

# Through Separation to Community

Gustav Landauer

June 9th, 1900

*Everything that exists now is but the handle of the past and of the future – bottomless, rich, and invisible... I am not happy, as happiness comes from man. I am not unhappy, as unhappiness comes from man too. I am everything, because that is what comes from God. Nothing in the world is lonely, everything is related. The true and the holy are like rays of light that hit everyone whose eyes are open; to see and to be seen is one and the same. (Clemens Brentano)*

*We shall be spirit for all things, and all things shall be spirit for us. We shall recognize all things and become one with them in God. This is why I ask God to free me of God. To have no being means to go beyond God and beyond all differences. I was there. I wanted to be there. I recognized the man I created. I am the cause of myself as an eternal being. My birth is eternal. I have always been eternal, I am eternal now, and I will remain eternal. I am also the cause of myself as a temporal being. What belongs to time will die. What comes with time shall vanish with time. My eternal birth includes the birth of all things, and it makes me the cause of myself and of all things. If I did not want to be, I would not be, and neither would there be any things nor God. It is not necessary to understand this. (Meister Eckhart)*

*All my souls slept.  
Then the sun rose from its depths.  
I am resting: a quiet man in quietness.  
A ghosts' horse cart rolls over me,  
And a new rich life begins.  
The crown that shines around your temples  
I have forged a thousand years ago.  
The world is full of dark questions.  
This is why you have to play the harp.  
(Alfred Mombert)*

For those of us who see ourselves as part of the Vanguard, the distance to the rest of humankind has become enormous. I do not mean the distance between those who one calls educated on the one hand and the masses on the other. This distance is problematic enough, but it

is not the crucial one. There are workers who are much closer to the vanguard than educated philistines. One must understand who really belongs to the vanguard. It is not a matter of knowledge or ability, but of perspective and orientation. The social position of the mass individual derives from a heritage that determines his being from the outside as well as from within: he belongs to a certain family and a certain class, he acquires certain knowledge and follows a certain faith, he turns to a certain profession, he is Protestant or Catholic, a German or an English patriot, a shop keeper or a newspaper editor. Authority, custom, morality, time, and class define his existence.

Nowadays, however, there is a young generation that has become skeptical of tradition. We can categorize its members if we want to: then we have socialists and anarchists, atheists and gypsies, nihilists and romantics. Some of them have enthusiastically tried to uplift the masses, to awaken them, to purify them, to arouse anger and indignation in them, to tell them about the coming beauty and splendor, and to organize them in new social and economic unions. Others have chosen different ways: they have turned life into a game and seek the finest and most exquisite for themselves; they have turned into big loners or small hedonists.

I was among those who had gone to the masses. Now I and my comrades have returned. We have lost some along the way – either to a party or to despair. We have brought back others with us – more than them, we could not find. We have come to a realization that took pains to reach: we are too far ahead to be understood. We have developed a sense of clarity that people in their everyday confusion cannot grasp. Our souls cannot tolerate this confusion any longer. The conclusion is that we must cease descending to the masses. Instead, we must precede them. At first, it might seem as if we were walking away from them. But we can only find the community that we need and long for if we – the new generation – separate ourselves from the old communities. If we make this separation a radical one and if we – as separated individuals – allow ourselves to sink to the depths of our being and to reach the inner core of our most hidden nature, then we will find the most ancient and complete community: a community encompassing not only all of humanity but the entire universe. Whoever discovers this community in himself will be eternally blessed and joyful, and a return to the common and arbitrary communities of today will be impossible.

I differentiate between three forms of community: first of all, there is a hereditary power that we can discover deep in the mine pits of our inner self: the inner paleontological treasures of the universe; secondly, there is another hereditary power, one that wants to inhibit, limit, and imprison us from the outside; and thirdly, there are the free momentary associations of individuals based on common interests.

The first of these communities refers to what one usually calls the individual – however, as I want to show, the individual is always a manifestation of the universe. The second refers to the forced communities of bourgeois societies and states. The third refers to the community which is only yet to come: to the one we want to initiate without further delay.

