

# Martin Buber, *I-It*, and Utopias: Economics and Dialogue in the Age of Neoliberal Globalisation

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The turn to populism in Western governments is increasingly marked by a breakdown in communication between those who disagree. Martin Buber's analysis of I-It as the nature of communication accounts for the impersonality and incivility of populist responses to globalisation. His writings on utopias account for the lack of centre in societies formed solely around bureaucratic means of production. This article elaborates upon his concept of I-It from *I and Thou* and his account of the breakdown of Marxism. These point to a loss of *Thou* as a binding and guiding force in community, leading to the uncivil distrust and populist reactions to globalisation. Neoliberal globalisation, as with the I-It interaction, is marked by a disconnection from nature in a system that is centred around self-interest. Buber theorised his *Thou* as the place where humanity is reconnected with nature and joined to others in dialogue. His work points to religious community as one witness to communities where forms of dialogue and interaction lie beyond market-based solution creation and negotiation. In Buber's work, a diagnosis for the anger and mistrust between neighbours and citizens in the present moment becomes salient: a disconnection from *Thou* as the organizing centre of community.

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## Introduction

In this article, I expand a suggestion made by Ronald C. Arnett that the individualistic self may be rooted in capitalism. In *Communication and Community: Implications of Martin Buber's Dialogue*, he posits that those who travel and experience the world as capitalists accumulate encounters with others; accumulation is presumed to be the source of happiness (Arnett 1986, 76). This assertion highlights the purpose of communication with others as partially definitive of that experience, as seen with Aristotle's final cause. I extend this conversation through this essay, understanding Martin Buber's analysis of economic transactions through his philosophical anthropology and his support of a form of socialism that emerges from analysis of pre-Marxist accounts of 'Utopia.' The essay examines the economic transaction of I-It, a designation for human relation that inescapably undergirds society in the

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historical moment of Buber: early twentieth-century Europe. His work addresses the post-World War I existentialist dilemma of the West, with socialism overtaking both the State in Stalinist Russia and the capitalist individualism against which it aimed to rebel (Baron 1996, 249–250). Buber's analysis reveals a core dilemma in the contemporary moment; the centrality of capitalism to all human practices, its role as a system within States, and the refashioning of community beyond dialogue within it.

The extent to which capitalism is a centralised ordering system that overtakes all human endeavour, and whether it should be, are each up for debate. On one side, there are those that wish to overhaul modern capitalism. Contemporary progressives such as best-selling journalist Naomi Klein consider the separation of human production from nature, of economic pursuits and their ethical tolls on the planet and on labour (Klein 2014, 9). Klein argues that dependence on fossil fuels not only drives climate change, but it pushes Western companies to develop new markets that deal with its effects, thereby furthering the crisis and increasing the lust for oil. This in part explains the centrality of the energy extraction industry to the global economy; she dates the drive to extract fuel from the earth back to Francis Bacon and *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623) (Klein 2014, 170). She also notes the clashes between producers and indigenous peoples and labourers that have marked this process since its inception (Klein 2014, 175–177). Klein echoes Bernie Sanders in the 2016 US presidential election and his call for reforming capitalism (Rehmann 2016), a call which reconsiders its own premises and develops new praxis.

Ironically, the opposite position also mistrusts globalised economics that has led to populist election results in the West, including the 2016 Brexit vote and the election of Donald J. Trump as President of the United States. These populist movements depicted the neoliberal globalised economy as the source of the dehumanisation of working and lower-middle classes throughout the West, marked by rumours of government funding going to illegal immigrants. Such movements are rooted in the fear of a system that would allow billionaires and government officials to undermine basic property rights, using environmental regulation to force small business owners to surrender their land to multinational corporations (Aho 2016, xi). Echoes of Ronald Reagan's 1989 Farewell Address are seen in this rhetoric, where he famously asserted that the expansion of government meant the contraction of liberty, in an equation 'as neat and predictable as a law of physics' (Reagan 2004, 516). This movement in the West, however, does not conceive of problems in Western capitalism so much as a corruption of an otherwise highly beneficial system. Leaders such as Trump, who has business holdings and bank dealings throughout the world, seek not to overhaul such a system so much as to

regain Western (American) dominance within it. Forms of state communication, such as diplomacy, are re-envisioned as pure negotiation, rather than dialogue that joins two parties in conversation. Further, the confusion of rhetoric and the politically charged news media landscape lead citizens across the political spectrum to question economics and government anew, in partisan ideologies that inhibit dialogue. What emerges is artificial ideology that masks the ground of such community, which is self-interest.

