

## THE SKEPSIS AND ANTIPOLITICS OF GUSTAV LANDAUER

International conference for the 100th  
anniversary of Gustav Landauer's death

25-26.11.2019  
University of Haifa

**Venue: Ofer Observatory (30<sup>th</sup> Floor)**

**Monday, 25.11.2019**

- 09:30 – 10:00**                    **Gathering and Greetings**
- Chair Dr. Natasha Gordinsky (Department of Hebrew and Comparative Literature, University of Haifa)*
- 10:00 – 10:40**                    **Hanna Delf von Wolzogen (Universities of Duisburg, Potsdam and FU Berlin):** „Rufer in der Wüste“ – Some Remarks on Gustav Landauers sceptic Theory of Revolution
- 10:40 – 11:20**                    **Agata Bielik-Robson (University of Nottingham):** Gustav Landauer and the Mysticism of Revolution.
- 11:20 – 12:00**                    **Cedric Cohen Skalli (University of Haifa):** Landauer’s Antipolitical Nostalgia: Revolution, Economy, and Medieval Christian Spirit
- 12:00 – 13:30**                    **Lunch Break**
- Chair: Dr. Annabel Herzog (School of Political Science, University of Haifa)*
- 13:30 – 14:10**                    **Yaniv Feller (Wesleyan University):** Romantic Politics in the Thought of Gustav Landauer and Leo Baeck
- 14:10 – 14:50**                    **Zeev Harvey (Hebrew University of Jerusalem):** Landauer, Strindberg, and the Promise to Abraham
- 14:50 – 15:30**                    **Lilian Tuerk (Hamburg University):** Skepsis and the Truth of Antipolitics in Yiddish Anarchist Thought
- 15:30 – 16:00**                    **Coffee Break**
- Dr. Balazs Berkovits (Bucerius Institute, University of Haifa)*
- 16:00 – 16:40**                    **Asher Biemann (University of Virginia):** “Jede Zeit ist inmitten der Ewigkeit” —Gustav Landauer’s Mystical Historicism“
- 16:40 – 17:10**                    **Abraham Rubin (Hebrew University of Jerusalem):** “The Anachronism of Anarchism: Margarete Susman on the Legacy of Landauer’s “Inevitable Failure”
- 17:10 – 17:50**                    **Yarden Ben Zur (Tel Aviv University):** Ghosts of Utopia: Gustav Landauer’s writing on Shakespeare, Goethe and Hölderlin and the dynamic of the revolution
- 17:50 – 18:30**                    **Sam Brody (University of Kansas):** Gustav Landauer Now
- 19:00 –**                            **Dinner**

Tuesday, 26.11.2019

*Chair: Dr. Orr Scharf (Cultural Studies M.A. Program, The University of Haifa)*

**09:30 – 10:10** **Elke Dubbels (University of Bonn):** Linguistic Scepticism and the Poetics of Politics in Gustav Landauer

**10:10 – 10:50** **Libera Pisano (University of Hamburg) :** The Anarchic Sprachkritik of Gustav Landauer

**11:00 – 11:20** **Coffee Break**

*Chair: Dr. Svetlana Natkovich (The Department of Jewish History, University of Haifa)*

**11:20 – 12:00** **Ulrich Sieg (Philipps University Marburg):** Rebellion and the Power of Accident. Gustav Landauer's reflections about the peculiarities of Jewish identity

**12:00 – 12:40** **Siegbert Wolf (Institute of Town History, Frankfurt am Main):** „The Real Place for Realization is the Community“ – Martin Buber's Reception of Gustav Landauer's Communitarian Anarchism

**12:40 – 13:20** **Yossef Schwartz (Tel Aviv University):** Gustav Landauer's Heretic Religiosity as a Skeptic Critique of Modern Progress

**13:30 – 15:00** **Lunch**

*Chair: Dr. Yotam Hotam (Faculty of Education, University of Haifa)*

**15:00 – 15:40** **Sebastian Musch (University of Osnabrück):** Da verstummte er, denn der Buddha sprach.“ – Gustav Landauer and Fritz Mauthner's on Language, Religion and Buddhism.

**15:40 – 16:20** **Cristina Basili (Complutense University of Madrid):** “We have to reject ourselves”: Gustav Landauer and Simone Weil's politics of the ascesis

**16:20 – 16:40** **Sebastian Kunze (University of Erfurt):** „Sind das Ketzergedanken?“ or Gustav Landauer's sceptical approach towards Martin Buber's “Three Speeches on Judaism”

**Words of Conclusion**

## ABSTRACTS & BIOS

### «We have to reject ourselves»: Gustav Landauer and Simone Weil's politics of the ascesis. (Dr. Cristina Basili)

The specific political and philosophical eclecticism of Gustav Landauer calls for a comparison with another eccentric thinker of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Simone Weil. The refusal of current political institutions and concepts is for both of them the starting point of a radical criticism against violence and the State. Landauer's *Antipolitik* echoes Weil's impolitical turn towards a mystical form of anarchism focused on the reconstruction of contemporary societies on the basis of a renewal of the pact between man and the universe. The first step of this intellectual project implies for Weil an original conception of politics, based on decreation and attention, that also claims for a new understanding of the power of language.

