Buber's Idea of Community
Towards a Foundation of Political Life

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Abstract

This article suggests that Buber's idea of the community may hint at an alternative to the more common foundations of political thought, usually grounded on notions of power or rationality. Showing how Buber's idea of the community developed from a neo-romantic form (in his early writings) to a principle informed by the dialogical dimension of human life (from *I and Thou* onwards), I will point out the vertical dimension of political life ensuing from Buber's discourse. A discussion of the theopolitical principle as expressed in Buber's *Kingship of God* will lead to the conclusion that, both descriptively and normatively, politics needs an openness to transcendence.

Keywords: Martin Buber, charisma, community, *Gemeinde*, meta-sociology, political theology, theocracy, theopolitics

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Fundaments of Political Life

Aristotle's renowned thesis 'that man is by nature a political animal' belongs to the very canon of Western thought and has many times been reproposed in different variations. It not only posits the necessity, for humankind, to gather and organise communal life together, but bases this inclination on the paramount feature of human nature, which for Aristotle is the *logos*. The latter was primarily understood as the capacity to distinguish right and wrong, good and bad, upon which capacity any form of harmonious communal life, from the household to the state, can and ought to be established.[1] However much this thesis has been repeated, socio-historical facts too often seem to have disproven it. Conflicts, civil wars, aggressions and oppressive regimes stand out as striking counter-examples, whereby the only central factor to politics seems to be the Machiavellian will to acquire and maintain power over others, regardless

of moral considerations. Modern political thought, it has been argued,[2] is in many ways Machiavelli's progeny, and marks the utmost distancing from classical political thought. Modern political science has therefore steered away from any form of morally charged political thought, rather developing the latter in a technical direction, by coining new categories, such as sovereignty and representation, and thus posing the basis for the construction of our own political entities – the modern state and its many institutions.

With the risk of oversimplifying, when considering the development of Western political thought, one is faced with the simple alternative: politics is grounded either in *logos* – pursuing the harmony of communal space – or in the exertion of sheer power – aimed at maximising the chances of obtaining and successfully exerting control. The shortcomings of such attempts at founding political life strike us as evident as ever, with the current state of affairs forcing us to witness the cruelty of wars and conflicts, growing inequalities and polarised societies. But the limits of these foundations are evident as well in the disregard for all spheres of human life that are not reducible to force and logic. In this article, I will advance a third way to think about the fundaments of political life, such that they can account for the complexity of the human and may establish relations that make a peaceful life together possible. To do so, I will rely on Martin Buber's reflections on the nature and requisites of a community.

It can be argued that throughout the production of his works, Buber put forward two main theses on political philosophy, that can be summarised as follows. (1) From a descriptive point of view, he asserted that the foundation of political thought can be complete only in so far as it includes a third dimension, which the other two foundational attempts ignore: a metaphysical dimension that is open to transcendence and is necessary to any coherent legitimation of power; in the twentieth century, this is the position of those discussing political theology[3] – which Buber will call 'theopolitics'. (2) From a prescriptive point of view, Buber suggests that human life can thrive only in a political context wherein one finds the minimal exertion of power of man on man. This might be achieved via many a political form, but the simplest and optimal appears to be that of the community.

It must be noted that Buber did not develop his ideas in the classical form of a treatise in political philosophy, wherein the best form of government is advanced (very much like Greek classical philosophy, but also early modern treatises), nor did he discuss his conceptions in a systematic account (as happened in critical philosophy, or in Classical German Idealism); his political insights are more often than not offered

to the reader in the form of interspersed scholia to his main works, or else through more punctual interventions, discussing one or another aspect of communal living. By looking at these fragmented discussions it is nonetheless possible to evince a more unitary and coherent picture, in which his views on the political realm emerge with more clarity. This reconstruction will thus offer an alternative to the two other tenets of *logos* and power.