If one wants to find out what we perceive real in the words “individual” and “community,” if one really wants to talk about the reality that we keep hidden behind abstract notions and categories, then one must look at the teachings of Berkeley, Kant, or Schopenhauer. Let us admit it: if we make our subjectivity the basis of our reflection, and if we accept the isolation of our individuality, then we give up all other notions of reality; then space and time define all our perception; then all is material, our brain and our senses included (and especially you, dear reader: a ghostly ghost which I, as spirit, have produced); then the past will only be an imagination of our

eternally present consciousness – this also means that all evolutionary theory will be rendered impossible.

We might never be able to refute such a notion, nor to prove another. However, the assumption from which this notion stems can never be proven either: my inner feeling that I am an isolated unit can be wrong – and I declare it so, because I do not want to be isolated. Yet, I must be aware of what this declaration means: I leave behind the only thing that seems certain within myself; I now float out into the uncertain world of hypotheses and fantasies. I reject the certainty of my I so that I can bear life. I try to build myself a new world, knowing that I do not really have any ground to build it on; all I have is a need. This need, as a part of life, includes a liberating, joyful strength: I know from now on that I live, that I perceive and act in my own, self-created world. Then, however, in order not to be a godforsaken loner, I accept this world and surrender my I. I do this to feel one with the world in which my I has dissolved. Just like someone who jumps into the water to kill himself, I jump into the world – but instead of death, I find life. The I kills itself so that the World I can live. And so, even if it may not be the absolute – which really means “isolated” – reality that I create, it is the reality that is relevant to me, born in myself, put in place by myself, and coming to life in myself. We go beyond abstraction, this deadening, emptying, and desolating means of reduction, and instead allow all our forces to combine and pull the universe into the sphere of our own control. Abstraction and conceptual thought have reached their end. They only await their final deadly blow.

Since Kant, conceptual thought has only killed the living world. Now the living world finally rises up and kills the dead concept instead. Yes, even that which is dead must sometimes be killed. The times of the one absolute way to explain the world, and of the both torturous and futile attempts to control it, are over. Instead, we embrace different perspectives of the world that not only exist next to each other but complement each other – we know that they do not show the world “as it is;” yet they do show what the world is for us. This is the way by which we are opening ourselves to what lies beyond our I by using our I. We use our senses to reach out towards what lies beyond them; we attempt to understand the world with the whole richness of our lives, with our passions, and with our deepest contemplation. During our former attempts to touch and grasp the world, we have become tired and complacent; instead of incorporating it into our- selves, we have emptied it and handed it over to the hollow compartments of our general concepts. At the entrance of these unwelcoming quarters – which we keep carefully apart from the more comfortable areas of our lustful opinions and fancy desires – there might be a note of warning: No. 0.

Let us take another way: let us allow the world to pass through ourselves, let us be ready to feel the world, to experience it, to allow ourselves to be grasped and seized by it. Until now everything has been divided into a poor, weak, active I and an unapproachable rigid, lifeless, passive world. Let us instead be the medium of the world, both active and passive. So far, we were content with transforming the world into the spirit of man, or into the spirit of our brain – let us now transform ourselves into the spirit of the world.

This is possible. The old Meister Eckhart, the great heretic and mystic, was right when he said that if we were able to comprehend a little flower and its nature completely, we would comprehend the whole world. He added, however, that we can never reach such absolute comprehension from the outside, i.e., with the help of our senses. “God is always ready, but we are not – God is close to us, but we are far from him; God is inside, but we are outside; God is at home, we are lost.”