Martin Buber's anthropological philosophy stands as an important voice to address these contemporary concerns over totalised, neoclassical economic systems. These are systems that were presumed by neoliberals to provide 'unanimity without conformity' (Friedman 2002, 23; see also Etzioni 1988, 1), but which are experienced as total conformity. Buber's work reminds humanity that economic I-It relations, as explained in his work *I-Thou*, produce power relations that are not in and of themselves to be feared, yet cannot be dualistically separated from the concerns of the social or the political. Buber's analysis of utopias and collectives predates Marxist socialism, and, considered in light of his project of interhuman dialogue, where the *Thou* enters into human communication, challenges the sole propriety of I-It, noting the human call into something greater. Buber's advocacy of community and socialism is contextualised in the face of Marxist socialism, which would assume the role of State supremacy that it had originally intended to eliminate. For Buber, however, the *Thou*, the spirit which guides humanity, must be the centre of community, liberating us from systems that predefine our actions and humanise human relations beyond the causality of economic communication.

A rehearsal of the nature of economics in *I-Thou* follows the interpretations of those such as Hoover and Lutz, who point to the relevance of Buber's philosophical account for present crises of bureaucratic States and determinist economic systems. Buber's work reveals the distinct nature of economic interaction that informs the neoliberal quest to make the free market the primary organising system of the globe, and the disconnection between humans in interaction with each other that results.

## **I-It and Economics**

The I-It is a move of separation, the differentiation between subject and object in consciousness (Buber 2010, 23). It is distinct from an organic, natural connection, such as that between a child and its bodily interactions with its mother, which flow continually in unification inside the womb (25). The *Thou*-ness of a child is 'inborn' (27). Its connection forms it into an I as it emerges into the world (29) and, from here, it can relate as I-It to 'an object of perception and experience without real connexion [*sic*]' (29). In It-ness, humans observe others and perceive, recalling their *Thou*-ness, to which they reconnect (30). I-It relates to science and the mechanisms

of the world that sustain humanity, yet it is not I-Thou (32). I-It exists in space and time, awaiting transformation into *Thou*-ness (34); the instrumental experience becomes the first step to unify into the *Thou*.

Here, then, the I-It relation describes a typical plan for aggregate, capitalist community that, in *Thou*-ness, progresses further in connection. I-It involves experiencing another (It) as she or he appears to an I in an instrumental way; their instrumentation is a part of life (38) – this is not understood in the manner of Heidegger's *Sein* (Even-Chen and Meir 2012, 33; Buber 2002, xv). The I begins with the internal feeling that protects I from the institutions of the world, which appear to I as It (Buber 2010, 43). Buber does not allow that this is an unethical stance toward the world, so long as the It does not overtake the I (46). The I is uneasy in its division with It, but this relation begins the process of community, of the pre-natal reunification into *Thou*. The *Thou* is a 'Third' presence that is 'received in the present' (46).

This marks economic exchanges as prior to deeper forms of dialogue and exchange, rooted in the *Thou*, the reconnection to others. In this understanding, Buber questions the absence of *Thou*-ness from capitalism: 'Can the two compartments of this life, economics and State, with their present extent and completeness of structure, be conceived to rest on any other basis but that of a deliberate renunciation of all "directness," and a resolute rejection of every court of appeal which is "alien," that is, which does not arise from this sphere itself?' (47) Buber notes the presumption of distance from others that has been assumed to be the foundation of capitalist economic activity in the West since Adam Smith, who argued that distanced bargaining is natural to humanity to acquire goods (Smith 2003, ch. 2). Buber's question identifies the permanence of objectification in the economic exchange, the separation between humans in transaction. Yet he is clear that this separation alone should not be understood as evil, echoing the natural state of humanity from Smith: '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. There is no evil impulse till the impulse has been separated from the being' (Buber 2010, 48). Here, Buber addresses his contemporary socialists, who aimed to undermine State and Capitalist structures as oppressive to human community. Rather, both State and Economic spheres, around which power circulates, are not problematic in and of themselves, so long as they are joined to a 'spirit' (49). Dismantling them from the edges of society is no 'substitute for the living relation with the Centre' (49). Financial systems allow humans the resources to enter into relations that determine and facilitate a *Thou* relation, when 'spirit' is made centre of that community.