Longing for a New Form: The Development of Buber's Idea of Community

The issue of living together with others struck Buber from an early age and retained a decisive importance throughout the production of his works. Crucial to this issue is the idea of community (*Gemeinschaft*) as the smallest unit of communal life. The early gestation of the notion of community and its continuous reworking are testimony to its relevance within his broad philosophical project.

The first text to address the topic dates back to 1900, when Buber, then twenty-two years old, contributed to the work of the Berlin *Neue Gemeinschaft* circle, a group of young thinkers characterised by '*fin de siècle* aestheticism, Nietzschean heroics, *Lebensphilosophie* and the New-Romanticism'.[4] The mystical aura and literary utopianism with which the circle was infused also imbue the pages of Buber's text, which yearns for an authentic life against the growing dissatisfaction with the political and social forms of that period. The latter are implicitly conceived starting from the sociological portrait of Tönnies, presented through the well-known distinction of community and society.[5] Where the first would be made up of immediate and personal interactions, on which roles, values and beliefs lived in an organic and communal way are based, the second would be formed through indirect interactions, from which derive more impersonal roles, formal or artificial values, and less sharing. Following Tönnies, the community, typical of the European Middle Ages and based on an organic model, has been gradually supplanted by modern society, following the changes brought about by industrial revolution, urbanisation and rationalisation, marked by capitalist production and guided by the search for profit. The argument that Buber proposes in his contribution, however, does not consist in a nostalgic appeal to a return to a pre-modern form of life, but – aware of this impossibility – is proposed as a leap forward: 'Our community is rather to be called postsocial; since it exceeds society and its norms, it is placed on a completely different level'.[6] Thus, leaving aside the sociological contrast, Buber proposes to rethink

the *Gemeinschaft* in 'post-social' terms, oriented towards the future and not reminiscent of past models: 'we are not interested in the "where-from" – only the "where-to". Not from "where-from", only from the "where-to" our truth and strength do come'.[7] Another difference from the medieval community is the absence of blood ties (*Blutverwandtschaft*) and the existence of an 'elective affinity' (*Wahlverwandtschaft*) among the members, who can freely join the community and are not bound to it by birth.[8] The originality of Buber's approach to the theme of the community already emerges from this early text: it is not so much a matter of tracing the boundaries and the conditions for the juridical implementation of a common life, but of identifying the theological and anthropological core from which the communitarian experience can flourish. In this respect, Buber follows and quotes his friend Gustav Landauer, who indicates the proper place of the longed-for *Gemeinschaft* in man's interiority: 'in the most intimate nucleus of our most hidden being [lies] the most ancient and all-encompassing community: together with the human race and the universe'.[9] Furthermore, it is precisely in the innermost regions of the human soul that one perceives life as consumed 'in struggle and in doubt' – a struggle one experiences due to the absence, or the failure to encounter the divine, with the '*grossen Du*'.[10] It is from this consumed, abandoned, yet still struggling life that the desire for the creation of an authentic community emerges, and invokes a transcendent plan: here is one of the typical traits of the *Erlebnis* mysticism of the first Buber and his circle. Not a political organisation with pragmatic objectives, nor a plan for the social reorganisation of life together, not even a return to the medieval roots of community life, but a mystical appeal to the core of human experience and its encounter with the divine for the realisation of 'true' community – here is the first form, with a purely utopian character, of the 'revolutionary' Buberian community dream: 'So our community does not want the revolution, it is the revolution'.[11] It is clear that this new form, although consciously rejecting a one-sided return to the past, is by no means free from presenting markedly neo-romantic traits.

The sociological dichotomy between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is taken up again in later writings, such as the article explicitly dedicated to the *Gemeinschaft* of 1919, where it is however reiterated that the movement to be made cannot be that of a backward flight from society towards the 'natural' and 'organic' community of the past, but on the contrary consists in a movement of overcoming, a move towards a '*neue Organik*',[12] a new organic configuration of human relationships. Similarly, in 1923, on the occasion of a lecture on the nature of the state held in Zurich, Buber hoped for the creation of a 'third form of life in common, distinct both from the rural village and from the big city, which could arise from

a new organization of work'.[13] To his own writings as an author one must add his work as the editor of the imposing series of monographs tellingly titled *Die Gesellschaft*, which included forty volumes on sociological and psychological subjects, on which Buber worked from 1906 to 1912.