Meister Eckhart shows us the way – we only have to understand his metaphors of God. He tells of how the ecstatic nun Sister Catherine runs jubilantly towards her master: “Herr, rejoice with me, I have become God!” She has forgotten everything she ever knew and has left herself and every- thing else. As she comes to her senses again, she first mutters: “What I have found, nobody can put into words.” Once words come to her, she says:

*“I am where I was before I became an individual; and all I see is God – and God ... You have to know that everything that is put into words or presented in pictures is nothing but a way to lead them to God. Know that nothing is in God but God! Know that no soul can enter God before it does not become God in the way it was before it became an individual ... If words suffice for you, this is what you ought to know: God is a word, heaven is a word – those who do not want their souls to move forward, with realization and with love, they should rightfully be called disbelievers ... The soul is naked and bereft of all things that can be named ... Know that as long as good human beings will live on earth, their souls will continue to exist in eternity. This is why good human beings treasure life.”*

The way to create a community that encompasses the entire world leads not outward, but inward. We must realize that we do not just perceive the world, but that we are the world. The one who can comprehend the flower completely, can completely comprehend the whole world. So let us return completely to ourselves, then we may truly find the universe. Let us make it very clear to us that, as long as we perceive our own inner nature as reality, all matter is indeed a spook, imagined by our eyes, our touch, and our perception of space as the external world (figuratively spoken, because our means of perception are matter too); let us make it entirely clear to us that inner perception only depends on spirit. A spirit that is complex and demanding. If we do not understand this, we will mis- take our narrow, ridiculous I for the only thing that is essential. Let us not forget that the acknowledgment of the world is a postulate of our thinking (which serves our life as a scout); this is also true for the acknowledgment of the spiritual world. We must not forget this in order to avoid turning a necessary disposition into a dogma or into so-called science.

There is another thing we must not forget: namely, that the “spiritualization of the world” has nothing to do with a “morality of the world,” or a morality which could be derived from a “world principle.” The least that our wisdom attains to is an ethical dogma or a so-called scientific justification of morality. Let us make it clear to ourselves – and we now know what it means to make something clear, namely to create a necessary disposition – that past, present and future – as well as the notions of “here” and “there” – are only a unique/unified eternal stream that flows from the infinite to the infinite. There is neither a cause for nor an effect of this world.

Nonetheless, this world is evident to us and therefore true. Assumptions of cause and effect only exist in the realm of isolated bodies, but not in the stormy sea of the soul. It would lead too far to show that one has also, step by step, realized in body mechanics that there are no isolated bodies and no far-reaching effects. The images of flows and waves are also common in the material world (the fact that they are taken from it is self-explanatory). The molecular and ether theory belong here, even if one only understands them as a hypothetical introduction of auxiliary terms or as a kind of justification.

I do not want to deny that the world can be explained materialistically, since there are many possible explanations, an endless number of world views, etc. Spinoza said more accurately, an

endless number of divine at- tributes. But one must understand everything materialistically and must refrain from the spiritual completely, because a mixture of the two is not possible. The emergence of the spiritual from the material is unexplainable. Spinoza already knew this. Yet it is only since Locke, Berkeley, and Kant that we understand that matter can, without the smallest remainder, be expressed as spirit alone: either as a reflection of our individual soul – a notion which I reject – or, figuratively spoken, as part-souls of the world- soul: a notion which I embrace. This is the extraordinary advantage a spiritual understanding of the world holds over a materialistic one.

This does not mean that we do not have to study the material; we very much have to in order for our psychological metaphoric language to progress. Our talk of the world-soul would be all but pitiful babble if our senses did not always provide new objective data for our individual soul to interpret. The marriage between us and the world is complicated and difficult; but since the relationship contains various pleasant aspects and since we cannot divorce ourselves anyway, we are best off accepting it. The countenance of complaint and condemnation – which we know as pessimism – is neither enchanting nor uplifting. We say thus: what works, is present; what works, pushes and exercises a certain power; and what exercises a certain power, exists, is that which is alive.

According to this rationale, nothing that is dead could have any effect, or could still be active. Hence, every cause is alive, otherwise it would not be a cause. There are no dead laws of nature. And there is no separation between cause and effect. Cause and effect must exist alongside each other. Our notion of cause-and-effect means a flow from one to the other. And when each pole is enriched by this exchange, and when the exchange becomes eternal, then we probably have what is called a reciprocal effect – because such an effect exists, even if the rigid ones among us do not want to know it. Matter is rigid and stiff; no wonder that materialists are too.