It is the person of character who bears responsibility for interpersonal exchanges in

the economic sphere of the I-It. Attention to one's disposition is not the sign of a 'dilettante' or perhaps a 'sucker' in more contemporary language, who thinks that all exchanges should involve interpersonal connection and *Thou*-ness. Rather, this spirit brings meaning to work and labour that one provides to sustain the system, and only such spirit overcomes Marxist alienation, where workers are commodities that produce other commodities (Marx, 1844, 29). Community is reified through human I-It relations, but it is ultimately birthed prior to State and Economic systems as Thou; only such an account of State and Economics liberates people, which is the role of the *Thou* (Buber 2010, 50).

This community, in which *Thou* is the centre, is not dualistic in a separation of *It* and *Thou*. While public and private spheres provide some separation between the personal and the economic, this does not disconnect all *It*-ness to public and all *Thou*-ness to private. The *It* and *Thou* are fluid in their motion as people relate to others around them. Such fluidity is dualistic if understood to be separated into spheres and would allow *It* to rise to 'tyranny' and 'rob the spirit completely of reality' (50). Instead, the spirit draws power from the world of *It*. Spirituality of Buber's time aims to reclaim this reality (51).

This perceived split is due in part to the constraints of *It* relations. Bound to space and time, the I-It is bound to the causality of the scientific world, to the systems and rules that govern behaviour (51). It is the approach to the *Thou* that allows freedom for the agent to choose beyond determinism. This removes the fear of the necessary, the systemic constraints, as the glimpse of the *Thou* has overcome him (52–53). It is what gives the human the courage to face the *I-It* world, which often overwhelms (54), which is bogged down in the 'dogma of process' that 'leaves no room for freedom' (57). Escaping causality means escaping fate that seems inescapable (56). Belief in fate in its own sake, however, is a mistake for Buber (Friedman 1983, 57). The inevitable *telos*, the end of the system that resolves as it must in scientific certainty, felt inescapable in the early twentieth-century context of Europe, from the dread of the existentialist and technological critic (52) to the persecuted Jewry of Eastern Europe and the Statist Russians. The *Thou* is what allows us to escape the notion that freedom does not exist (Buber 2010, 58).

Buber does not tread lightly in his assertions; like his existentialist contemporaries, he wonders how the power of I, as subject, has been 'ruined' and 'trampled' and can rise again (58). As self-will and fate, marks of the economic, Statist I-It relation, combat one another, it is the *Thou* that breaks in to give a glimpse beyond determinism (59). *Thou*-ness moves us to meet with destiny, unsure of what that is (60); this forms the freedom of the I. This hope moves beyond the systems that have oppressed, ironically so, in the post-utopian context of the early twentieth century.

Contemporary issues emerge through the I-It discussion that inform economic debates. First, Buber's I-It accounts for a separation from nature with the ruling *Thou* facilitating a return. The economic separation that allows domination of nature, that requires sustainability experts integrating ecological endeavours into business, for example, to persuade business leaders that such activity adds value before it can be adopted, rather than business leaders acting in an encounter of *Thou*-ness, is understood through the I-It. Second, the separation of the I and It reflects the Marxist alienation of labour, a concern of Buber in the need for *Thou* to infuse working relations between human beings (Buber 2002, 42–43). This transformation, and the ability of the *Thou* to disrupt process, leads to a third area of concern, which is the recovery of humanity in the face of economic determinism, in the transformation of the public sphere to quarantine encounters with *Thou* as, at best, a strategic option, and not a call. The emergent issues in market economics are the ability to control fate, to control outcome, to reveal and control causality in the attribution of exchange value, often through negotiation. Dobrijevic, Stanicic, and Masic, in their discussion of the role of perception in negotiation, provide a typical account of power in economic interaction: 'All negotiators want power, they know what they can do by putting pressure to the other side... When a negotiator thinks he has less power than the other party, he/she believes that the other side already possesses some advantage that can be used and consequently starts looking for more power in order to neutralise the other party's power' (2011, 36). They explore multiple accounts of how power is harnessed, but each toward a shared *telos*: a favourable outcome. Economics and It encounters allow relations to be reduced to negotiation, rather than allowing a *Thou* to control and connect and reunify. Reconnection with *Thou* as the birthing source of community, of human interaction, allows us to interact with such systems and not to lose the anthropological centre of our identity, to trivialise our existence to mere biology and sensory cause/effect relation. It, rather, creates, to borrow from Buber's critique of Oswald Spengler, 'that which constitutes the category of *man*' (Buber 2002, 85), and does not separate from *Thou*.