All these endeavours towards the depiction of a new form of communal life reflect Buber's preoccupation with the possibility of realisation of a novel and genuine way to conceive of politics and interpersonal relations at large. His commitment to this new form takes its cue from classical sociological distinctions, contrasting the 'organic, natural community of the past with modern, artificial and mechanical *Gesellschaft*',[14] but seeking to overcome this dualism. Even when striving for a 'post-social' form of life in common, however, Buber's juvenile attempts to conceive the community are undoubtedly affected by an overall neo-romantic imaginary – exposing his thought to the risk of restorative readings. Aware of such risks, Buber declares his *Gemeinschaft* to always be future-oriented and never to seek any sort of 'origin' derived from a mythical past. However genuine the programme and intentions behind his 'new community' might be, it is a distinctive theological dimension that marks the originality of his proposal and distinguishes Buber's longing for a new foundation of communal life.

The Vertical Dimension of the Communal Life

In the 1910s and 1920s Buber not only insisted on the difference between the '*neue Gemeinschaft*' and the medieval peasant village, on the one hand, and the modern *Gesellschaft* on the other, but he underlined the connection of this new social form with a transcendental dimension: the importance of the religious element becomes increasingly evident.

Looking at the addresses contained in *The Spirit of Judaism* (*Vom Geist des Judentums*, delivered between 1912 and 1914 and published in 1916), one is struck by the marked social accent of the idea of religiosity therein presented. These addresses describe not only the human urge to realise the communion of man with the unconditioned (distinct from ethical and intellectual efforts), but also the drive to transform the social world through the divine image. In *Jewish Religiosity* (*Jüdische Religiosität*) we read:

> Here, as nowhere else, multiplicity is given into our hands, to be transformed into unity; a vast, formless mass, to be informed by us with the Divine. The community of man is as yet only a projected opus that is waiting for us, a chaos we must put in order.[15]

Despite the rather simplistic depiction of the divine – as an image to be imprinted on the social sphere – here it is already clear that the optimal form of human common life, the *Gemeinschaft*, requires the presence of a transcendent element for the realisation of the community form. A few years later, this transcendent element will take on an explicitly theocratic tone. In the lecture *The Holy Way* (*Die heilige Weg*, delivered in 1918 and published in 1919), Buber deals with the messianic figure of Jesus Christ and his announcement of the 'Kingdom of God', arguing that the latter is none other than the authentic and complete form of community:

> It is the perfect life of man with man, true community, and as such, God's immediate realm, His *basileia*, His earthly kingdom.[16]

In this text Buber's theological-political idea begins to take shape, an idea that here already evokes the notion of the immediate sovereignty of God (*unmittelbare Herrschaft Gottes*) in direct relation to the full realisation of the community. However eminently human and earthly, taking place at a social and historical level, the realisation of the community reflects and requires a link with what transcends this earthly plane and finds its place on the transcendent one of the divine or the messianic. In brief, the idea that the worldly political order must be referred to another, transcendent level, with the caveat that this divine intervention must be direct and without mediations. This outline will be coherently developed in the following years. In a lecture held in February 1924 entitled *Staat und Gemeinschaft*, the latter is presented as a 'messianic category, not historical … only the community [Gemeinschaft] is a genuine herald and forerunner of the Kingdom of God'.[17] From a mystical category infused with early twentieth-century neo-romanticism, the *Gemeinschaft* now takes on new connotations, derived from the study of Jewish tradition and the ancient history of the people of Israel. The community becomes the historical expression of the non-historical, and at the same time a means to approach the announced Kingdom of God, to draw near to the completion of the work of creation.