The aim of my paper is to point out the connections between Weil's and Landauer works focusing especially on the ideas they develop in order to rebuild a sense of community whose roots are to be found in the horizon of self-annihilation and in the ground of the past. Without ignoring the significative differences between the authors, I'd like to suggest that their hypothetical dialogue could help us contextualize their thoughts in the framework of a specific current of 20<sup>th</sup> century political philosophy. At the same time, the results of this investigation point out the role of anarchism as an ethical and theoretical disposition needed in order to rethink the way in which we enact social relations beyond the authority of the State. A moral disposition that, more than any unified theory or ideology, seems the proper form of resistance to the crisis of our times.

**Dr. Cristina Basili** is currently Juan de la Cierva Research Fellow at the Complutense University of Madrid. Previously she was DAAD post-doctoral researcher at Bonn University and adjunct lecturer at the Pompeu Fabra University of Barcelona. Her research field is the history of political thought. Particularly, she worked on the theological-political problem in 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy. Between hers interests there are also classical reception studies, gender studies and utopian studies. She is the author of various articles and essay on the thought of Simone Weil, Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss, and she is currently working on her first monography on modernity and Platonism in Leo Strauss' work.



## Ghosts of Utopia: Gustav Landauer's writing on Shakespeare, Goethe and Hölderlin and the dynamic of the revolution (Yarden Ben-Zur)

"As we have seen, each utopia contains two elements: the reaction against the topia from which it arises, and the memory of all utopias that have previously existed. Utopias might appear dead, but whenever a topia rattles their coffins, they are resurrected like Job" (Landauer, *The Revolution and other Writings – a Political Reader*, 114.)

This Quote from the essay "The Revolution" (1907) shows the view of the German-Jewish writer Gustav Landauer (1881-1919) of the revolution as a dialectical process. Landauer describes the revolution as a junction, in which the Utopia and the Topia meet. Thus, in the revolutionary moment, the political meets the esthetical. Landauer himself, who found his tragic death in the revolution in Munich in 1919, incarnated this process in his own life and death. In my research I show the dialectical relationship between Landauer's literary work, as a critic of Shakespeare, Goethe, and Hölderlin and their complicated and changing positions and acts towards the revolution. Landauer understands the revolution both as a mimetic process, in which the new topia always adsorb the former topia and the old utopias, and as a melancholic process, in which the new topia mourn about the Ruins, which it itself created.

In this lecture I'll claim that Landauer sees no definite barrier between revolution and literature. In his view, there is no hierarchy between the reality and the possibility. The relationship between those two affects one another in a dialectical way and rises the ghosts of the Utopias to hunt the World of the Topias, of reality. Landauer understands the revolution as the endless repetition of the dead-living utopias as the gentlest winds tremble their coffins, which are being also their cradles.

The same dialectical connection is to be found not just in the idea of revolution itself, but also in the life and writing of Landauer. Landauer didn't choose for no reason to use a metaphor to describe the revolutionist dynamic. His view of the Utopia as the suffering body of Job exposes his use of literary figures in his Political thinking. One cannot separate his work as thinker, writer, literary critic, and translator from his political activity without betraying her essence. Presenting the revolutionary dialectics in Landauer's thought and practice, I ask what are the borders between literature and politics, where does literature ends and revolution begins, and what are the unique characteristics of the revolutionary time.

**Yarden Ben-Zur** is a master's student in literature at Tel Aviv University, a member of the junior staff, and a research assistant and a fellow in The Minerva Institute for German History. Yarden is currently writing his M.A thesis by Prof. Galili Shahar about Gustav Landauer's writings on revolution and literature. This research was first developed while studying as an Erasmus student at LMU in 2017, and has since won the Reich-Ranicki grant for research in the field of German Literature for 2018. Yarden was also a participate researcher in the project "Traces and Treasures of German-Jewish History in Israel" under The The Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center in Jerusalem for German-Jewish Literature and cultural History. He is a poet and translator from German to Hebrew, of Schelling, George and others. Before pursuing the academic course, Yarden has worked as a journalist and as a parliamentary assistant in the Knesset – the Parliament of Israel.