Buber's analysis of the initial period that led to the rise of socialism and the formation of utopias, prior to World War II, discerns differences in economic systems that inform modern responses to the reduction of economics to the I-It. His account of community through co-operative structures reveals further the strategies that attempted (and failed) to overcome the alienation between the self and nature and others. His work uses the *Thou*, the spirit of humanity, to reclaim and protect institutions (Buber 1952, xv). Buber would turn to religious understanding to overcome these issues, attempts that would manifest in later forms in Israeli co-operatives and the *kibbutz*.

## Communities and Utopia

Utopias were conceived as the final escape from the oppressive system of labour and production, where division of labour that inhibits meaning in life is recovered. This produced two accounts of socialist response, which Buber approaches throughout his writing. One is rooted in imminence and the other in the transcendent *Thou*. As socialism aimed for the most just State or community, with the Hegelian dialectic within imminent humanity revealing this process as adapted by Marx, Buber turns to economics as eschatological, which reveals in space and time from beyond it—in line with creation, not alienated from it. Such contexts overcome the aimlessness or lack of agency in humans, who, in dehumanising systems, existed like ‘a stick stuck in a bundle moving through the water, abandoned to the current or being pushed by a pole from the bank in this or that direction’ (Buber 2002, 74). This is a particular mark of the technological era, which, since the Enlightenment, viewed humanity as able to solve its own problems, its own dilemmas, not to seek guidance from above (Buber 1952, 8). Buber’s work examines both.

Buber examines community and society. Drawing from Tönnies, Buber considers the divide between a functional community focused on a centre of good (*Gemeinschaft*) and one rooted in disconnection (*Gesellschaft*) (xvi). The former develops as a response to the loneliness of the technological age (14), a space of fellowship, though in a contemporary context; Buber does not aim for nostalgia in community (15). Rather, it is infused with *Thou*-ness, with spirit. That which bonds the community matters deeply. He would call for economic community bonded not by religious dogma, but rather ‘religious exaltation,’ one conditioned by insight into the factors of life that must be considered anew (72). Each group of people in a community, then, is labelled ‘society,’ which precedes State. Further, each of these societies must consider its values. Buber’s work aims for a philosophical account of sociology, or one that is not ‘value-free’ (Lutz 1996, 268). For Buber, society is ‘a living and life-giving collaboration, an essentially autonomous consociation of human beings, shaping and re-shaping itself from within’ (Buber 1952, 14). Its structures are units, not individuals; the elimination of these unit structures through capitalist economy, which initiated societal progress ‘as a process of atomization’ (14), formed the historical basis for the work of the nineteenth-century utopians. Buber identifies three basic accounts of utopian society that counter this process. Each differs in two particular and significant ways for Buber: the organising *Thou* of the community and its *telos* of activity.

The first form of utopian society is consumer co-operative, rooted in an account of community where *Thou*-ness was irrelevant. Harmony, Indiana, the establishment of Robert Owen, was a settlement based upon such shared consumption, in an

attempt to abandon dogma. Buber argues that Owen's utopia failed because there was no replacement narrative or other structures to unite it (75). He critiques consumption as a specific bond of community, noting that it asks little of those involved in community or society and shifts responsibility within a community to managers, not offering any sense of unity (77). The manager then transforms the community into a group of people who she or he attempts to have work for her or him. In terms of society as an organism that works together, ones with only minimal encounter or unifying interactive practices do not evolve into a 'true social organism' (77–78). This transformation is limited in 'a technical and managerial sense' (78). The organising *Thou*, then, is community practice and the predetermined *telos* is mere production.

The producer co-operative is the second form of utopia, which was privileged in Karl Marx's account of society. This involved the working class becoming the leadership of society. This would require a revolution, however, and one that wholly replaces the social with the political (83). The co-operative was to be spread nationally, even given the risk of devolvement of such co-operatives 'into ordinary bourgeois joint-stock companies' (85); redistribution of wealth was meant to remedy this temptation. In differentiation from other forms of socialism, the federalisation of such co-operatives is Marx's communism (87); they could not remain isolated from the influence of each other.