I and Thou: Community and Dialogic Philosophy

The reflection on the nature of the community reaches its maturity through its harmonisation with the dialogic thinking developed in *I and Thou* (*Ich und Du*, 1923), Buber's *Hauptwerk* in which his dialogical philosophy is expounded. The problem of the mutual relationship between two people – the authentic realisation of dialogue in the form of the 'I-Thou'

relation, as opposed to the reifying 'I-it' relation – in fact extends to that of the 'true' being together of men and women. The central question revolves around the conditions for the creation of such a community, after having rejected the possibility of founding it on purely institutional bases (e.g. statutes and regulations) or, conversely, on the emotional sphere (within which one finds a sense of belonging and identity). Buber expresses a dissatisfaction with the rationalisation reflected in the Weberian 'iron cage' of state institutions but does not indicate – as Weber did[18] – individual emotionality ('feelings') as the primal source for the bonding of the community. He states that, rather,

> True community does not arise through peoples having feelings for one another (though indeed not without it), but through, first, their taking their stand in living mutual relation with a living Centre, and, second, their being in living mutual relation with one another. The second event has its source in the first but is not immediately given with it. A living reciprocal relationship includes feelings but is not derived from them. A community is built upon a living, reciprocal relationship, but the builder is the living, active Centre.[19]

This central passage condenses some of Buber's most relevant political and sociological theses. When confronted with the question of the foundation of the community (the *Gemeinde*), Buber first reiterates his central claim – that a 'living relation' stands at the core of any human action and enterprise. Here emerges the prescriptive aspect of Buber's political thought: without maintaining an *I-Thou* relation at the centre of political action, any attempt to build a community is either vain or corrupted. But he also adds that primacy must be accorded to a relation with a 'Living Centre'. This latter is indicated as the 'Builder' (*der Baumeister*) of the community, the real foundation of social cohesion and political action. Scholars have debated the nature of the Centre, and somewhat divergent readings have been proposed. Most notably, Dan Avnon has stressed the concreteness and lived experience of the human 'Builder', the person (or the persons) who endeavour to build a communal space and tie the various members of the community together.[20] On the opposite side, Paul Mendes-Flohr, in his seminal article on Buber's concept of the Centre, has proposed to read the Centre as a 'situational revelation',[21] stressing – as Alex Guilherme correctly observes – the 'connection with the eternal Thou'[22] that takes place in the Centre. I argue that, no matter how important the concrete person, the human element as the Builder of the community – as Avnon correctly posits – the point of crucial importance is the source from which the Centre draws to prepare and realise the communal space. In other words, from where comes the capacity of

the Centre, of the Builder, to pull the members together? Posed as a question of political ontology: what is the source of the capacity to create and mould the interhuman space? In sociological terms: where does the legitimacy of the Builder come from? The answer to both queries resides in the ulterior dimension of the Centre, in the reference to a meta-historical (and thus meta-sociological) sphere. In this sense, Mendes-Flohr's reading, on the one hand stressing the linkage to the *eternal Thou*, to a theological sphere, on the other hand recalling the contextual nature of the community (that is, responding to the needs of a particular situation), seems to me to better reflect Buber's socio-political stance.

In fact, other pages of *Ich und Du* clearly present the 'living Centre' as transcending the historical level of social organisation of the community. In the third part of the work, dedicated to the dialogue with the divine, Buber takes up again the notion of the Centre, described on the one hand as the crossing point of all the relationships that unfold through it, and on the other as the source of the transformative power – in an ethical and social meaning – of the *Thou*:

> The world of *It* is set in the context of space and time.
> The world of *Thou* is not set in the context of either of these.
> Its context is the Centre, where the extended lines of relation meet – in the eternal *Thou*.
> In the great privilege of pure relation the privileges of the world of *It* are abolished. By virtue of this privilege there exists the unbroken world of *Thou*: the isolated moments of relations are bound up in a life of world solidarity. By virtue of this privilege formative power belongs to the world of Thou: spirit can penetrate and transform the world of *It*.[23]