## Gustav Landauer and the Mysticism of Revolution (Prof. Agata Bielik-Robson)

In my presentation, I want to focus on Landauer's mystical writings which deliver a philosophico-theological justification for his anarchist politics: mostly his own translation and selection of the writings of Meister Eckhart and his critique of Mauthner's *Sprachphilosophie*, which appeared under the title *Scepticism and Mysticism (Skepsis und Mystik. Versuche im Anschluß an Mauthners Sprachkritik)*. What interests me most is the motif of *theosis* – man becoming God – which Landauer takes from his ingenious reading of Meister Eckhart, which presents him as an “almost atheistic” thinker, where the *almost* signifies not a simple rejection of the divine element, but a different understanding of the whole Judeo-Christian theological tradition. In Landauer's interpretation, it is not a political theology of sovereignty (as it will soon be announced by Carl Schmitt), but a unique code of *Gotteswerden*, ‘becoming-God,’ which teaches human individual how to raise above her natural and social conditioning and embrace the ultimate freedom, so far attributed only to the divine absolute. According to Michael Löwy, Landauer's belief in theosis amounts to the belief in “the God whom we want to become and whom we will become in the end” – and I would like to confirm this diagnosis. Furthermore, I want to show how Gustav Landauer's daring reinterpretation of the biblical tradition in terms of anthropological mysticism influenced the next generation of German-Jewish thinkers, most of all: Gyorgy Lucacs, especially his take on Meister Eckhart's sermon on *pauperi spiritu*; Ernst Bloch and his development of the motif of theosis; and Jacob Taubes in his musings on revelation as revolution. Although overshadowed by his ephebes, Gustav Landauer emerges as their indispensable precursor: all the tropes of the progressive theopolitics ‘from below,’ which those younger thinkers will oppose to Schmitt's political theology ‘from above,’ were originally generated in Landauer's unique genre of political mysticism.

**Agata Bielik-Robson**, Agata Bielik-Robson is a Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Nottingham and a Professor of Philosophy at the Polish Academy of Sciences. She published articles in Polish, English, German, French and Russian on philosophical aspects of psychoanalysis, romantic subjectivity, and the philosophy of religion (especially Judaism and its crossings with modern philosophical thought). Her publications include books: *The Saving Lie. Harold Bloom and Deconstruction* (Northwestern University Press, May 2011), *Judaism in Contemporary Thought. Traces and Influence* (coedited with Adam Lipszyc, Routledge 2014), *Philosophical Marranos. Jewish Cryptotheologies of Late Modernity* (Routledge 2014) and *Another Finitude: Messianic Vitalism and Philosophy*, Bloomsbury, 2019.



**“Jede Zeit ist inmitten der Ewigkeit”—Gustav Landauer’s Mystical Historicism  
(Prof. Asher Biemann)**

Gustav Landauer’s famous manifesto *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* defines “our” socialism as the “creation of future things as if they had been present since eternity.” It was not radical futurity, not complete transformation and violent progress that animated Landauer’s call for a new social order, but something “mild” and “enduring,” *Sanftes und Bleibendes*, a “covenant,” as he put it, “between the striving forces of life and the eternal powers binding us to the world of being.” What Landauer’s vision of “our” socialism engendered was a view of history that consciously placed itself outside the historical (and historicist) conventions, but also outside the revolutionary pressing forward. Landauer’s concept of history, which he developed most explicitly in his 1907 text on “Revolution,” was defined by simultaneous layers (*Schichten*), bridges (*Brücken*) and interim times (*Zwischenzeiten*). But most of all, it was defined by something pointing beyond the ephemeral, a viewpoint *über die Vergänglichkeit hinaus*, that could accommodate both forgetting and preserving. History, then, had to “leave behind the entire standpoint of time” to acknowledge that all ages of the world are of the same age—*gleichaltrig*—part of the same past and always beginning anew.

Drawing on multiple texts, including *Skepsis und Mystik* and his translation of Meister Eckhart, my lecture will reconstruct Landauer’s unconventional, unsystematic view of history in light of his mystical and *critical* conception of time. What will emerge is a more “conservative” than revolutionary Landauer and a philosopher, who, like many of his contemporaries, was deeply concerned with the enduring as a critique of modernity.

**Asher D. Biemann** is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, where he teaches modern Jewish thought and intellectual history. He studied at the Universities of Graz, Vienna, and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and has taught at Harvard University, the Goethe Universität in Frankfurt, the Ludwig Maximilians Universität in Munich, and the University of Vienna. He is the author of a critical edition of Martin Buber’s *Sprachphilosophische Schriften* (2003), *The Martin Buber Reader* (2001), as well as of *Inventing New Beginnings: On the Idea of Renaissance in Modern Judaism* (2009) and *Dreaming of Michelangelo: Jewish Variations on a Modern Theme* (2012; German translation *Michelangelo und die jüdische Moderne*, 2016), both of which appeared with Stanford University Press. He is currently completing a book on *Enduring Modernity: Judaism Eternal & Ephemeral*.



## “Landauer Now” (Prof. Sam Brody)

I ask after “Landauer Now” in two senses. The first is the position of Landauer in the thought and action of the international left, two decades into the twenty-first century. The state-centered communism he so vigorously opposed, but which was still on the rise in his own time, has fallen almost everywhere. The decentralized anarcho-socialism he favored, however, has also long ceased to be a mass movement and certainly not a mass working-class movement. Nonetheless, it remains an influential strand of thought and can be seen in the horizontalism of left protest movements around the world as well as the struggles of Chiapas and Rojava. In order to assess this influence – its potential and direction – I examine the “now” of Landauer in a second sense: his resolute opposition to teleology and planning. Landauer argued, in *Revolution* and elsewhere, that there is no “after the revolution.” Against the notion of a world-transforming, apocalyptic transformation, Landauer urged us to embrace the hard truth that what we are doing now – right now – is building the world we will live into, and that what we do not do now will not happen at some unknown point in the future (e.g. “when the state will wither away”). How does this teaching face up to a moment of renewed activism among both far-right nationalists and new socialist “planners,” critical of anarchist failures to transform our societies? How does it meet the challenge of the ultimate “now,” the last moment to save the habitability of the earth for humans before irreversible climate change? One hundred years later, what can “antipolitics” offer us that politics cannot?