The flow of all that is eternally alive and knows neither isolation nor death is the macrocosm whose discovery makes Goethe's Faust rejoice:

*Am I a God? All grows so clear to me!  
In these pure lineaments I see  
Creative Nature's self before my soul appear.*

“Creative Nature” – this is the *natura naturans* of Spinoza, a teacher of Goethe, who takes the term from the medieval mystics and realists. Again and again we do encounter the notion that one can become God; that one can become the world instead of just recognizing it. Perhaps the deepest meaning of Jesus' teachings is reached when Meister Eckhart lets God, who is also the Son of Man, say: “I was human to you, so if you are not Gods to me, then you do me injustice.” So let us see how we can become Gods! Let us see how we can find the world in ourselves!

We mentioned the realists of the Middle Ages. They were called realists because they declared the universals, the emptiest abstract notions and generic names, realities. Since they mostly referred to products of both human hands and heads – be it clay, virtue, God, or immortality – they were fair game for their opponents, the nominalists; no matter how hard it was for them to make themselves heard in their complicated times. These concepts, they explained, were not realities, but mere words. Thus the nominalists took on a necessary task: they robbed spooks of their reality and sacredness.

The last great nominalist was Max Stirner, who, with the most radical thoroughness, freed our minds of the spook that abstract notions are. The essence of his teachings can be summarized

in the following paraphrased words: “The concept of God has to be destroyed. But it is not God who is the enemy – it is the concept.”

Stirner discovered that all actual oppression comes, in the end, from concepts and ideas that are accepted as sacred. With a fearless, strong, and determined hand he took notions such as God, sacredness, morality, state, society, and love apart and demonstrated laughingly their hollowness. According to his marvelous explanation, the abstract notions were but bloated nothingness, and concepts were only words for a group of singularities. However, Stirner then replaced God with the concrete single being, the individual. God was from now on under the ownership of The Ego and Its Own. This was Stirner’s obsession.

Our task is to prove that the concrete and isolated individual is as much a spook as God. We therefore have to restore the wisdom of the realists that also exists. The objections against them throughout the centuries were important, but now it is time to realize that there are no individuals, only affinities and communities. It is not true that collective names are only sums of singularities or individuals; rather, individuals are only manifestations and points of passage, the electrical sparks of something greater, something all-encompassing. (Whether the generic cut and dried names that we are using are adequate, is another question.

First, let us remember that there are no more dead causes or dead laws of nature, no transcendent principles, for us anymore. We only know immanent life, only present forces. If therefore the scientists of our days tell us in their rigidity in what ways a newborn individual is determined by heredity, we have to ask: which heredity? Where does it come from? From heaven or from the past? Is the dead, strong, immobile law of heredity the father or godfather of an isolated creature?

Neither abstract heredity exists nor the concrete individual. Heredity as a word hints at the past, while it really means something very alive and present. “The individual” is a rigid and absolute expression for something that is very mobile and relative. Heredity is a very real and very present force which signifies the survival of the ancestors in new forms and shapes. The individual is a spark of the soul stream that we know as humanity, species, or universe. If we see the world only as the outside world, then we do see, touch, hear, taste, and smell individuals. If we turn within ourselves, however, we realize that there are no autonomous individuals. What we are, is what our ancestors are in us. They are active and alive in us, they are with us when we interact with the outside world, and they will be passed on with us to our descendants. What we are part of is an unbreakable chain that comes from the infinite and proceeds to the infinite, even if little segments might tear off and experience complications. Everything we make while we are alive connects us with the universe. And even our dead body is a bridge that is used to continue our journey through the universe. As Clemens Brentano says, “Life is nothing but a piece of eternity that we make our own by dying.” The saying Everything that lives, dies carries some truth in it, but it is a trivial and meaningless truth. We should say instead: “Everything which lives, lives once and for all.”