Buber's mature thought continues to reserve a special place for the theme of the community, now explicitly developing it around the question of the dialogic relationship, of the *I-Thou*. In so doing, Buber accords a central role to one of the many facets of the *Thou*, the divine and transcendent one, the 'eternal Thou' (*ewig Du*). As Mendes-Flohr put it, 'a *Gemeinde* … is founded when a host of men encounter and realize a common revelation, a *Thou* which addresses them collectively'.[24] The latter assumes the central position and weaves together the threads of human relationships within the social fabric of the community.

Kingship of God: The Theopolitical Principle

Perhaps the work in which Buber best addressed the questions of legitimacy of the leader and of the nature of the political community is

Kingship of God (*Königtum Gottes*, 1932). In this scholarly work on biblical scholarship, Buber reflects on the nature of the pre-monarchic Israel, basing his analysis on a reading of the most ancient prophetic books of the Bible, with a focus on the *Book of Judges*. His main thesis consists in the actual historical occurrence of a peculiar form of government whereby sovereignty is directly exercised by the divine. The intersection of the horizontal plane of the community and the vertical plane of the divine is described by Buber as direct theocracy, where sovereignty is exercised through the temporary bestowal of *charisma* on a single individual. When considering the period of the Judges, Buber observes that the Sinai covenant 'signifies that the wondering tribes accept JHWH "for ever and ever" as their King' and 'that no man is to be called king of the sons of Israel'; in other words, 'there is in pre-kingly Israel no externality of rulership; *for there is no political sphere except the theo-political*'.[25] But if no man may act as a king, how then is the rulership exerted? How is the community pulled together? In direct theocracy, Buber argues, rulership depends on the acknowledgement of the *charis*, of a special gift (an exceptional set of qualities and a specific mission) that one individual has been endowed with.[26] Drawing a parallel with his discussions of the nature of the community, it seems to me possible to read the role of the Builder of the community as one similarly gifted person, as a charismatic leader. Buber notes that *charisma* is a gift (i.e. it does not directly depend on the individual will to summon it), is temporary (strictly dependent on the person's mission) and is revocable (once the task of the charismatic leader is fulfilled, the *charis* could be transferred to another person). The political life of the community under a direct theocracy is thus constructed upon a serious recognition of *charisma* by all his members:

> The charismatic which deals seriously with its experience is now obliged to base its institutional structure upon manifestations of the *charis*; to incorporate these, accordingly, as the most real of all, into stable political reality, into permanent presuppositions of political life and action, accordingly to base Theopolitics no longer merely on covenant and statute, also no longer simply to verify it in the carrying-out of covenant and statute, but also to exercise Theopolitics even when it is a matter of letting the *charis* hold sway beyond the actual charisma.[27]

The role of the *charisma* – nourishing the centre of the community – must be found beyond 'covenant and statute' – that is, beyond juridical forms. This means thinking about the community that arises around the charismatic leader as a principle of action, not as a political form *strictu sensu*. The principle does not directly apply to a specific form of government but holds true as a 'presupposition' of political action in