**Samuel Hayim Brody** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Kansas. His first monograph, *Martin Buber’s Theopolitics*, was published in 2018 by Indiana University Press and was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award. He is also editor or co-editor of two volumes of the *Martin Buber Werkausgabe* published by Gütersloher Verlagshaus: Volume 15 (*Schriften zum Messianismus*) and Volume 21 (*Schriften zur zionistischen Politik und zur jüdisch-arabischen Frage*).



**Landauer's Antipolitical Nostalgia: Revolution,  
Economy, and Medieval Christian Spirit**  
(Dr. Cedric Cohen Skalli)

In his 1907 book *Die Revolution*, Landauer characterizes modern politics as a surrogate of medieval Christian spirit. Landauer perceived and understood the Christian period, i.e. the Middle Ages, as a time of completeness and totality (*Gesamtheit*) in which independent forms of existence “were interrelated and organized without ever creating a pyramid or a comprehensive power.” Leaving behind this medieval model of “a society of societies” without a central political power, modern politics—and its accompanying modern political revolutions—engaged in a paradoxical venture: to resuscitate the former unifying spirit of societies through violence and through the establishment of a new political order, the modern state. Incapable of founding a new common spirit by political and artificial means, revolution became for Landauer, somewhat tragically, “a means in itself,” a limited moment of “revitalization of force and spirit” always followed by deception and a spiritless political order. “A common spirit can be felt during the revolution – but it does not come to life. Once the revolution is over, it is gone.” In this paper, I will study how Landauer’s complex understanding of modern politics brought him to a concept of antipolitics in which the revolutionary moment of the new constitution is directed toward a progressive dissolution of modern politics and state in favor of the development of a “Bund of economic communities... that will free the spirit imprisoned in the state.” Landauer’s revolution is thus a complex fantasy combining violent political agency, economic reorganization and religious spirit in order to abolish the political condition of modern men and women, or at least to suspend it temporarily. This discussion will shed light on an antipolitical dimension at the heart of the revolutionary drive.

**Dr. Cedric Cohen Skalli** teaches early modern and modern Jewish Philosophy at the University of Haifa. He is the newly appointed director of the *Bucerius Institute for the research of contemporary German History and Society*. His research focuses on the relationship of Jewish thinkers to two main philosophical shifts: the shift from Medieval philosophy to early modern thought (14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century), and the shift from early modern to modern thought (18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century). He published three books and many articles on diverse aspects of Jewish thought and literature in the Renaissance and several essays on German 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy. He is also translator of many works of Freud, Benjamin, Scholem, Idel and Abravanel.



„Rufer in der Wüste“ – Some Remarks on  
Gustav Landauers sceptic Theory of Revolution  
(Dr. Hanna Delf von Wolzogen)

In 1908 Landauer's essay *Die Revolution* was published in Bubers seria *Die Gesellschaft*. After *Dreißig sozialistische Thesen (Die Zukunft, 1907)* this small essay is Landauer's second major work about his view on „socialism“ and indeed it is part of his efforts to establish the Sozialistischer Bund. The essay unfolds the concept of revolution as an essential concept of European Modern Age philosophy and natural sciences – and at the same time a term of European crisis. I would like to depict Landauer's radically practical-pragmatic and sceptic approach to the tradition of thought and knowledge of the European Modern Age in some figures of thought in *Die Revolution*; for example his citing of a) Spinoza, b) Novalis' *Europa oder die Christenheit* and c) „Dichter“ as figure.

**Dr. Hanna Delf von Wolzogen** Studies in Philosophy, German literature and psychoanalysis in Giessen, Frankfurt on Main and Heidelberg. Doctorate at Freie Universität Berlin (Gert Mattenklott). 1985-1988 Joseph Buchmann Fund for Research in Jerusalem. Teaching at the Universities of Duisburg, Potsdam and FU Berlin. 1996–2016 director of the Theodor-Fontane-Archives, Potsdam.

Publications on German and German-Jewish literature and philosophy, for instance: *Gustav Landauer ! Fritz Mauthner. Briefwechsel 1890/1919* (1994); *Gustav Landauer: Dichter, Ketzer, Außenseiter. Essays und Reden zu Literatur, Philosophie, Judentum* (1997); *Theodor Fontane und Wilhelm Wolfsohn – eine interkulturelle Beziehung* (ed. together with Itta Shedletzky, Tübingen 2006; Schriftenreihe wiss. Abh. des LBI 71); *Editor of Landauers Letters 1899–1919. 6 vol. (v+r) 2020.*



## Linguistic Scepticism and the Poetics of Politics in Gustav Landauer (Dr. Elke Dubbels)

In Landauer's eyes, linguistic scepticism should open the door to a „new language“: a poetic language of „new metaphors“ which enable us to perceive our relation to the world and to each other in a new way. The talk is going to investigate in how far this poetic idea also informs Landauer's notion of politics. Here are some of the questions which are to be addressed in this context: Which poetics underlie Landauer's politics? Which poetic forms of writing and speaking does Landauer use in his political works? And, last, but not least: Does Landauer stay true to his sceptical insights into language or does he succumb to the temptation to construe a new myth?

