Good morning, dear speakers and participants, my name is Cedric Cohen Skalli, I am the director of Bucerius Institute for the Research of Contemporary German History and Society.

Good morning, my name is Libera Pisano, I am research associate at the Institute for Jewish Philosophy and Religion at the University of Hamburg.

Libera and I are happy and honored to open to the international conference, “THE SKEPSIS AND ANTIPOLITICS OF GUSTAV LANDAUER” on the 100th anniversary of his death which will take place today and tomorrow at the University of Haifa.

**Duty of memory**

Before saying a few words on the concept of this conference. We would like to fulfil our duty of memory concerning the circumstances in which the death of Gustav Landauer happened at the end of the *Räterepublik* in Munich in May 1919. At the end of the second volume *Gustav Landauer Sein Lebensgang in Briefen* [a biography in letters] edited by Martin Buber and Ina Britschgi-Schimmer and published in Frankfurt in 1929, one reads the following description of Landauer’s death.

On the morning of the 2nd of May, Landauer was transported to Stadelheim together with three other arrested members of the worker soviets of Starnberg.… Landauer was delivered to the soldiers without the slightest protection. Their officers did not prevent them from their murderous intentions; on the contrary, the soldiers were cheered to do it. It was an officer who appealed to the troop of soldiers, with whom Landauer was walking, and said: “Stop, this Landauer must be shot immediately!” Another officer… beat him on the head with the stick of his horsewhip. This was the signal for the soldiers, who leapt on him as a pack of animals. They shot and beat Landauer to death. His last words, according to an eye witness, were: “Kill me! Show me that you are men!”

At the end of Ulrich Linse’s book *Gustav Landauer und die Revolutionszeit 1918-1919,* published in 1974, one read different testimonies or reports on the circumstances of Landauer’s death in prison of Stadelheim, yet the brutality of the soldiers and officers remains the same. Michael Brenner in his recent book *Der lange Schatten der Revolution; Juden und Antisemiten in Hitlers München,* sees in Landauer’s assassination, the mark of “pogrom atmosphere” triggered by “so the called Jewish Revolution in Munich” which would eventually lead to the later rise of National Socialism to power.

**Bio and bibliography**

Born, 7th April, 1870, to a secular Jewish family in Karlsruhe, southern Germany, Landauer studied German and English literature, philosophy and art history in Heidelberg, Strasbourg and Berlin. However, he completed none of these studies as his political militancy had him banned from all German universities. Stirner, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Spinoza and Schopenhauer are just a few of the many philosophers he was impressed by in that time. His first political commitments saw him rise to the top of German anarchist circles during the 1890s. In the first decade of 1900, Landauer withdrew almost entirely from public activity to engage in private study. He was to favor a more inner, philosophical and mystical idea of anarchism to the political manifestations of the time. This introspection was spurred by his translation of Meister Eckhart in prison and a deep affinity with the Mauthner’s *Sprachskepsis*. This new vein of Landauer’s thought is sourced his “Durch Absonderung zur Gemeinschaft,” a speech given at a meeting of the newly founded circle Neue Gemeinschaft– where he met Martin Buber and Erich Mühsam– and later was to serve as the first chapter of his *Skepsis und Mystik*. During these years Landauer and his second wife (the poet and translator, Hedwig Lachmann, whom he married in 1903) were extremely active translating Kropotkin, Wilde, Whitman, and Tagore. 1907 marked his return to political activism with the publication of *Die Revolution* in the book series edited by Buber; in fact, he published “30 Socialist theses” that anticipate his *Call to Socialism*, of 1911, which represents the peak of his political contribution. In May 1908, Landauer initiated the *Sozialistischer Bund* whose goal it was to form small, independent communities or settlements as a material foundation for a new form of society and an embodiment of his notion of socialism. With the outbreak of WWI, Landauer and Hedwig Lachmann were isolated, being among the few pacifistic voices in Germany at that time. The majority of anarchists and leftist thinkers welcomed the war as an opportunity of political renovation. Landauer was convinced the war was nothing but the extreme outcome of nationalism and imperialism. In 1917 he and his wife decided to move to Krumbach, southern Germany. In 1918 Hedwig died of pneumonia and his enormous loss has been interpreted by many biographers and friends as a point of no return in Landauer’s life and justification for his ‘sacrifice’ or ‘martyrdom’ to the Munich Soviet Republic; in fact, in November 1918 he joined the Bavarian Revolution as one of its intellectual leaders. He was brutally murdered by the Freikorps on the 2nd of May in 1919.