We have seen that matter and body are inadequate and dated expressions for the complex soul stream that we call the world. Yet, our perspective is so new that we lack proper words for it. Hence, we have to make do with the old expressions under certain reservations. I doubt this will do too much harm, since all our reflections are only metaphorical approaches, which are always pursued under certain reservations. Our world can only be understood if we understand the several parallel, supplementing perspectives by which we have created it.

If we look at this from a material angle, we realize that there can be nothing more certain than that the individual stands in an inextricable connection with the past generations. Sure, the umbilical cord that connects the child with the mother is severed at birth, but the invisible chains that attach our bodies to our ancestors are stronger than this. What is heredity other than an almost eerie yet very familiar and well-known power and domination that the world of the ancestors exercises over our body and spirit? What are power and domination other than presence and community? If we humans have smooth skin instead of woolly hair, a chin that does not protrude, an upright posture, then this is a consequence of heredity, i.e., the domination that is still exercised over us by the first humans who evolved from the state of the apes. Put differently, since these first humans still have an effect on us, they still live in us, and we still experience them in us when we experience ourselves. One finally has to realize that all effect requires presence and that there are no dead, but only living causes.

If we want to get rid of the word “cause” altogether, we could say: “The cause is dead, long live the living effect!” We can also invert Schopenhauer’s saying that all reality is effectiveness. We can say instead that effectiveness is reality, that what is real are the connections and the communities, and that all that is real (there is even a Swabian saying that confirms this) is also present and in the moment.

We are the instants of the eternal community of ancestors. It can only help to point out that eternity too follows the rules of time. Even if Schopenhauer calls it “timeless,” he means “infinite course of time.” I am afraid that if we attempt to create timelessness, i.e., stop the process of time and try to see past, present, and future as a kind of “dead simultaneousness” (the words escape us here), we simply end up with an image of infinite space. Sure, time can be expressed in terms of space, and space in terms of time; time can be swallowed by space and space by time; but to go beyond both notions seems near impossible. To express space through time is maybe one of the most important challenges for the coming generations. All our language is quantitatively spatial and qualitatively facial: the tree, human beings, the mammal – all these categories and many others are built on facial perceptions. It would be good to perceive the world in terms of time instead. Best with the help of hearing. Music can maybe be the simple beginning to this new language.

The great hereditary communities are real; the work of the ancestors is still felt today, hence they must be alive. Of course, our human and animal ancestors – to only speak of those for now – have long become extinct in the outside world; despite searching everywhere, we have only poor remnants. In ourselves, however, these paleontological relics, these dead extinct beings are still alive. It requires only a “second face” to become aware of them. We are what remains of them, and our children will be as much theirs as they will be ours.

The individual bodies which have lived on this earth from its beginnings are not just a sum of isolated individual beings; they form a big and real community, an organism; an organism that changes permanently, that always manifests itself in new individual shapes. As little as our consciousness usually knows about the powerful and real life of our allegedly un-conscious desires, reflexes, and physical automatisms, as little do we know about the life of the ancestors in ourselves. And yet their existence is undeniable. If we do not acknowledge this, the meaning of life and the world will remain mysterious to us; they will be all matter, all perception, all spook.

Everything that exists, exists for itself, i.e., is conscious. *Est ergo cogitat* – this is our Cartesian credo. Humanity is no abstract, dead term to us; humanity is real and alive, and the individuals are – together with their consciousness – the individually emerging, changing, and disappear-

ing (another form of changing) shadows that make humanity visible. Humanity, or rather the universe, is the Platonic idea, the *ens realissimum* of the scholastics.

We have to think of the tree which stands in poor soil: it lowers a branch into richer soil and makes the old tree die and pass away, while its own sapling prospers and turns into a new tree. Likewise, we die as human beings and do not die at the same time. In our children, as well as in our deeds, we continue to live in another form and in unity with other human beings. One could say: Disregard the material and only focus on the spiritual! However, I would like to respond instantly: No, no, this cannot be! The one who only feels the spiritual with his soul while perceiving his body externally has lost all natural perception and has subscribed to some school's dogma. Body and spirit are not separable on the inside, both are expressions of the soul.