**Dr. Elke Dubbels** has been teaching as a lecturer in the Department of German and Comparative Literature and Culture at the University of Bonn since 2011. She earned her Ph. D. at the Humboldt University in Berlin in 2010. Her dissertation „Figuren des Messianischen in Schriften deutsch-jüdischer Intellektueller 1900-1933“ („Figures of the Messianic in the Writings of German-Jewish Intellectuals 1900-1933“) was published with de Gruyter in 2011. Currently, she tries to finish her habilitation thesis which deals with the politics of rumour in German drama from Gryphius to Kleist.



## Romantic Politics in the Thought of Gustav Landauer and Leo Baeck (Prof Yaniv Feller)

At a cursory glance, Gustav Landauer and Leo Baeck do not seem to have much in common. The former is an anarchist whose engagement with Judaism late in his life was a result of his neo-romantic revolutionary politics; the latter a rabbi whose understanding of Judaism was shaped among others by neo-Kantianism. In this paper, I propose that the two were in fact close in the parameters of their thinking about Judaism, but not in its end-result: Both thinkers thought that Judaism and Jews, as representing a minority position, are especially capable of critiquing the nation-state and it is from this standpoint that their philosophy is to be understood. Both also saw an intimate connection between romanticism and their contemporary political moment. For Landauer this manifested itself in a call for revolution out of a romantic understanding of the world, and of Judaism. Baeck, by contrast, came to see romantic politics as essentially a Christian disengagement with the world and ethics in such a way that posed a danger to Jewish life in the Weimar Republic.

**Yaniv Feller** is the Jeremy Zwelling Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies at Wesleyan University. He specializes in modern Jewish thought and has published on the subject in venues such as *Identities* and *Jewish Studies Quarterly*. Yaniv's first book manuscript, entitled *A Minor Central Figure: Leo Baeck and the Jewish Fantasies of Empire*, offers a new interpretation of one of the most prominent German-Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century by focusing on German and Jewish imperial fantasies of expansion and domination.

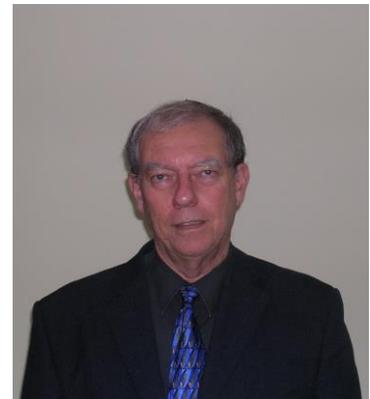


## Landauer, Strindberg, and the Promise to Abraham (Prof. Warren Zev Harvey)

In 1905 August Strindberg (1849-1912) wrote an enigmatic little book, *Historical Miniatures*. It was not a play, not a novel, not a poem, not a history, and not an essay. It presents twenty-one apparently disconnected visionary scenes from the history of the world, beginning with the birth of Moses in Egypt and concluding with the French Revolution.

In 1916 Gustav Landauer (1870-1919) lectured in Berlin on Strindberg's *Historical Miniatures*. The lecture was published in *Der Jude 2* (1917-19918), pp. 97-109. In his reading of *Historical Miniatures*, Landauer focused on the divine promise to Abraham: "and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Is this a blessing for one individual or a blessing for the world? Is it a promise or a command? Creatively developing Strindberg's insights, Landauer holds that humankind is eternally redeemed by the old Abrahamic faith that humankind is one. Landauer's discussion of the promise to Abraham throws light on his concept of anarchism and on his anarchistic interpretation of Judaism.

**Warren Zev Harvey** is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he has taught since 1977. He studied Philosophy at Columbia University (Ph.D., 1973), and taught at McGill University before moving to Israel. He is the author of many studies on medieval and modern Jewish philosophy, including *Physics and Metaphysics in Hasdai Crescas* (1998). He is an EMET Prize laureate in the Humanities (2009).



**„Sind das Ketzergedanken?“ or Gustav Landauer’s sceptical approach  
towards Martin Buber’s “Three Speeches on Judaism”  
(Sebastian Kunze)**

Gustav Landauer read Martin Buber’s “Three Speeches on Judaism” with appreciation according to his letters to him. Buber was a close friend of Landauer, however, this appreciation was nonetheless accompanied by a sceptical approach to Buber’s Speeches. Especially, Landauer’s texts “Judentum und Sozialismus” (1912) and “Sind das Ketzergedanken?” (1913) – both published in Prague based Zionist publications – are dealing with Buber’s Speeches. As the former one is more affirmative of the Speeches, the latter one is very sceptical on Buber’s conclusion concerning categories such as “nation” or the relationship between individual and group.

Both of Landauer’s texts were analysed and commented on in the past, however, never before these texts were read in the context of Buber’s Speeches, therefore I am not going to just reproduce research topoi. Moreover, I will provide a new reading of the texts, which will produce new insights in Landauer’s approach to “identity” as well as his stance on “Zionism” on the one hand and on the other it will offer a more nuance approach toward Landauer’s and Buber’s relationship.