many forms. To be sure, the historical context treated by Buber was delimited and specific, but in focusing on pre-kingly Israel, he is able to point to another, ulterior dimension that lies at the ultimate foundation of political life altogether. In short, the necessity to 'let[ting] the *charis* hold sway' can be read as Buber's appeal to always refer political reality to its metaphysical source and its ethical aspects. Here the prescriptive aspect of Buber's political thought comes to the fore. On the one hand, the 'true' community reposes on the acknowledgement of the non-sufficiency of the human sphere – no individual can legitimately lay claim to rulership on their own. On the other, it compels the members of the community to choose between 'divine rulership' and 'history',[28] between theopolitics and *Realpolitik*. The latter, Buber underlines, is an ethical choice, taking place 'in the situation of the "individual" with all his depths'.[29] The theological and ethical dimensions are therefore the ultimate foundations of political action, determining its success or failure. In stressing these aspects, Buber opens up the political sphere to a dimension different from the rational organisation of the common space through *logos* – the immanent capacity of man to self-organise – or through the sheer exercise of power. To describe this third option, Buber uses the term 'theopolitics', describing it as 'action of a public nature from the point of view of the tendency toward the actualisation of divine rulership'.[30] The insistence on the 'tendency' indicates that the outcome is not certain and cannot therefore be taken for granted: there is always the risk of a degeneration into ungovernability on the one side, or autarchy on the other. Together with the description of a new foundation of political life, it is clear that Buber advances a prescriptive principle: the need to acknowledge and grant primacy to the life of the *charis*. Gabriele Guerra has thus described this optimal outcome: 'The mystical moment in which the external and internal of the religious experience, the "presence" of the divine in the public sphere and the social body, coincide (or tend to coincide) without residue'.[31] The compenetration of historical and meta-historical planes happens, in the case of direct theocracy, through the recognition and the primacy granted to the divine endowment of *charisma* on a specific person, acting as the leader of the community. It is via this recognition that religious experience finds itself at the core of the political: the vertical dimension is the true pillar upon which the community is built.

In contemporary settings, the theopolitical principle may be variously declined, finding different applications according to each context but keeping firm the tendency to actualise 'divine rulership'. If one maintains that the optimal outcome of this rulership is but the realisation of genuine dialogue, a paramount criterion to understand the actualisation

of the theopolitical principle consists in the capacity to engender relations of trust among the members of a political community widely understood. It follows that any social, economic or political choice that thwarts the realisation of the dialogical community frustrates theopolitical efforts. One can think for instance about economic policies. Quite often in public debates those taking a *Realpolitik* stance tend to favour an application of a 'trickle-down' economics, following the belief that large corporations and wealthy investors would benefit the development of a state or region; at the same time, however, they disregard the risk that such policy could engender inequality, thus ultimately exacerbating the polarisation of the society. On the contrary, a theopolitical stance would minimise the inner oppositions of a social body in order to create conditions conducive to dialogue. The realisation of the minimal condition for the creation of relations of trust requires in fact the reduction of conflict. An economic policy that tackles inequalities provides the first steps towards this goal and thus is more respondent to the principle. The intended 'divine rulership' is not taken here in the numinous sense of a direct intervention of a supernatural entity into worldly business. Rather, the transcendent aspect of political action resides in its opening of a condition for dialogue, both horizontally (between human members of the community) and vertically (with the 'Centre'). The theopolitical principle, as abstract as its given definition might sound, always finds its proper declension in the concreteness of the specific context in which it is applied.

Conclusion: Politics Open to Transcendence

Buber's attempts at thinking about the foundations of life together brought him to reflect on the nature of the community, on its requirements and its features. Since his early writings, the endeavours to conceive of a community beyond the existing sociological accounts brought him to posit the possibility of a political form different from rural community and modern society. In his reflections, however, this striving for a third form soon morphed into the acknowledgement of an altogether different dimension of political life, a vertical dimension thoroughly indebted to his religious studies. This theological sphere, essential to the form of social and political life Buber advocates for, has been explored in different directions. In his masterpiece *I and Thou*, the vertical dimension is reflected in the centrality of the Builder of the community and the living relation with the Centre. In *Kingship of God*, the uttermost relevance and primacy of the divinely bestowed *charisma* describes the vertical axis of the communal space.