The specific eclecticism of Gustav Landauer is not easy to grasp. He was a fin de siècle writer, a translator, a politician, a journalist, a political thinker and a revolutionary figure who had an important role in late 19th and early 20th century Germany. We chose to devote this international conference to the complex articulation of Skepsis and Antipolitik in the multifaceted features of his life, of his thought and of his problematic legacy. These two different features have not received yet proper attention by scholars, even if they are at the heart of Landauer’s thought. Skepticism has been used by Landauer as the theoretical premise for a new idea of community and a complex mystical experience, in which the individual is indissolubly bound to the entire past and present of humanity; Anti-politics could be defined as a radical critique towards a modern hypertrophy of politics and an attempt to free man and societies from the abstraction of the State. These two elements are the fil rouge that ran through all his political and philosophical thought.

**Background and Concept**

Just a few words on the background of the conference. The idea of conference is born out of our meeting, Libera and I, at the Maimonides Center for Advanced Studies in Hamburg more than three years ago. Since then, Libera and I are collaborating on a research on the last period of Landauer in the *Räterepublik* in Munich in 1918-1919. During our work on this paper, we thought join our respective interest, Libera in Sphachphilosophie, and I in Jewish political thought, and therefore we came with the title: THE SKEPSIS AND ANTIPOLITICS OF GUSTAV LANDAUER. One century after Landauer’s brutal death, in a time marked by a deep doubt concerning the outcomes and expectations of modern politics, but also by more than a century of linguistic turn in philosophy, we thought it would be just to devote this international conference to the complex articulation of Skepsis and Antipolitik in Landauer’s life, thought and legacy.

As soon as we begun to send mail of invitations to scholars around the world, Libera and I were amazed by the enthusiastic answered we received, and by the remarkable quality of the abstracts scholars sent us. If today, we are proud to present a conference with 18 distinguished speakers, coming from the US, Germany, Spain, and Israel, it is thanks to the enthusiasm that Landauer’s life and work still raises among scholars today. We want to thank each speaker for coming today and tomorrow and for investing such of wealth of knowledge and thought in their papers. Our idea was to mix confirmed and well-known scholars with younger scholars at the beginning or middle of their career. And we are looking forward to hearing the papers and engaging in discussion afterwards. Therefore, we remind the speakers to limit their talk to 25 min in order to leave 15 min of discussion for each paper. We would like also remind that the Papers presented at this conference will be collected and published in the series “The Maimonidean Library for Jewish Philosophy and Religion” whose chief editor is **Prof. Giuseppe Veltri**, director of the Maimonides Centro, who unfortunately cannot be here but he sends us his best wishes for a productive conference.

We would like to conclude this too long introduction by thanking our sponsors:

First, the Bucerius Institute for the Research of Contemporary German History and Society.

Second, the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies and its head Prof. Giuseppe Veltri.

And third, the Faculty of humanities at the University of Haifa.

And last but not least, Libera and I want to thank the coordinator of the Bucerius Institute, Mr. Amir Bar-On who made this whole conference possible by his daily work and by his wonderful skill in administration.

A Last practical remark:

Today and tomorrow, we will have lunch in the dining room of the faculty on the ground floor. Amir will lead you all to the dining room. And this evening, the speakers and chairs are all invited to a Dinner downtown. Right after the last conference, a bus will take us to the restaurant. Again, Amir will lead us.