Marx's concern for revolution in this account, however, eschewed the social almost entirely. Buber notes that despite the efforts to unite the proletariat, these were political and economic in nature, not social: 'the evolution of the new social form...was neither the real object of its thought nor the real goal of its action' (98). The action in these communities has no 'clear and consistent frame of reference' (99). The political restructuring would evolve through Leninism and the Russian Revolution, which despite hatred of bureaucracy (116), managed to evolve into one. This became the re-animalisation of humanity, the reduction to zoological function (130). Hannah Arendt later echoed this critique of a labouring society, one where production is its unifying component, without a sense of the transcendent, as a means of survival. Yet 'without being at home in the midst of things whose durability makes them fit for use and for erecting a world whose very permanence stands in direct contrast to life, this life would never be human' (Arendt 1998, 135). This speaks to a society lacking a *Thou* that is only in solidarity through the State divorced from a 'society,' which is ironically abolished. The protection of this structure, separate from other communities, is its *telos* (as was later the case in East Germany, for example). Such a society is part of Modernity, which views others as 'a cog in the "collective" machine' (Buber 1952, 132). Ironically, communal or social identity overtakes that of the individual in the totalisation that co-operatives

sought to avoid; Proudhon, another early socialist, saw the communist collective as ‘ruthless perfection’ (30). In communism, humans run to ‘the great collectivities’ (132) in the absence of such original community emerging from a *Thou*. This form of modern life offers the *telos* of false community, which appears true in the distorted and unrelenting push of technology, ‘causing [one] to lose the feel of community—just when [one] is so full of the illusion of living in perfect devotion to [one’s] community’ (132).

The re-imagining of society, then, can only happen through ‘full co-operatives,’ which are the third account examined by Buber. These are marked by a ‘union of producers and consumers...a union whose power and vitality for socialism can only be guaranteed’ by all co-operatives working together (79). The nature of these, however, cannot be mere aggregate societies. There must be ‘little societies’ that associate with others on the basis of ‘the social principle – the principle of inner cohesion, collaboration, and mutual stimulation’ (80). From this emerges the proper socialist State. Such a State overcomes the failure of the co-operative through isolation, which Kropotkin noted (74). Buber draws this understanding of social association in the earliest account of ‘socialism’ from Pierre Leroux in 1848, who noted that ‘if you have no will for human association, I tell you that you are exposing civilization to the fate of dying in fearful agony’ (128). Leroux, following the work of Saint-Simon, was an influential reformer who attempted to popularise social change in the name of the Church in nineteenth-century France (Bakunin 1975, 58). The unity of these co-operatives separates them from the other two accounts. Buber’s accounts of Christian Socialism within France and England point to spiritual organisation to recover the lost sense of community within socialism.

Buber’s account affirms the role of community in identity beyond the self. He specifically notes that community must be integrated with people working together *as well as ‘their mutual relationships’* (Buber 1952, 134; emphasis added). The extension of I-It is merely a beginning to such bonds. Social life cannot be maintained if aggregate limitation, to protect an economic system, defines these interactions. The organising *Thou* and the *telos* are revealed as on-going, not mired in attention to and obsession with causality in social exchange that honours the laws of dialectical materialism or the neoliberal market, which Buber argues forms belief in ‘fate’ (Friedman 1983, 66). This belief in the *telos* of ‘fate’ is reflective of the ‘self-willed man’ who is defined by his own actions and never sacrifices. Disunion rules his world, however, as his means and end as an agent are always separated through his own agency as an ‘originative “I”’ (Arnett 2013, 8); an identity that starts with the Self rather than a community. Such a person has no use for what is exterior; he thinks he is satisfied by I-It relations. Here, then, we see individualism tied to a particular account of economic systemisation that eschews community

and society.