Let us look at this artificial separation, let us consider it for a moment: the way that heredity supposedly expresses itself in the individual is only in customs and morals, they say. They speak of "herd morality" and such; but apart from this, the individual is something in and by itself, something special and clearly distinct. The opposite is true: it does not even matter how much customs and traditions of past generations define what we inherit; what matters is that their influence can be felt from the outside, through our social environments and the random communities of authority. However, what really makes an individual is that which is given to him by God's grace and birth; by the hereditary power that we ourselves are.

The individual is the part of ourselves that can only superficially be altered from the outside. The more firmly an individual stands on its own ground, the deeper it retreats into itself, the more it withdraws from the effects of its surroundings, the more it will find itself united with the past, with what it originally is. What man originally is, what his most intimate and hidden is, what his inviolable own is, is the large community of the living in himself, his blood and his kin. Blood is thicker than water; the community, as which the individual finds itself, is more powerful and more noble and more ancient than the weak influences of state and society. Our most individual is our most universal. The more deeply I go into myself, the more I become part of the world. But do I have the means to go this deep, to find what I need? Can what I find be different from a mere perception? Will not the inner perception I can have of myself just be a weak and vague general feeling compared to the clear sensual perceptions I derive from the outside world? Would the community that I advocate be based on nothing but such a weak and vague general feeling that is essentially useless to us?

Well, let us not be too proud of the clarity of our sensual perceptions, and let us not forget that we do not want to perceive the community which I advocate, but that we want to be and live it. The clarity of our sensual perceptions comes from the individualization and separation which we project onto the outside world in order to control it. Likewise, it seems as if the world separates us and turns us into individuals in order to express itself through us. Under such circumstances, it is only in separation and in turning inwards that we can find and feel the world in our body and soul. 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.

If we want to bring something that we have forgotten into our consciousness, we recall it with the help of the psychological apparatus that we call memory. Our memory, however, is limited to the few and superficial experiences of our individual lives. This means that any understanding of individuality based upon our individual memory is superficial, momentary, and fleeting too. True individuality is deep, ancient, and everlasting. It is the expression of the community's desires in the individual.



Meister Eckhart says that God is not one with the individual, but with humanity. It is humanity that all individuals have in common; it is humanity that gives them value. It is the highest and finest in all individuals' lives. It is what Meister Eckhart calls human nature.

We must not misunderstand this: Eckhart does not speak of arbitrary commonalities enforced by authority. Enforced commonalities are the superficiality of herd mentality. Human nature is not indifferent, superficial, philistine, but eternal heredity, divinity; it is consensus and community, created once all find their deep and genuine core and live according to it. In other words, the true individuality that we find in the deepest depths of our selves is community, humanity, divinity.

Once individuals have transformed themselves into communities, then they are ready to form wider communities with like-minded individuals.

These will be new kinds of communities, established by individuals with the courage and the need to separate from the dullness of superficiality.

Individuals who are one with their innermost self and newly born thereof have no "memory" of the ancestors and the community alive in themselves. They are this community, they do not perceive anything as external; they are this memory, they do not possess it. We are all humans and live human lives. But we are also all animals with animal needs; needs that are older and hence more individual than human needs; the latter always have a touch of superficiality.

Human is our conceptual thinking and our memory; animal – thus both more general and individual – is our observing and witnessing, our feeling, and all forms of subconscious and bodily-spiritual experience. We become most general and divine, "most community," when we are more than animal. The so-called non-organic, the infinite, the universe are part of ourselves as well.

If we follow the teachings of Berkeley and Kant, only the infinite universe, the *natura naturans*, the God of the mystics, can really be called I. I am the cause of myself because I am the world. And I am the world because I am whole. Development comes from an eternal source; the connection is never broken, but our superficial mind cannot remember its origins, cannot recognize the ever-present source in ourselves, and does not allow it to flourish. Nonetheless, we have the most marvelous proof that the human spirit is able to connect to the voice of eternity: music, as Schopenhauer said so well, is the world reduplicated. Music is not necessary, however, to find infinity in ourselves. We must only *become* infinite, we must only become *truly* ourselves and unearth our deepest depths.