In addition, I am following the reception of the Ketzergedanken within the cultural-Zionist circle around the Prague based “Verein jüdischer Hochschüler Bar Kochba” which lasted at least until the late 1950ies in Israel. This reception allows to place the discussion of these three texts into context and to assess its impact on this strand of the Zionist movement.

In sum, my paper aims on the one hand at reconstructing Landauer’s critique on Buber and on the other hand, I will show the reception of Landauer’s Ketzergedanken within the cultural-Zionist circle around the Prague based “Verein jüdischer Hochschüler Bar Kochba” which last at least till the late 1950ies in Israel.

**Sebastian Kunze** M.A. studied Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Halle-Wittenberg as well as Jewish Studies in Berlin, Southampton, Jerusalem and Potsdam. Since 2016 he is a research associate at the Chair of Judaic Studies at the University of Erfurt. 2018/19 he was a Leo Baeck Fellow.



**„Da verstummte er, denn der Buddha sprach.“ – Gustav Landauer  
and Fritz Mauthner's on Language, Religion and Buddhism.  
(Dr. Sebastian Musch)**

During their long symbiotic friendship Gustav Landauer and Fritz Mauthner shared many interests, among them their fascination with Buddhism. This article focuses on the connection between their interest in Buddhism, their notion of religion and their common project of *Sprachkritik*. In a first step I will situate their interest in the intellectual history of German Buddhism. From where did they derive their knowledge about Buddhism and which elements were either highlighted or suppressed in their specific interpretations? In a second step, I will analyze their writings about Buddhism, focusing on the one hand at the scattered remarks in their earlier writings, and on the other hand at Mauthner's novella *Der letzte Tod des Gautama Buddha* from 1913, which depicts the figure of the Buddha as a sceptic of language, in combination with Landauer's short article *Fritz Mauthner's Buddha-Dichtung*. In a third step, I will relate their conceptualization of Buddhism to their respective ideas on religion and linguistic skepticism.

**Sebastian Musch** is a researcher at the History Department and the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) at the University of Osnabrück, Germany. His first book titled *Jewish Encounters with Buddhism in German Culture (1890-1940)* is forthcoming with Palgrave Macmillan. After stations in Heidelberg, Milano, Badulla (Sri Lanka), Haifa, Berkeley, Dartmouth College, and Marbach, he earned his PhD from the Institute for Jewish Studies in Heidelberg in 2018. He is currently writing his second book, a biography of the Yugoslavian-Israeli rabbi Hermann Helfgott-Zvi Asaria (1913-2002). His research focuses on German-Jewish (intellectual) history, Jewish migration, German-Asian studies, and Jewish-Buddhist studies.



## The Anarchic *Sprachkritik* of Gustav Landauer (Libera Pissano)

At the beginning of the twentieth century with the so-called *Sprachkrise* – a complex phenomenon of language critique diffused in the philosophical and literary debate among poets and intellectuals before World War I—language attracted special attention, especially among German-Jewish thinkers. This phenomenon was interpreted as more literary than philosophical, but—in my view—its role is crucial, because it helps us to better understand how the critique of language became the focus of philosophical thought at the beginning of the last century long before the linguistic turn. Thanks to the mediation of Fritz Mauthner, whose work was the *trait d'union* between literature and critical thought, the phenomenon of *Sprachkrise* spread throughout the milieu of German-Jewish philosophy; in fact, it involves the whole generation of thinkers whose elective affinities who – as Michel Löwy stated –linked together language, messianism, libertarian utopias, and Romanticism.

In a letter to Mauthner of May 17, 1911, Gustav Landauer wrote: “The critique of language is inseparable from what I called Anarchism and Socialism”. Mauthner and Landauer were bound by a deep, lifelong intellectual friendship, evidenced by a huge epistolary. The former’s linguistic skepticism was used by the latter as the tool for unmasking and smashing the oppressive idols hidden in language and its supposed truths. Mauthner’s treatment of language as a deceptive tool for human knowledge is at the root of Landauer’s thought of anarchy. While Mauthner focused attention on the metaphorical and illusory value of language and human knowledge mediated by words, Landauer used a linguistic-skeptical strategy to dismantle the power of the state and lead to an idea of community. In this contribution, I want to analyze the theoretical connection between linguistic skepticism and anarchy in Landauer’s thought and, on the other hand, how the connection between politics and language – through Mauthner and Landauer – exerted a crucial role in this constellation of authors at the beginning of the last century.

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**The Anachronism of Anarchism:  
Margarete Susman on the Legacy of Landauer's "Inevitable Failure"  
(Dr. Abraham Rubin)**

During the short-lived German Revolution of 1918 - 1919, Gustav Landauer wrote his friend Margarete Susman that he would invite her to join the Räterepublik, the revolutionary council in Munich, once the hour came. The revolution was subdued and Landauer was brutally murdered by counter-revolutionaries only a few months after he sent his invitation. The anticipated hour never arrived. It was the revolution's "inevitable failure" that formed the starting point for Susman's meditations on Gustav Landauer and his legacy. Far from seeing his political defeat as proof that his ideas were no match for reality, Susman argued that it was the very fact of Landauer's "inevitable failure" that embodied the moral and philosophical principles of his anarchism. His revolt against a given reality was rooted in an idealism that anachronistically clung to a belief in individual agency, and was driven by a staunch refusal to submit to an impersonal vision of historical necessity, à la Marx and Hegel.