Yet Buber's work also critiques the development of self-righteous behaviour within a unit that leads to the atomistic separation from others, as well as the assumption of defined *telos* that characterises individualism. Religious communities, for example, are defined by a dogma that, as a system, functions similarly to capitalism as a once-revealed, *telos*-defined set of functions accounting for right and wrong in rigid terms. For Buber, attachment to dogma mirrors the Statist rule of law too closely and leads to self-righteous attention to one's own behaviour in a community (Buber 1952, 72). Buber examines the movement of co-operative development in France and England that led to the formation of Marxist doctrine, discerning which communities worked and which could work. Those rooted purely in economic or Statist law were termed 'schematic fiction,' an idealised, ahistorical form of community imposed from above (11). Then there were those that involved 'organic planning,' which did not anticipate outcome but point in a just direction. Buber argues that the West, since Plato, has attempted to reify ideals with tools, but argues that planning and experimentation in social life are more recent. In these cases, it is the orientation, the *Thou* that reconnects one to another, in its own social nature. Communities that lack this account will falter.

## A Distinctively Spiritual Turn

Community, then, is not just rooted in the State, or a State that operates as an industrial machine; it also nurtures as a mother (39). These relations happen in the between space, which is the only place where a 'spirit of solidarity can... remain alive' (65). As Maurice Friedman has noted in his extension and interpretation of Buber's work, the between is the location of true community (Friedman 1983, 38; Friedman 1960, 43). As *I and Thou* affirms, the intentional retreat from *Thou* is dehumanisation. Importantly this between is not just held between people, as utopian Fourier advocated in his 'universal harmony' (Buber 1952 20), but also between communities.

The *Thou* of the community, which Buber develops in later writing and work on the development of the State of Israel, is evidence of religious socialism. Such communities emerge from 'the spirit working silently in the depths' (Friedman 1960, 47). They are alternatives both to the communist and the neoliberal state, each of which suppresses the good. As Maurice Friedman argues

Both [capitalist and socialist states] are evil in so far as they prevent the springing-up of the good, the socialist state in that it makes impossible even those remnants of true community which exist in the capitalist state, the capitalist state in that the relations between man and man are indirect and

perverted, based on desire for exploitation rather than true togetherness. (47)

Community only emerges from the shared orientation to an ‘Eternal *Thou*’ (64); the reunification of I and It (67).

These accounts of community have been controversial in the West as religious communities have separated themselves from the famously atheist Marx, distrustful of the misuse of power. In a Western post-Cold War context, words like ‘socialism’ sear into the psyche as a trigger for oppression of liberty and State surveillance. Those who espouse socialism in the positive often connect to critical theoretical examinations, and often join with other descriptors such as ‘liberal’ or ‘radical’ (Carey 2014). Yet as Buber’s account of community shows, this Western divide may only be rhetorical. Though resistance to *Thou*-connected communities still emerges when framed as communism or socialism, the West seeks community that eschews the mechanical of the Industrialist Communist State, and its surveillance and environmental degradation.

Religious communities in the West have developed this conversation for several years. Pope John Paul II, for one, was an early voice offering critical analysis of neoliberalism, calling the globalised economy a system that must be subject to ethical consideration. He offered moral theological reflections on a system that ironically promises greater liberty but avoids understanding human qualities of life (Himes 2008, 272). Re-examination of the ‘dignity of work’ in the Catholic Social Teaching tradition also re-emerges (Sison, Ferrero, and Guitián 2016) as part of an on-going Vatican examination of globalised economics and its effects on human worth of workers and precariats, a view that is shared by Pope Francis III (Gregg 2017, 366); this can be at least dated back to *Rerum Novarum* in 1892, and is extended by groups such as the National Catholic Rural Life Conference (NCRLC) (Bové 2016). While not atheist and not driven by an ultimate authority of the State (though the Vatican does have Statehood), concerns for all components of community are shown by the Church in a mirror of early Marxist critiques. Its attention to *Thou* counteracts the understood rigidity of neoliberalism.

## **Capitalism Rethought through the I-It**

Writers on capitalism have not ignored the role of community, though the totalisation of separation of *It*-ness and *Thou*-ness in capitalism suggests that such roles have been underthought. Catholic intellectuals analysing the history of work for its own sake in the West, emerging from Max Weber’s analysis, argue that the West rose when religious ideals were embodied in community practices. Francis Fukuyama, for example, drawing from the Greek *thymos*, allows that pre-Modern practices should infuse and direct community to make liberal capitalism work;

he calls for capitalism to adopt them (Fukuyama 2006, 227–233). This stands in the clear lineage of Weber, who argued for the link between Protestantism and success as a leader in industry (Weber 2001). Yet such writing ignores the totality of neoliberalism and of the globalisation project, which redefined justice and community. Such redefinition excludes shared faith in God, or even basic trust as a unifying principle of diverse persons, an argument made by Jane Jacobs in her defence of twentieth-century cities (Jacobs 1961).