Throughout the development of his reflections, it appears with growing clarity that for Buber what is at stake is not so much a specific sociological form, but rather a principle for social and political action. As Mendes-Flohr has poignantly observed with regards to a passage of *I and Thou* quoted above,

> Buber's conception of the Centre and social renewal may be more properly characterized as a meta-sociology: he seeks to identify a principle which although formally independent of social life, he holds to be the ultimate ground of 'genuine' communal life. This principle, we have observed, is identified by Buber as a responsiveness to the eternal *Thou*, the eternally renewing address of God.[32]

As such, this principle holds validity regardless of the specific political form it may be referring to. It is an urge to infuse politics with a transcendent element, a dimension always irreducible to merely sociological explanations. Buber does not offer a new recipe, a model or a panacea to heal the many illnesses politics (ancient and modern alike) is affected by, but a different and new way to conceive and start any political enterprise. The element of novelty does not reside in its first historical occurrence – the gathering of the twelve tribes in pre-kingly Israel is a notable antecedent – but rather in the utopian *élan* that the community Buber envisaged brings forward. In advancing his political theology *qua* meta-sociology, Buber establishes the primacy of an ethical and a theological dimension over those accounts of politics – nowadays prevailing – that conceive of politics as a merely rationalistic edifice or, more cynically, as a clash for power. First, against the attempts of modern political theory – from Machiavelli and Hobbes onwards – to expunge moral considerations from the political sphere, Buber restores the relevance of the ethical moment. The success of the construction of a communal space depends on the action and choices of single citizens and of single elected politicians: Buber's theopolitical principle re-establishes a shared responsibility in the political enterprise. Second, against any reduction of the political sphere to the mere management of power – that is, against *Realpolitik* – Buber's theopolitics refers the very core of the political enterprise to a transcendent dimension, be it the endowment of the *charisma* or the relation with the *eternal Thou*.

In conclusion, Buber's political thought does not ultimately urge us to dispense with institutional structures and political bodies – the world of *It* – but it exhorts us to always ground political life on the meta-sociological dimension of the *eternal Thou*, a monition that, in his words, reads as follows:

The communal life of man can no more than man himself dispense with the world of *It*, over which the presence of the *Thou* moves like the spirit upon the face of the waters. Man's will to profit and to be powerful have their natural and proper effect so long as they are linked with, and upheld by, his will to enter into relation.[33]

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Notes

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5. Cf. Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Abhandlung des Communismus und des Socialismus als empiririscher Kulturformen* (Leipzig: Fues, 1887).
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14. Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia*, 50.
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17. Buber, 'Staat und Gemeinschaft', Buber Archiv, MS Var 350. Quoted in Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia*, 55.
18. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed. Talcott Parsons, trans. A.M. Henderson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 136.
19. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 45. I follow Gregor Smith's translation, which aptly capitalises the C in centre, stressing its linkage with a transcendent sphere.
20. Dan Avnon, 'The "Living Center" of Martin Buber's Political Theory', *Political Theory* 21, no. 1 (1993), 55–77.
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22. Alex Guilherme, 'Reflexions on Mendes-Flohr's and Avnon's Interpretations of Buber's "Living-Centre": Implications for the Gemeinde', *Philosophia* 43, no. 3 (2015), 821–841, here 829, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-015-9605-7.
23. Buber, *I and Thou*, 100.
24. Mendes-Flohr, 'Martin Buber's Concept of the Centre', 19.
25. Martin Buber, *Kingship of God*, 3rd newly enlarged German ed., trans. Richard Scheimann (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), 136.
26. In this Buber quotes and follows Weber. Cf. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 358 ff.
27. Buber, *Kingship of God*, 140–141.
28. Ibid., 139.
29. Ibid., 139.
30. Ibid., 57.
31. Gabriele Guerra, '"Theocratic Anarchism"? Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem in Switzerland: Anarchism, Messianism and the Avant-Garde', in *Anarchism and the Avant-Garde: Radical Arts and Politics in Perspective*, ed. Carolin Kosuch (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2020), 177–196, here 181.
32. Paul Mendes-Flohr, 'Prophetic Politics and Meta-Sociology: Martin Buber and German Social Thought', *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 60, no. 1 (1985), 67–82, here 78.
33. Buber, *I and Thou*, 48.