In her obituary for Landauer and in subsequent essays that engaged with his life and thought, Susman sought to articulate the political relevance of her friend's "anti-politics." Susman knew Landauer since 1910, when he first invited her to publish a poem in *Der Sozialist*, which was under his editorship at the time. Only a fragment of their extensive decade-long correspondence remains, yet its remnants reveal an intense intellectual relationship that was stimulated by disagreement and sustained by mutual respect and keen affection. Susman's recurring allusions to Landauer in the decades following his death attest to his centrality to Susman's own intellectual enterprise. As Elisa Kalpheck suggests, Susman's essays can be read as a continuation of her dialogue with Landauer. With Kalpheck's evocative suggestion in mind, this paper interprets Susman's interrelated meditations on German modernity and the German-Jewish legacy as an extension of her intellectual exchange with Landauer. It shows how questions of philosophy, culture, and religion that first emerge in their epistolary exchange materialize and metamorphose in Susman's mature philosophical writings. Susman's sympathetic reading of Landauer offers an original understanding of the oft-debated nexus of his Jewishness and anarchism.

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**Rebellion and the Power of Accident.  
Gustav Landauer's reflections about the peculiarities of Jewish identity  
(Prof. Ulrich Sieg)**

In the first part of my essay I will discuss how Gustav Landauer reflected the Jewish situation in central Europe's fin- de-siècle. The focus of my argumentation will be his essay "In Sachen Judentum" (1901). Landauer argues that it is impossible to give a really "balanced picture" of Anti-semitism because the subject is demanding an engaged author. Landauer's opponent was the German left-liberal politician and writer Hellmut von Gerlach who had tried to give an "objective picture" of this fanatic ideology. Gustav Landauer reasoned instead that every human being has to fight for his own moral principles and therefore has to condemn Anti-semitism explicitly. But this is only half of Landauer's solution for a complicated problem. He argues that it is highly important to find a solution for the accidental dimension of human existence. Twelve years later Landauer changed his argumentation in his essay "Sind das Ketzergedanken?" which will be the focus of the second part. Landauer's article was published in the famous collection of essays "Vom Judentum" (1913) of the Prague Bar Kochba. Landauer emphasizes the significance that new ideals like the Jewish nation will find a way to be a part of the real political world. Otherwise even splendid ideas are only a form of intellectual "masturbation" without any political significance. But even arguing in this polemical way Landauer did not support any simple form of Jewish identity to enhance the chances of Jewish nationalism. In his understanding the universal dimension of Judaism is far too important to be sacrificed on the altar of modern nationalism. The third part of the essay will analyze Landauer's correspondence with Martin Buber and Fritz Mauthner during World War I. Landauer had to realize that the admired scholars and friends became ardent nationalists. In strict contrast to a great number of intellectuals Landauer despised the heroic language in the war of words. He confronted Buber and Mauthner with his own political and philosophical position and tried to change their minds. At least in the case of Buber he was quite successful in the long run. In the fourth and last part of my talk I will show the abyss in Landauer's trust in the Bavarian revolution. His combination of rebellion and self-assessment which gave him a wise orientation during the ideological confrontations of World War I was of no great help to understand the situation in the aftermath of the war. Now Landauer had to act in a hateful environment and to decipher the plans of his political enemies. In the beginning of 1919 Munich was full of hate, envy and fanatical anti-Semitism as Michael Brenner recently has shown. Landauer's idealistic way of anarchism did not help him to survive. After Landauer was murdered in May 1919 his highly sophisticated ideas about the importance of multiple identities were unfortunately underestimated for a long time. But taking into account the meaning of identity politics in the presence his thoughts are of great importance again and definitely worth studying.

**Ulrich Sieg** received his PhD in Modern History from Philipps University Marburg in 1993 and his Venia legendi in Modern History from Philipps University Marburg in 2000. Since 2005 he is teaching Modern History as apl. professor at Philipps University Marburg. He has held professorships at McGill University Montreal (2007-2008) at Goethe University Frankfurt (2011-2012) and at Ludwig Maximilians University Munich (2016) His publications can be found at his academia webpage <https://www.online.uni-marburg.de/ulrich-sieg/>.



## Gustav Landauer's Heretic Religiosity as a Skeptic Critique of Modern Progress (Prof. Yosef Shwarz)

This paper will emphasize the historiosophical dimension in Landauer's thought as fully developed in his *The Revolution* (*Die Revolution*). From the viewpoint of such historiosophic speculations, modern political conflicts are defined in their national and revolutionary framework. The break from tradition, alias "secularization," is translated, especially since the French revolution, to a violent dividing line, which crosses national and social divisions all over the old European continent and its colonial settlements. The universal values of the French enlightenment and French revolution was translated to the local, romantic, and chauvinist nationalistic paradigm. From now on the border of nations will constitute the natural borders for any revolution as well.