Neoliberalism minimises the I-It relation to a single point between with two sides divided in transaction, rather than brought together in the unity of genuine personal exchanges. Globalised neoliberalism reifies all justice as distributive and locates the *telos* of human activity in self-interest. Activity within capitalism reveals what is the true market price and directs our behaviour. As Foucault argues, capitalism marked the turn from jurisdiction to veridiction (Foucault 2008, 31–32). Foucault's work reveals that exchange value is the *Thou* of liberal capitalism; furthermore, its violation, specifically through State interventions into economic practices which distort exchange value, is injustice that corrupts the system. The system only works when this condition is met. The absence of State intervention, as a response to World War II, drove the neoliberal project—such a system seems appealing as a response to State brutality. Communism was understood to be a totalising system of power that disallows control, one that was revealed, in a scientific manner through evidence of its failure, always to falter. Its *telos* was future harmony, even if it was after a revolution. This has been noted long since before the collapse of the Eastern bloc. Hayek notes the 'shaken' communists who had to admit that Marxism led to Stalin's tyranny (Hayek 2007, 79). Quoting Walter Lippmann, Hayek argues that submission to a system of one's own affairs leads to tyranny (80). Though a preface to the 1976 edition of his text asserts that he never said all socialism leads to totalitarianism (55), this theme has been adopted by his intellectual progeny: economic 'freedom' checks State power (Friedman 2002, 11). But in this account, the social is completely absent as an externality, as, accordingly, is social justice. Justice is only understood in terms of distribution within the system.

The principles of globalisation, ironically conceived to counter another system, communism, both of which were meant to counter the religious and totalitarian taxation and rules of the Church and State in the Enlightenment era, demand immediate, clear results to dialogue. Globalisation envisions exchanges as negotiated dialectic, with revelations limited to the weakness and strength of the other, or the exchange value that guides their interactions (see Friedman and Friedman 1980, 18–20; Friedman 1961, 75–77). Such interactions are not guided by a *Thou*. That which guides us, revealed by the *Thou*, is elusive; it 'happens,' as we receive 'not a specific "content" but a Presence, a Presence as power' (Buber

2010, 110). Globalisation as an economic system, emerging from the free market, renders human communication in legal speak rooted in predictability—there must be certainty in contracts, and in agreements, which are the only ‘between’ of globalisation. The reification of the transcendent, through the uplifting of science and math as systems with eternal rules that are more certain, more fair than rhetorical or religious narratives, marks the ascendancy of economic systems as controlling of human behaviour, confusing accounts of power.\*

Not all capitalism is neoliberal, of course. Excellence in productivity is a primary virtue that often serves as a rebuttal to critiques of the system, rooted in the Nietzschean critique of morality that corrupts excellence in its practice (Nietzsche 2007). For him, only individual will to power can achieve the heights of humanity and social commitment to a community-centred *Thou* abolishes this process. Accounts of the twenty-four-hour-a-day work of the globalised marketplace, combined with earlier Weberian accounts of the Protestant Ethic, suggest that the drive of industrial production allows us to escape the brutality of the totalitarian socialist regime through the accumulation of goods that make individuals less dependent on the State. Doubtless, this is a motivation to reframe justice as distributive rather than jurisdictional. Yet Buber’s work points to the key problem of modern and post-modern individualism. The alienation from others feels persistent and the most capitalist-driven, most liberated market activity in human history has not led to innovative solutions for loneliness. Meaningful interactions with others, which is a primary driving force behind dialogue (Kelly 2013, 52), diminish in the face of the pursuit of our self-interest. Problems made salient by current political controversies over immigration and global markets only show that communication centred solely on a *telos*, the attainment of that which interests us, forms communities that transform what is *Thou* from a Spirit, a force, or a phenomenon, into a system.