There is yet another way to feel the infinite, the most splendid of them all. We are all familiar with it as long as we are not entirely corrupted by the decadence and egotistical superficiality of our distorted and arbitrary communities. I speak of love. Love is such a wonderful and universal feeling, a feeling that spins us round and elevates us to the stars, because it is a cord that connects our childhood with the universe. There lies a deeper meaning in the fact that the name for the experience of community, the feeling that connects us with humanity: love, human love, is the same name that we use for the love between the sexes that connects us with the following generations. Damn the soulless who do not shiver when they hear of love! Damn those for whom sexual satisfaction is nothing but a physical sensation! Love sets the world alight and sends sparks through our being. It is the deepest and most powerful way to understand the most precious that we have.

I have talked about the gap between us, the new human beings, and the masses, and about the necessity to separate ourselves from those united by the state. This might seem to contradict

my belief that a love for humanity is part of our most genuine being. Let me explain: on the one hand, it seems clear that all contemporary human beings – the civilized as well as the others – are so closely related to us that it is difficult not to love them as we love anyone who is close to us. On the other hand, the relationship is as difficult as it often is with our closest relatives: they are very close to us in their being and their characteristics, and we do feel the bond of blood and we do love them – but we cannot live with them. Most of our contemporaries have deformed their humanity because of their statist and social lowliness and stupidity; they have also deformed their animalness with their hypocrisy, false morality, cowardice, and unnaturalness. Even during occasional hours of clarity or despair they cannot shed their masks. They have blocked their way to the universe; they have forgotten that they can turn themselves into Gods. We want to be everything though: humans, animals, and Gods! We want to be heroes! So for the love of humanity that has lost its way, for the love of those who will come after us, for the love, finally, of the best in ourselves, we want to leave these people, we want our own company and our own lives!

Away from the state, as far as we can get! Away from goods and commerce! Away from the philistines! Let us – us few who feel like heirs to the millennia, who feel simple and eternal, who are Gods – form a small community in joy and activity. Let us create ourselves as exemplary human beings. Let us express all our desires: the desire for quietism as well as activism; the desire for reflection as well as celebration; the desire for labor as well as relaxation. There is no other way for us!

This intimate belief is born from grief: we want to feel the highest joy of creation because we are desperate. Those who have already experienced it know that the only way to awaken people is by religious genius, i.e., by the exemplary life of those who do everything to rise from the abyss. These individuals know that all these questions are serious existential questions. We who are few, we who are advanced – we need our pride! – cannot, and do not want to, wait any longer! So let us begin! Let us create our communal life, let us form centers of a new kind of being, let us free ourselves from the commonness of our contemporaries!

Our pride must inhibit us from living off their work; there should be no exchange for our finest thoughts – not even for our lowest. Let us engage in physical labor, let us be productive! This way we will be able to present the finest of our spirit to all of humanity. Let us hope that a new generation – to which I address these words based on deep despair – will find itself and unite.

*Through separation to community* – what this means, is: let us risk everything, so that we can live as complete human beings; let us get away from the superficiality of the authoritarian common communities; let us instead create communities that reflect the world community that we ourselves are! We owe this to ourselves and to the world. This call goes out to all who are able to listen!

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)  
Anti-Copyright



Gustav Landauer  
Through Separation to Community  
June 9th, 1900

[https://files.libcom.org/files/Landauer\\_Revolution\\_and\\_Other\\_Writings.pdf](https://files.libcom.org/files/Landauer_Revolution_and_Other_Writings.pdf)  
Translated by Gabriel Kuhn in *Revolution and Other Writings: A Political Reader* (2010)

**[usa.anarchistlibraries.net](http://usa.anarchistlibraries.net)**