In the context of my talk, I would like to emphasize the non-conventional character of Landauer's anarchic anti-politics and put it in the framework of German-Jewish intellectual-political discourse, i.e., within a more general orientation shared by figures such as Buber, Scholem, Bloch, Arendt, Adorno, Marcuse and others. None of them was a conventional political activist, and yet their thought was embedded with political and theo-political elements, many of which became central in later political discourse. I would like to point out the way in which a crucial moment of their thought was dedicated to historic analysis of modernity and its crises, concentrated not on a "protestant" return to classic canonical figures, i.e. in the idealization of antiquity, but to the detailed analysis of the dialectics of secularization as against its close past, i.e. the rapture and continuity of different modern paradigms when related to their "Middle Ages", which retain their force as permanent source of political energy. It is here that notions such as heresy, mysticism, and messianism become loaded and central, and it is here that Landauer's *Skepsis* (unlike Fritz Mauthner's *Sptachkritik*) cannot be read without its *Mystik*.

**Prof. Yossef Schwartz** is the head of the School of Philosophy, Linguistics and Science Studies at Tel Aviv University. He is Professor of medieval and early modern intellectual history at the Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Ideas, which he directed from 2009 until 2015. He held the Martin Buber Chair for Jewish philosophy of religion at the department of evangelical theology, Goethe University of Frankfurt/Main, 2000-2002. Further teaching/research positions at the Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at UPenn, the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, and the Center for the History of Knowledge, Zurich. He is the winner of an ERC Research Grant, dedicated to the study of the translation of "Latin philosophy into Hebrew" and an ISF Research Grant, dedicated to Christian Hebraism and Christian Cabbala. His present GIF project, together with prof Andreas Speer from the Thomas Institute in Cologne concentrate on the medieval Latin Translation of Moses Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*. He also dedicated a series of studies to modern German-Jewish authors such as Salomon Maimon, Ernst Cassirer, Gustav Landauer, Gershom Scholem, Martin Buber, and Franz Rosenzweig, concentrating mainly on their historiographical concept of pre-modern culture and the process of secularization.



**Skepsis and the Truth of Antipolitics  
in Yiddish Anarchist Thought  
(Dr. Lilian Türk)**

Yiddish anarchists, as many other liberal socialist thinkers, composed and distributed manifests and declarations on the principles and aims of the societies founded, clubs, newspapers and cooperatives - expressing a rigid sense of morality and a certain dogmatism visible in heated debates, highly dynamic factionism and numerous foundings of groups and publications. Antipolitics did not implicate the end of political activism or the termination of debate and negotiation on the boundaries of anarchism, but was widely spread among conservative and religious anarchists like A. Gordin and A. Almi, who turned towards traditional belief, morals and education, and more importantly, towards moral self-refinement, which they believed eventually lead to societal change. The disillusion in the promises of enlightenment and emancipation, in democratic progress was part of a wider turn towards spirituality and the Jewish traditional texts. Solely the philosophical question of the existence of God, oftentimes phrased as an attempt to answer to Theodicy, allowed a certain skepsis within the moralist and elitist Jewish anarchism, and allowed agnosticism as legitimate expression of anarchist scepticism.

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**„The Real Place for Realization is the Community“ – Martin Buber’s  
Reception of Gustav Landauer’s Communitarian Anarchism  
(Dr. Siegbert Wolf)**

The deep personal and intellectual friendship between Gustav Landauer (1870-1919) and Martin Buber (1878-1965) and their ‚antipolitical‘ cooperation in the years from 1900 to 1919 takes an extraordinary place in libertarian socialism in the 20th century. Both were intellectuals, social philosophers, writers, libertarians, educators and pioneers in a communal settlement. After Gustav Landauer’s death Martin Buber as his political and literary executor tried to carry on the communitarian and federative anarchism of his friend especially into the Kibbutz-movement and also into his bi-national and federal conception for peace between Jews and Arabs in Palestine/Israel.

As his literary executor Buber spent many years in reissuing all of Landauer’s major writing and was - together with the social scientist Ina Britschgi-Schimmer (1881-1949) - the editor of a two-volume collection entitled: „Gustav Landauer. Sein Lebensgang in Briefen“ (Gustav Landauer. His life in letters) (1929).

Beyond this Buber took Landauer’s conception of an federative and communitarian socialism into his philosophy of dialogue („I and Thou“, 1923) and his pedagogics. In his until today worth reading chief work „Paths in Utopia“ (hebr. 1946, dt. 1950), which deals with modern utopian socialists, Buber wrote about Landauer’s anarchism in a very praiseworthy mode.

The lecture focuses on the central question of Martin Buber’s social philosophy and how it was influenced by Landauer’s communitarian anarchism, and how Buber connected philosophy thinking with his ‚antipolitical‘ engagement.

About my person:

**Siegbert Wolf**, Dr. phil., Historian, Political scientist and Publicist, Board member of the „Martin Buber-Gesellschaft“. Editor of books about Gustav Landauer, Martin Buber, Hannah Arendt and Jean Amery. Since 2008 Editor of the „Selected Writings“ by Gustav Landauer.