Buber’s work suggests that Full Co-Operative units, based in local community that correspond with other communities, embody the petite narratives of postmodernity that connect us and eschew the universal, leading to *Thou*-led community with practices that reunify us with It. Reflecting on the work of Emmanuel Levinas, Ronald C. Arnett notes that Levinas finds justice with ‘narratives of institutions,’ and these are disrupted by the Other, in the exchange, in the between (Arnett 2017, 152). The *Thou* that directs such communities emerges in multiple, petite forms (Arnett, Arneson, and Bell 2007, 163) resembling the small units that form the Buberian account of Full Co-Operative as a vision. Disillusionment with global markets, such as critiques of the corporatisation of farming (Bové 2016, 783), has led a call for new accounts of economics, ones which may require overcoming the rhetorical baggage of ‘socialist,’ a move that millions of Bernie Sanders supporters

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\* Stanley Deetz has argued forcefully for this replacement (1992).

were willing to make in the 2016 US presidential election.

Hoover and Lutz have, respectively, explored how Buber's work extends into economic thought. Hoover notes the exploitation of environmental resources in globalisation and the call of Buber for humanity to reorient itself to nature. The It of economics currently 'considers the planet Earth to be a bundle of resources which needs only to be exploited for the maintenance of high throughput in a high-consumption society' (Hoover 1996, 260).\*\* As with the rhetoric of globalisation, such a stance forgets the limits of time (261) and space that define community, and that Thou is the source of transcendence in such a world. The will to profit within the system only breaks the rules, it does not transcend them. Nor does it lead to any kind of socially legitimate community: 'the measure of community is in the relationships which build the everyday tissues of common concern, mutual assistance, and meaningful living' (262). Accounts of sustainability, rooted in 'moral sustainability,' require attention to the between, to the interhuman (265). Lutz also notes the irresistible capitalist urge to maximise production (Lutz 1996, 270), counter to the Weberian presumption of Fukuyama that a liberal capitalism needs some religious influence to persist well. This reflects liberal Christian Realism and the dualistic split of narrative and ethic critiqued by Mennonite John Howard Yoder, who sees such dualism only as an excuse to permit violence (Yoder 1994, 158). Restated, the privatisation of spiritual influence allows one to participate in a system that dominates and advances Western empire. Buber notes that the *Thou* does not create tension between activity in the world and religious belief, but a call to duty in the between space: 'there is no more tension between the world and God, but only the one reality' (Buber 2010, 108). Buber resists the 'rational economic man' of nineteenth-century utilitarians (269), a concept reflective of the turn to the self that contributes to accounts of libertarian individualism,\*\*\* extended to Adam Smith's 'invisible hand': it is 'an *impersonal force* that snuffs the true spirit' (274). The intimacy of the Thou reminds us that society and its normative principles and practices are revealed, mysteriously, in the connections between others; it is not violated or inhibited by those connections.

Ultimately, the social as a utopic realm has the capacity to overcome the economic alienation of humanity in all senses. The fear of globalisation, of a world that

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\*\* This is ironically rooted, in part, in a religious dominionist view of cultural activity in the West, found in the cultural mandate of Genesis 1 and expanded, as Klein argues, by Francis Bacon and beyond.

\*\*\* Libertarianism appears to develop in the mid-nineteenth century with John Stuart Mill, but is echoed in the private exchanges between economic traders that date back for centuries in Western Europe.

is not yet post-nuclear, causes humanity to question the role of the State, the social, and the nature of individual relations that emerge from it. Buber's work points to a model that does not reify a telos, as with Marxist socialism that leads to inevitable Statism, a model that takes direction from a revealed yet unreified *Thou*, and points to community and space for dialogue beyond the individualism of Western economics. Ironically, the fear of socialist society, where the rule of law was a 'weapon' to brutalise peoples, is embodied in neoliberal society under the rule of capital and contract, whose allegiance to systemic 'laws' requires us to question the right of children to access food, healthcare, and quality education because the government must not intrude on private industry as a principle. Our faith in this form of capitalism calls us to avoid dialogue with others—consider those who disengage from the political realm entirely in favour of the capitalist, the consumptive, or the academic. Dialogue in Buber's work is not marked by the avoidance of exercising power, which Arnett argues is a mark of individualism (Arnett 1986, 143). Buber's call for the restoration of a *Thou* in an alienated world could not be more prescient toward overcoming cultural and social division. Neoliberalism as the source of revelation offends transcendent religious community, which still works to witness to social patterns guided by the between space of *I* and *Thou* beyond mere interactions that support production.

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