landauer as a New Jesus and a New Jewish Prophet

The image of Landauer as a crucified Jesus appears in the eulogies of Buber, Susman, Mauthner, and Bab. It can be considered an ambiguous poetical effort both to acknowledge Landauer's death and failure while at the same time redeeming it as a sacrifice of the spirit in chaotic and passionate times.

Toward the end of Buber's eulogy, one finds a political interpretation of Landauer's death:

> The two forces against which he consecrated the struggle of his life—the state and the party—joined together to crush the last confused flickering of revolution. Their alliance succeeded, and it could not have happened in any other way. Their victory implied, as such victories always do, the murder of Gustav Landauer. He died upright, as he had lived.[115]

After this political narrative of the end, Buber proposes another story or vision. He presents Landauer as the "wahrhaft Deutscher und wahrhaft Jude" (authentic German and authentic Jew).[116] His perfect Germanness is explained through a quotation from an October 1918 letter to Paula Buber. In this letter, Landauer expressed, somewhat ironically, his perception of the end of the

113 Gustav Landauer, *Shakespeare*, ed. Martin Buber (Hamburg: Rütten & Loening, 1962), 113.
114 Ibid., 112.
115 Buber, *Landauer und die Revolution*, 290.
116 Ibid.

Reich: "May the crown of thorns which our Reich has rightly earned bring us and humanity a celestial blessing!"[117]

Buber illustrates Landauer's Jewishness with the idea that he completely embodied the spirit of Judaism and its history.

> After many speeches and conversations, I can testify to his position vis-à-vis his Judaism. He knew the infirmity of his race, and desired a cure for it. He felt the archaic Jewish spirit, which drives toward action and realization, deeply alive and present in himself. He felt bound to his ancestors, the Jewish prophets and martyrs.[118]

Buber sees himself as the best person to testify to Landauer's Judaism, since it was at the heart of their intense dialogue and relationship over twenty years. For Buber, Landauer was endowed with the essence of Judaism, the impetus toward creation and realization, but also with a deep attachment to Jewish history, especially to prophecy and martyrdom. For Buber, Landauer unified the prophet and the martyr of "the human community yet to come" (*der kommenden Menschengemeinschaft*) in his life and work.[119] The tension between the prophet and the martyr, which sheds a new light on the death of Landauer, is at the heart of Buber's final ambiguous vision of the Christ. The concluding sentence of his eulogy reads:

> I saw in a church in Brescia a wall painting, its surface covered with crucified men. The field of crosses reached across the horizon, and from each cross hung men of different stature and faces. There I became penetrated by the vision that this is the true figure of Jesus Christ. On one of these crosses, I saw Gustav Landauer hanging.[120]

Buber recalls here a former vision he had in the Church of San Giovanni in Brescia.[121] There he could see in the aisle a mural of the ten thousand martyrs of Mount Ararat. There are two versions of this legend. The first refers to a group of martyrs killed during the Diocletian persecution in 303 CE; the

117 Ibid. For the letter, see Buber, *Gustav Landauer: Briefen*, 2:267.

118 Buber, "Landauer und die Revolution," 290–291.

119 Ibid., 291.

120 Ibid.

121 The name of this painting is *The Ten Thousand Crucified of Mount Ararat*, probably painted by Angelo Esseradts (Italianized form: Everardi) in 1647/1678. See L. Salvetti, *Guida alla Chiesa di San Giovanni in Brescia* (Brescia: Grafo, 1976). See also Brody, *Martin Buber's Theopolitics*, 47.

second refers to a military campaign led by the Roman emperors Hadrian and Antoninus Pius against the Gadarenes and the people of the Euphrates region. According to the legend, the ten thousand martyrs of Mount Ararat were Roman soldiers who, led by Saint Acacius, converted to Christianity and were crucified on Mount Ararat in Armenia by order of the Roman emperor. This legend articulates a complex relationship between the Roman Empire and a rebellion of soldiers who converted to Christianity. In the late medieval and early modern period, this legend became the topic of several religious paintings. One of these paintings was credited with having miraculously stopped an epidemic of cholera in Venice in 1511. This miracle was probably the reason why the Church of San Giovanni in Brescia also commissioned a picture of the ten thousand crucified on Mount Ararat (Fig. 3).

Buber saw in the Brescian mural a mount covered with crucified men reaching the sky. This perspective covered with crosses and with martyrs is also represented in the lithograph on the second page of *Masken* (Fig. 1). There, one sees an endless forest of crucified men under a gray sky. If in the Brescian mural the mount of the crucified is topped by a depiction of a divine assembly above the clouds, watching over the martyrs and representing their future redemption and beatitude, the *Masken* lithograph does not feature a divine response, but a response from below, from the men represented by the raised fists, rebelling against the sacrifices of the past. The lithograph of *Masken* was probably influenced by a more recent painting, well-known to Buber: *The Wandering Jew* (1899), painted by Samuel Hirszenberg (Fig. 4).

In this image, which quickly became a Zionist icon, the perspective of crosses visualizes Jewish history in Christian Europe as a *via cruciorum*. For Buber, this field of crucified men was not only a representation of Jewish history, but also of human history, and maybe of the Munich Revolution, as well as "the true figure of Jesus Christ."[122] Buber transforms this perspective of crosses, this history of martyrdom, Jewish and Christian, into a vision of a new *ecclesia*, a new Corpus Christi, a new community of the suffering humanity. Violence, defeats, and injustice are redeemed in Buber's epiphany, which unifies them into a divine vision.

In the concluding sentence of the eulogy, Buber seems to introduce his own new religious vision. He does not see the mount of the crucified from afar, as in Brescia. He is at the foot of one of the crosses. He does not see the entire history of martyrdom, the new *ecclesia*, but he is at its most intense center, at the foot of the cross of Gustav Landauer. He sees the new Jesus, a Jewish prophet

122 Ibid.

FIGURE 3 Angelo Everardi(?), *I diecimila Crocifissi del Monte Ararat* (1647/1678), Chiesa di San Giovanni in Brescia. Photo: Don Mauro Cinquetti. Reproduced with permission.

and martyr of the community yet to come. This image of Landauer at the very heart of human history, and at the articulation of martyrdom and the coming salvation, redeems him from all his sins and protects him from all possible attacks by opponents.

Yet this successful salvation of Landauer's role in human history is also the image that was missing from his actions, according to Buber. It is an icon of a martyrdom that should not be repeated but rather assumed by the new Jewish

FIGURE 4 Shmuel Hirszenberg, Poland, 1865–1908, *The Wandering Jew,* 1899. Oil on canvas. Photo© The Israel Museum, Jerusalem by Elie Posner.

apostles of the coming community for its spiritual implications.[123] The funeral eulogy for the difficult friend and leader thus became a farewell to revolution.

123 After his death, Landauer was almost forgotten by socialists and anarchists in Europe. His second life, as philosopher and as anarchist, was created by Jewish and Zionist movements. The fundamental contribution toward Landauer's "passage to the east", so to speak, was given by Martin Buber. Landauer's legacy, immediately after his death, is noticeable in the kibbutz movement; in fact, already in the 1920s, a special issue of *Die Arbeit*, the socialist Zionist Hapoel Hatzair journal, was dedicated to the memory of Gustav Landauer. The preface stated: "Gustav Landauer was an awakener for us; he has transformed our lives, and he has given our Zionism, which he never mentioned by name, a new meaning, a new intensity, a new direction." See Martin Buber, "Der heimliche Führer," in *Gustav Landauer Gedenkheft*, in *Die Arbeit* (1920), 35.